Frequently asked Questions and Answers
First Year China Experience (FCE)
China and the Environment

What is FCE?
Funded through a generous grant from the Henry Luce Foundation in New York, the First Year China Experience is part of the Furman-Luce Initiative on Asian Studies and the Environment. Twelve lucky students will be accepted into the program. As part of the program, participants will take a year of Chinese language their freshman year and take a First Year Writing Seminar on China’s Environment team-taught by a China specialist and a Sustainability scientist. In May, the group will travel to China for two-weeks on a fully funded study tour of China! Students will need to complete the Chinese and FYW course requirements (with grades of no less than C+) , of course, before travelling in May.

Is FCE competitive?
Yes. Each year many in-coming freshmen apply to the program. Students are selected based in part on their academic excellence, but also on their desire to absorb all they can about China both inside of the classroom and out, or their interest in merging science exploration and area studies. The program is uniquely interdisciplinary, recognizing that none of China’s environmental issues can truly be understood or addressed without knowledge of the country’s history, politics, economics, and culture as well as an understanding of the natural science behind both the rise of China’s environmental challenges and opportunities for addressing them. We recognize that no one can gain all of this expertise in a single year---but we’re going to have a wonderful and intellectually exciting time exploring these real world issues! The program is looking for student leaders who can serve as ambassadors for Furman and their home countries while in China, and who will share their experiences and knowledge with others upon their return. Many, though certainly not all, of our past participants have become exemplary Asian Studies majors or continued their Chinese language studies paired with one of Furman’s more than two dozen academic majors. We’re particularly excited this year to be working not only with students fascinated by international cultures, but also those primarily interested in the sciences. Nearly all past participants have become leaders in some capacity across the community.

Where will we travel in China?
That’s perhaps the most exciting part of all! In addition to exploring Beijing, the political capital of the country, and walking along the Great Wall, the group will spend a week in Yunnan Province in Southwest China. Yunnan is known for its fascinating ethnic minority populations, its immense biodiversity, and varied topography. We’ll travel to some of the most spectacular mountain landscapes, talk with scientists about efforts to clean up important lakes and rivers in region, and meet with government officials, Non-Government Organizations, villagers, and academics to discuss how the environment impacts their daily lives and how they contribute (or are barred from contributing to) the nation’s efforts to address its serious environmental challenges.
Who will be taking me to China?

You will be travelling to China with your FYW China and the Environment instructors, so you’ll know each other well before ever leaving the country. The program is unique in offering a team composed of a China specialist and a natural scientist. The 2018-19 Program will be co-directed by Dr. Kate Kaup (Professor of Asian Studies and Politics and International Affairs) and Dr. Suresh Muthukrishnan (Associate Professor of Earth and Environmental Sciences). Both have vast experience conducting fieldwork and working with students. Dr. Kaup speaks fluent Mandarin, and has led well over a dozen group study tours to China. Dr. Muthukrishnan strongly believes in immersive experiences for students and his class field trips as well as travel-study programs are designed to provide an incredible life changing experience to our students.

What happens after the program?

Well…that really depends. Did you love the first year?? Eager to learn more about China and/or environmental issues? We encourage you to take additional classes with us and/or to even consider a major in Asian Studies, Chinese Studies, Sustainability Sciences, Earth and Environmental Sciences, Biology….or some combination thereof! We have one particularly exciting offer for FCE participants: if you continue your studies in Chinese, Asian Studies, or an environmentally related major, you are eligible for a *second* fully funded trip to China in one of the LIASE May Experience offerings. We’ll notify all participants about the options available as these new courses come on line beginning next May.

Though we hope you’ll “get the bug,” it may be that Chinese isn’t for you, or that you fall in love with another field of study and don’t have time to continue courses with us after Freshman year. No worries. We are 100% sure that the experience will expand your horizons and teach you things you never even imagined you might learn not only about the world, but about yourself.

How do I apply for the program and when will I find out if I am selected?

Please visit Furman’s Asian Studies Department Website for an online application. The 2018-19 applications will be available May 5th, and applications are due June 30th. Admission into the program will be announced by July 10th.

How do I know what classes to register for over the summer if I don’t know whether I will be accepted into the program?

No worries! You can just register for classes as if you were not participating in the program, and after you have been successfully added to the program, the registrar will adjust your schedule accordingly. You’ll receive your course assignments at the same time all freshmen do, so you won’t even notice the difference. All participants will take the China and the Environment First Year Writing Seminar and a year of Chinese Language classes. Most participants will have no prior Chinese training, but if you’ve already taken Chinese we will place you in the appropriate class.

Could I study more than one year of Chinese?

Absolutely! Further language study beyond one year is available but is completely optional. If you are pursuing a B.A., remember that you’ll need to complete a language course 201 or greater for graduation, so you might consider at least completing CHN 201. Furman University offers four years of nationally competitive Chinese language study, a language house on campus, and numerous study away and internship programs in China every other fall, nearly every May, and over the summers. You won’t be bored!!

Is Chinese Language more difficult to learn than Western languages?

Well…yes. And that’s a big part of what makes it so interesting and fun. Furman has nationally recognized Chinese language faculty to help you master the language and state of the art language lab resources. The majority of students who take Chinese at Furman have no previous exposure to the language, and perform very well. While the writing system and tones can be challenging, most students find the grammar easier than Romance languages and you’ll be able to start trying your Chinese in real world conversations in no time. In addition to the dynamic classroom experience, if you’re interested you’ll be able to participate in all sorts of extracurricular offerings where you can learn more about Chinese culture and practice what you’re learning in class. These outside activities range from cooking classes, to learning
Mahjong, chatting with Chinese visitors or classmates from China over lunch, guest lectures, Chinese film screenings, etc. If you would be interested in speaking with a current Chinese language student to learn more about Chinese classes at Furman, we can arrange a conversation—in English or Chinese!

Would I have to pay to be part of the FCE?
No. Roundtrip international flights, all travel within China, food, lodgings, and cultural experiences are covered by the program. The only money that participants will need on the trip is spending money and expenses related before the trip to securing passports and visas (visas run close to $300 though they are valid for ten years).

How many students will be going?
Twelve students will be chosen as participants.

What will an average day be like in China?
Fantastic!! We will start the program in Beijing, the political heart of the People’s Republic of China. After exploring Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, and the Great Wall, the group will head to Yunnan Province where we will have the rare opportunity to room with Chinese roommates from Yunnan Minzu University for a week. Your roommates will be even more nervous than you are, and completely excited about meeting you! What a great chance to experience China first hand and to compare notes as you travel with your Chinese partner and the group to interesting sites in Yunnan, ranging from the spectacular mountain ranges in Dali, to massive dam projects along raging rivers, to some of the most pristine Alpine lakes and some of the most devastated waters in need of environmental recovery, to remote rural ethnic villages. We’ll say goodbye to friends in Yunnan and head to our final destination of Shanghai, the financial capital of the country and the “New York City of China.” We’ll visit imperial treasures at the world renowned Shanghai Art Museum and explore environmental challenges posed by rapid urbanization at the Urban Planning Museum. Our trip will start with a walk in imperial footsteps and end with a farewell banquet and Shanghai Acrobats!

Is China safe?
In an age of some global security concerns, China remains one of the safest places in the world for international tourists. Crime rates are much lower than in the United States. The program directors are very alert to political and health issues affecting China, and they constantly monitor the Centers for Disease Control, World Health Organization, State Department, and Embassy websites for any changes to the current, very stable situation in China. While this program aims to be fun and enriching, student well-being is always the top priority.

DON’T FORGET TO APPLY BEFORE THE JUNE 30TH DEADLINE. FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT 294-2545 OR EMAIL ROBERT.LANG@FURMAN.EDU (ASIAN STUDIES PROGRAMS COORDINATOR). LOOK FOR PROGRAM INFORMATION AT SUMMER ORIENTATION.