

A HANDS-ON APPROACH TO CHINA

A NEW ELECTIVE MERGES COOKING, ACUPUNCTURE AND TAI CHI INTO AN INTEGRATIVE INTRODUCTION TO EAST ASIAN CULTURE.

BY MIMI WIGGINS PERREAULT

Learning tangible ways to express cultural knowledge is just one byproduct of the China Studies Program's newest elective course, *Dimensions of East Asian Culture*. ¶ "This course provides a broader understanding of culture," China Studies Program Director Jay O. Lundelius said. "The 'hands-on' element of the course helps students to gain a deeper understanding of the culture." ¶ The course is an elective 3-credit hour course that

introduces students to the basic components of Chinese and East Asian culture. The course consists of four overlapping segments, one which focused on the ideas of balance through Tai Chi, the gracefulness of painting, one that talks about the importance of health and gives insight on medicine and a third which teaches the elements of cooking. These classes in essence build upon one another. The course was offered for the first time in spring 2009—but has been in the making for a few years.

"Students participate in and learn a Tai Chi routine every afternoon for five weeks," Lundelius added. "They actually learn the elements of Chinese painting and how to apply their cultural understanding to the art form."

While there are a few lectures about the history and symbolism of Chinese art, the course is mainly hands-on. Students spend most of their time learning how to hold a brush, mix pigments and paint watercolors in the Chinese manner. In the cooking section, students will learn guidelines and techniques about Chinese cooking and regional/cultural cuisines. In the course students spend most of their time preparing and cooking meals. In the Chinese medicine and in Tai Chi sections, students will hear a few lectures on unifying Chinese philosophy, but most of their time will be spent practicing a standard Tai Chi routine.

Guest instructors are brought in from the community to teach elements of these classes to students, while CSP

Program Administrator Yili Lundelius teaches the cooking elements of the course. While students don't actually get to practice Chinese medicine, several elements of the Yin and Yang are learned in their classes. Students have requested a course on Chinese cooking for years and so both were glad they could add the element to this culture course.

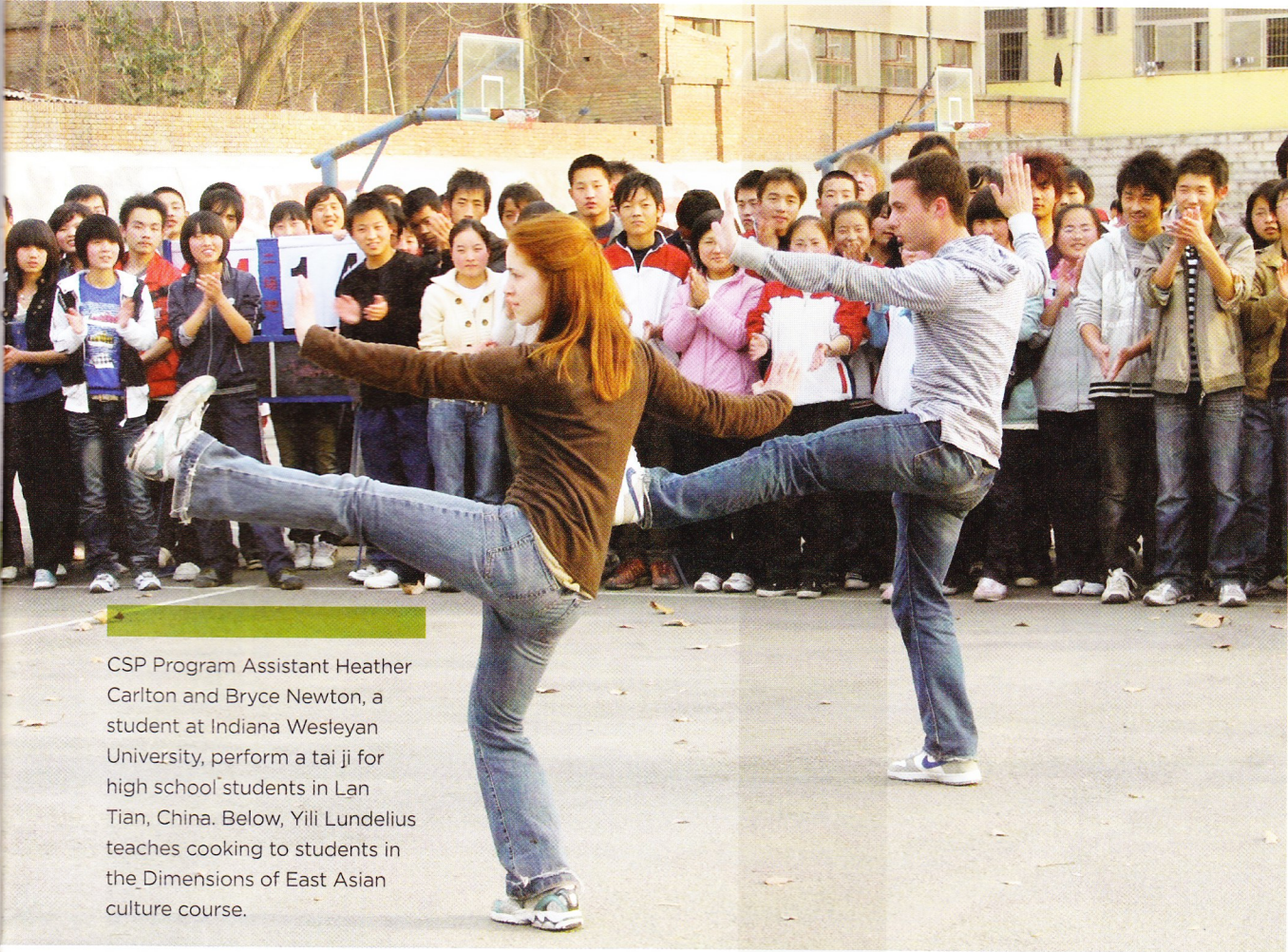
"Students have always asked for a Chinese cooking course," said Jay Lundelius. "When it was put in the context of the underlying Chinese principles and philosophy—especially as they relate to eating and health—this course seemed valuable."

Students often discover ways to apply what they have learned in their classes to their everyday life, and realize that among the differences there are still some similarities.

"[Jay Lundelius often says,] 'Everything you hear about China is true somewhere but nothing you hear about China is true everywhere,'" said Joni Miller, a student from Colorado Christian University who attended the program in spring 2009. "Policies and traditions can vary from region to region and it is important to realize the diversity that exists within China."

Overall, Miller feels like the program helped her to feel at home in a faraway culture.

"The China Studies Program not only prepares students for life in China, but also teaches important skills for living in any new culture," she said. ▣



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CSP Program Assistant Heather Carlton and Bryce Newton, a student at Indiana Wesleyan University, perform a tai ji for high school students in Lan Tian, China. Below, Yili Lundelius teaches cooking to students in the Dimensions of East Asian culture course.



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—JONI MILLER, CSP ALUMNA

The China Studies Program is located in Xiamen, China. Learn more about the semester at www.bestsemester.com/csp.