

美國參訪心得：跨文化場域中的靈性實踐與自我轉化

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參訪大學：美國羅格斯大學

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一、為何出發

大學就讀藝術大學時，身邊許多同學畢業後選擇赴歐美深造，當時的我並不嚮往出國留學，反而轉向法鼓文理學院生命教育學程。在社會學、心理學與佛學的薰陶下，禪修從知識學習轉化為我的日常修行。

既然如此，為何會在碩四申請前往美國羅格斯大學（Rutgers University）參訪？除了學校計畫的補助支持，更核心的動力源於我的論文研究——「臺灣千禧世代在靈性實踐中的自我探索」。我觀察到身邊有愈來愈多年輕人接觸靈性實踐，而羅格斯大學黃教授關於「正念（Mindfulness）」的研究令我印象深刻。在美國，正念被廣泛應用於校園干預計畫，幫助師生減壓並提升幸福感，且大眾普遍將其視為科學工具而非宗教行為。

這對在佛教道場學習禪修的我而言，是個不小的衝擊與啟發。在資訊爆炸的當代，人們迫切需要安頓身心的方法，而經科學驗證的正念，正是一個門檻較低、大眾易於接受的管道。帶著這份好奇，我希望實地探究美國文化如何看待佛教與冥想，並以此回望台灣青年的靈性實踐現象。

二、跨文化學習：表達的勇氣與多元的視野

在羅格斯大學交換期間，我隸屬於社會工作學系。除了修習社工系的課程，為了提升語文能力，我也選修了專為非母語者開設的英語溝通課程。

這段課程經歷令我印象深刻。首先，美國學生極其善於表達，即便教授採取講授式教學，學生仍會踴躍提問，師生間的對話極具流動性。相較於亞洲學生，他們展現出更強的

自信與發表意願。與此同時，這也讓我反思並對自身文化感到自豪：華人的謙虛與謹慎，使我們在發言與行動間追求對等與踏實，這亦是一種難得的特質。

此外，校園的多元包容性也令我驚嘆。羅格斯大學匯聚了世界各地的學子，我的室友便是一位印度女孩。透過與不同背景同學的討論，我們從各自的文化經驗出發，共同建構出豐富的課堂面貌。最後，我有幸參與了「年輕人正念與生活技能干預」研究計畫，協助整理適合大學生的八周課程。這次經驗不僅證實了正念研究的普世性，更徹底打開了我的觀看視野。

三、田野觀察：靈性實踐的在地化與流行化

除了課堂學習，我利用課餘時間深入不同場域進行體驗，這些觀察成為此行最珍貴的養分。我首先參與了法鼓山新澤西道場的禪修與茶禪活動。我發現，即便在美國，傳統道場仍以華人服務為主。唯一的例外是 Rebecca 老師帶領的工作坊，因其流利的英文與著作背景，吸引了許多西方人士參與。這讓我意識到，語言與表達方式是文化傳播的關鍵媒介。

隨後，我走訪了阿姜查傳承的森林寺院（Forest Monastery）、一行禪師的碧岩寺（Blue Cliff Monastery）以及日本禪宗背景的禪山寺（Zen Mountain Monastery）。這三個場域的帶領者皆為西方出家人，他們的開示幽默且貼近美國生活感，參與者也以西方人為主。同樣的現象也出現在法鼓山象岡道場，當由西方在家居士擔任老師時，往往能吸引更多西方青年。這證明了教學者的文化背景與經驗分享，對於學習者的吸收程度有顯著影響。

這些觀察與我的論文緊密相連：無論國籍，千禧世代與 Z 世代參與冥想與靈性實踐的比例正在攀升。在美國，冥想已逐漸脫離宗教標籤，轉化為一種身心調適的流行文化。

四、結語：靈性實踐的再定義

這半年的旅程轉瞬即逝，卻極其充實。從課堂研究到田野體驗，我不僅結交了志同道合的朋友，也與他們共同創造了節慶聚餐等溫暖回憶。

這段異地生活的機緣，幫助我的論文開拓了全新視角。我不必再侷限於台灣本土的觀察，而是能從全球化的跨文化現象中，重新回應並解讀台灣青年的靈性實踐。這不僅是一次學術參訪，更是一場關於自我與世界的深度對話。

US Study Visit Reflection: Spiritual Practice and Self-Transformation in Cross-Cultural Fields

Visit Period: September 1, 2025 – January 31, 2026

Host Institution: Rutgers University

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Why Set Out

During my undergraduate studies in the arts, many of my peers moved abroad to further their education in countries with longer histories of artistic development. At the time, I didn't feel a strong pull toward studying overseas. Instead, I transitioned to the Life Education program at Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts. In addition to studying sociology, psychology, and Buddhism, I delved deeply into the knowledge of Chan (Zen) meditation, which has since become my daily spiritual practice.

So, why did I choose to apply for a study visit to Rutgers University in the United States during my fourth year of graduate school? Beyond the school's travel grants, the decision was deeply rooted in my research topic: *"Self-Exploration in Spiritual Practices among Taiwan's Millennials."* I had observed an increasing number of my peers engaging in various spiritual practices. My interest was further piqued by a lecture by Professor Huang from Rutgers, who shared research on the impact of mindfulness. He had implemented mindfulness intervention programs in various schools, finding that many American students and professors use mindfulness as a tool to reduce stress and enhance well-being, viewing it as a secular practice rather than a religious one.

This was a significant revelation for me, coming from a background of practicing Chan in a traditional Buddhist setting. In an era of extreme tension and information overload, people desperately need ways to settle their minds and bodies, yet not everyone has access to traditional channels. "Mindfulness," validated through research and scientific methods, has become a bridge for many. Driven by this curiosity, I wanted to explore how American culture perceives Buddhism, meditation, and mindfulness to better reflect on the spiritual practices of youth in Taiwan.

Cross-Cultural Observations: Expression and Diversity

During my exchange at Rutgers, I was hosted by the School of Social Work. In addition to a core course, I enrolled in a graduate-level English communication course designed for non-native speakers to sharpen my language skills.

Several aspects of the Rutgers academic experience left a deep impression on me. First, American students are generally very adept at expressing their thoughts. Even when professors used a lecture-style format, students frequently interrupted with questions, and professors were eager to respond from multiple perspectives. Compared to Asian students, they appeared more confident in sharing and presenting. However, this also made me feel a sense of pride in my own cultural background; the Chinese value of humility—not overpromising and ensuring that one's words match their actions—is a grounded and diligent trait that I have come to appreciate more deeply.

Furthermore, the diversity of the student body was a stark contrast to the campus environment in Taiwan. Rutgers students come from all over the world. My roommate was an Indian girl, and in our class discussions, we could hear experiences from diverse cultural backgrounds, collectively constructing a multifaceted understanding of the subject matter. Finally, I had the honor of participating in Professor Huang's research project, *"Mindfulness and Life Skills Intervention for Young People."* This project integrated an eight-week mindfulness course into the freshman curriculum at Nanjing University. Assisting with literature reviews and curriculum design for college students confirmed the universality of mindfulness research and broadened my analytical horizon.

Field Observations of Spiritual Practice

Beyond the classroom, I utilized my weekends and holidays to conduct field observations in various spiritual settings, which became some of the most vital learning experiences of the trip.

Initially, through the resources of Dharma Drum Mountain (DDM), I visited the DDM New Jersey Center for meditation workshops and "Tea and Chan" activities. I noticed that participants were still predominantly Chinese, with very few Westerners. An exception was a workshop led by Rebecca, a teacher who has lived in the US for many years and authored several English books; her fluency and perspective attracted a significant number of Western participants.

Regarding the language barrier, I also visited several other centers for retreats: the Forest Monastery (Ajahn Chah lineage), Blue Cliff Monastery (Thich Nhat Hanh's Plum Village tradition), and Zen Mountain Monastery (Japanese Zen tradition). The teachers at these sites were Western monastics whose teachings were rooted in American cultural contexts, often infused with humor and a relatable, "lived-in" feeling. Consequently, the participants were mostly Westerners. I observed a similar phenomenon at DDM's Chan Meditation Center in New York; when Western lay teachers led basic courses, the audience was largely composed of young Westerners. This underscores how a teacher's cultural experience and mode of expression significantly influence who the practice reaches.

These experiences directly link back to my thesis. Regardless of the country, Millennials and Gen Z are increasingly participating in meditation and spiritual practices. Through conversations with locals, I learned that meditation has become a "trend" in their culture—a lifestyle choice rather than a strictly religious activity.

Conclusion: Redefining Spiritual Practice

The six months passed in a flash, yet the journey was incredibly fulfilling. Between academic research and spiritual field observations, I met many like-minded friends and mentors. From extravagant Halloween decorations to Christmas dinners, these interactions allowed me to immerse myself in American life.

This opportunity to live abroad for an extended period has provided my thesis with a much broader perspective. Instead of observing Taiwanese youth in isolation, I can now respond to local phenomena through the lens of global trends and cross-cultural comparisons.