

“Princeton in Beijing Language Program, Enhancing Cross-Cultural Fluency”

Amanda Cassano, Class of 2022

As this year’s recipient of the Goldsmith Adams Award, I participated in the 2021 Princeton in Beijing (PiB) online summer language program. PiB is an intensive Chinese language immersion program hosted by Beijing Normal University and Princeton University. PiB offers the unique opportunity for students to learn the equivalent of a full academic year of Mandarin language instruction in a period of eight weeks—equivalent to 120 synchronous class contact hours. In addition to small-sized class sessions, PiB students meet with instructors daily for individual tutoring sessions and participate in extracurricular activities aimed to promote socialization and cultural immersion.

In the third year course, we used textbooks called *All Things Considered* (C. P. Chou, Yan Xia and Meow Hui Goh, Princeton University Press) and *Eyes on China* (C.P. Chou, Jincheng Liu, and Xin Zou, Princeton University Press), which gave me the vocabulary needed to discuss modern American and Chinese societies as presented in Chinese media. PiB is renowned for the high quality of teaching it offers and the success of students who graduate from the program, many of whom are influential figures in the field of Chinese Studies. Guest speakers during this year’s program included Gregory Gilligan, Chair of Amcham China (American Chamber of Commerce in the People’s Republic of China) and PGA TOUR China Managing Director, Ira Belkin, senior research scholar with the U.S.-Asia Law Institute and Adjunct Professor at NYU School of Law, Melinda Liu Beijing Bureau Chief for Newsweek Magazine, and Matthew Pottinger, who recently served as the United States Deputy National Security Advisor (2019-2021). PiB Professor Lin also presented lectures on subjects including Fang Lizhi, “Fang Lizhi: From Physics Professor to Political Dissident” and “Rhythm in Daily Life Chinese.”

Studying with PiB this summer elevated my language proficiency to a level at which I am now able to comfortably engage in complex discussions regarding social, political, economic, and historical subjects in Chinese. Understanding the ways in which many Chinese people consider socio-political issues has refined my communications skills and made me a more competitive job candidate in the field of business and foreign affairs. Ultimately, I plan to live and work in China for several years once I graduate from Bowdoin. PiB helped me significantly improve my Mandarin language skills so that once I am in China, I am better able to successfully integrate with the local culture, navigate independently, and conduct business in professional settings. Additionally, studying with PiB allowed me to take an advanced 3000 level seminar in Chinese film this Fall. Only by attending PiB was I able to reach this personal milestone in my language studies.

I am very grateful to have been selected as this year’s recipient of the Goldsmith Adams Award, which has enabled me to pursue what I know in my heart is my lifelong passion.

Faculty Mentor: Professor Jia

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