

UC Berkeley, "Human Security and Peacebuilding"
June 13th – July 15th at University for Peace, Costa Rica, CA

The whole course consisted of five weeks. The first three weeks were the lecture about the main ideas about the human security and peace building in the campus of the university, and in the last two weeks we were supposed to do volunteer works at one of the places we had chosen at the first day of the class.

So, in the lecture part, we've learned a lot about ongoing global problems such as migration, environment, human rights, democracy in relation to Arab spring, and so on. The class focused especially on "vital core" of human security. Although the concept of security has been changing from the traditional state security to new born human security, the whole concept of the human security is still quite ambiguous. The term "Vital core" was the key word to untangle this complex idea about human security, and it has three factors: physical security, livelihood, and human dignity.

After finishing the paper and presentation that was due on the last day of the third week, we went off to each place where we were going to volunteer for the next two weeks. The volunteer work I did was maintaining and rebuilding the tracks of the forest park in Monteverde, which is one of the most famous destinations for eco-tourists coming to Costa Rica. The work was mainly manual labor, though as I talked with the staff or other volunteers who had been working there longer than us, I realized that being wholly dependent on tourism is not a totally good idea and might increase the people's vulnerability.

This course opened my eyes in various ways, which I think will never be obtained if I was just studying in Japan. Not only the new knowledge I gained from the lecture, but through the volunteer work, I realized the importance of connecting the theory to the practice and the real world. In addition, many students from literally all over the world gathering up to talk about and make peace gave me a sense that the world can be small and united no matter how diverse the nationality or race is. Interacting and wishing peace with all kinds of people from the bottom of our heart was truly interesting and I'll never forget it.

For those of you who are planning to involve in the program next year, I just want to tell, be aware that you are part of the world, and have fun.

Human security and peacebuilding

I participated in the course of the university of California, Berkeley. The course was the joint program with UPEACE, a university mandated by United Nations.

For the first three weeks, the classes were conducted with a morning lecture/afternoon discussion format. Following that, we had field study as a peacebuilding practice for two weeks.

In the lectures, after an initial introduction of human security and peacebuilding, three specific security issues was given special attention in the form of case study modules: international migration and human rights; poverty, environmental stress and vulnerable peoples; and terrorism. The latter section also addressed “The Arab Spring” in the Middle East and North Africa as a response to conditions of human insecurity. What’s more, we chose additional human security issues for research and presentation. In particular, the lecture about “The Arab Spring” was the most impressive for me. The professor was from Egypt, and he explained how Islam thought about current situation from the historical and religious point of view. As for the group project, we researched about child soldiers in Uganda. The research was amazing because we had a student from Uganda who used to be a child soldier.

After the lecture, we were organized into teams of 4-5 members and participated during an intensive two-weeks period in field study assignment under the supervision of governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations working in the areas of environment, health, food security, education, development, gender equality, conflict resolution and other human security issues. I went to a lodge named el manantial lodge to help the owner create more environmental friendly business. He tried to raise the awareness of local people for environment. To be honest, what we did was manual labor, however, I learned that small work is very important in order to start something big. In addition, the experience made me realize the importance of team building. At first, we didn’t know each other. However, we gradually understood and cared for each other.

It was the first time for me to study human security and peace building, because I am in law department at my university and such kind of class is not popular in Japan. However, my dream is to work for peace. So this experience was an eye-opener for me. I want to keep studying about peace.

The amount of reading was the most difficult work for me. In addition, I think that more students from all over the world should enroll in the class because most students were from Berkeley.

Anyway, I strongly recommend everyone to join this wonderful program!!!