

# Class Profile

*These are drawn from questions #1-6 on the surveys you answered yesterday. If you would like to add to your answers, I will place the surveys in my mailbox tomorrow (Thursday) and you can take them and return them to the mailbox before Tuesday.*

1. Previous foreign language courses: You are all very experienced students and it seems most of you have taken courses with Guy Beauregard.

2. Previous other courses: A wide range of answers! Some philosophy classes, media studies, art, ecology, finance, biology, management, Chinese history & poetry, nanotechnology, Cinema, economics, ethics, psychology, sociology, mathematics, medicine, science fiction, photography!

3. Languages besides English/Mandarin: Taiwanese was the most common answer, but also German, French, Spanish, Swahili. I also see Hakka... does this mean the same as Taiwanese?

*\*Sidenote on languages and their relation to power distribution... my wife and I are taking basic Mandarin at NTHU and our class includes students from Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Indonesia, Korea, Vietnam, India, Gambia. So it was the first day of class, and nobody speaks any Mandarin. Guess what language the teacher used to address the class...*

4. Desires for the class: Of course many were interested to learn about American literature and its connection to American culture and history. Some hoped also to make comparisons to European literature and to their own lives. Some were seeking to improve critical thinking skills. We will try to achieve all of these objectives!

5. Fears for the class: There were some concerns about lacking historical or cultural background knowledge. As you can see, I will try to help with that. It might surprise you, but your background knowledge is not much less than that of my American students! Some had concerns about my style of teaching. As I said yesterday, this is OK because you and I can try to tune ourselves to "harmony." Some expressed anxiety about writing load. If you consult the syllabus you will see that there is no reason to worry about that... you will answer or compose *one* question most weeks. And then a midterm exam for one hour in the 9th week of the term and an essay/exam due in the 18th week that you have more than two weeks to work on. That's not very much writing, I think. Not surprisingly, the most common fears were about reading load. I may make some deletions if my list is too ambitious.

6. Biographical quirks: Volleyball, baseball and other sports were very popular... also music, movies, and American television. Someone has an unusually long Chinese name, someone tends to blush when called on, someone likes to compose poetry,

someone has red hair, someone studied in France, someone likes "pop and lock" dancing, and someone has a British accent. Finally, someone likes detective stories and ghost stories. Apologies to you! I deleted Edgar Allan Poe from the syllabus to make room for others; he is the master of both of these genres in American literature. In fact, he is the originator of the entire detective genre. I can advise you some stories to read if you want to make him the topic of your final essay. Oh, but my favorite answer to this question was "so far nothing"... I couldn't decide if that was an optimistic view or a despairing one!