



Student Spotlight

Purdue University is a top destination for international students, enrolling over 9,000 international students representing 128 nations in 2022. Here, we shine the spotlight on a student who has taken courses with the PLaCE program to improve their English language and communication skills

ZHANG TIAN

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Zhang Tian is from Shanghai, China, but lived in New Jersey before coming to Purdue. After her undergraduate studies, Zhang worked in banks for several years and as a stay-at-home mom for 12 years. She has always had a passion and curiosity for life: she enjoys painting, martial arts, cooking, photography, hiking, and writing articles online for nearly 30,000 followers.



Why did you choose to study at Purdue University?

My undergraduate degree is in business administration, so my philosophical background is insufficient to apply to a Ph.D. school in philosophy. Dr. Yeomans and Dr. Dillmann in the Philosophy Department have developed an excellent [master's degree program for international students](#), which incorporates the study of both academic English and philosophy. It provides advanced English classes, and students may enroll in any Ph.D. philosophy course. Therefore, I believe it is an excellent approach to assist international students who are not native English speakers to acquire a solid foundation in philosophy and become more competitive Ph.D. applicants.

What courses have you have taken with PLaCE? How have they helped you?

I have taken two short courses. One focuses on writing personal profiles, such as resumes, cover letters, and personal statements. Another course was the study of American idioms. Both were conducted by Dr. Pimenova. I loved both of them. Dr. Pimenova meticulously prepared both courses, and the course styles were varied and engaging, written assignments, games, videos, and other activities. We were thus exposed to a great deal of American culture while studying English. I believe it is crucial for language learners to comprehend the culture underlying the language. Therefore, this session was attractive and beneficial for an international student's language acquisition and cultural integration. In both courses, Dr. Pimenova also gives many opportunities for students to interact with one another, which not only provides international students with more opportunities to practice and learn to speak but also enables them to learn about the diverse customs and social practices of various nations.

What are some of your accomplishments and future goals and plans?

No matter what I do, I try to give it my all. My philosophy is that life is full of unique experiences, and it is never too late to begin to realize your dream. In recent years, I learned watercolor, oil, and acrylic painting, and I had two successful solo exhibitions. In 2019, I competed in the World Taekwondo Association Tri-State Tournament, winning three gold medals in the color belt competition. In 2022, I earned my taekwondo black belt.

My goal is to start my Ph.D. studies after my current master's program. This requires more refinement of my English language skills and enhanced knowledge and understanding of philosophy. This is why I also chose to attend the Short Course offered by PLaCE so that I could have more opportunities to be exposed to the English learning environment and have more opportunities to communicate in English. I hope that through diligent effort, I will be able to apply to my ideal school and produce research outcomes in the areas of philosophy that interest me, such as ethics and political philosophy.

What advice would you give to new international students?

I have two suggestions: (1) Make good use of the school's learning resources. For example, on the website of the school's library, you can search for books or materials that will assist you in doing research or writing your paper, and Purdue OWL offers individual appointments with the program's faculty to discuss your writing and receive feedback and advice. (2) When possible, converse with students of different cultural backgrounds. Due to their language, many international students tend to interact with people from their own country, which is not beneficial to learning about different cultures, integrating into the university learning environment, or improving their spoken English. Don't be frightened to make mistakes. Only by repeating the process of making errors and correcting them will you improve.

