
2012-13 Postcards

Postcards from Abroad

10-20-2012

Month of Trials

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MONTH OF TRIALS

10/20/12

Hello, fellow readers. This is Steven Crowder with the log for October 2012. I would like to start off with saying that one month of study in Rikkyo is quite different from what you would see at Linfield, especially if you are used to having daily homework. My department is the College of Intercultural Communications over here at Rikkyo University, just in case I never mentioned that in the previous journals. What I am trying to say is that instead of daily homework and classes, there is weekly homework and classes. That means that the classes here at Rikkyo meet only once a week and they give you one week to do the homework that is assigned for that week.

The language classes are interesting, actually. They assign different parts of the language every day. For example, my Total Skills class is on Monday, Grammar is on Tuesday, Conversation is on Wednesday, Reading is on Thursday, and Composition is on Friday. The homework for the language classes is assigned every day, and due in the next portion of the class that is held on the next day. It's not too different from what is over at Linfield, but just be sure to check to see if the homework is more than just one page. Everyone in my class learned this the hard way, including myself.



FIGURE 1: THE SENPAIS AND THEIR KOHAI

Speaking of homework for classes at Rikkyo, the majority of homework is submitted online, so make sure to have your laptop on hand at all times. In my Japanese Culture and Japanese Society classes, there are assigned readings. For these, the readings are easy, but they require large amounts of critical thinking, so be prepared to spend an hour or two doing their assignments. I'm not trying to scare anyone reading these into not taking these classes; I am simply forewarning them. Also, for some classes, we have discussion leaders. Two or three students are assigned to a certain week to discuss a topic in their class, summarize the main points, and ask the audience questions about their opinions and/or remarks about the topic.

In the time that I have spent here in Tokyo, I can't say that I have not felt the onset of homesickness. There have been a few times when I wished I had been able to see some old friends back in Oregon because I did miss speaking to them. Sure, there are Facebook and Skype, but I actually prefer speaking to them in person. Right as I was first experiencing my homesickness, I got a message from my friend/upperclassman/neighbor who studied at Rikkyo, Tiffany Ross, who asked if I wanted to meet up on the weekend. I decided without a second thought to go see her. When I got to Ikebukuro station, she was with Matthew Hipperson, another

friend/upperclassman who also studied at Rikkyo. We all had dinner and I gave them a tour of the campus. According to them, there have been a lot of changes since they studied at Rikkyo. In the photo attached, you can see all of us. Unfortunately, my phone decided to chop off the top of Matt's head. Sorry, Matt.

Life in Japan is interesting, but a little crazy at times. I decided to take a tour of Akihabara and a few department stores in Ikebukuro. When I passed by a shop or a certain section of a department store, the clerks were saying "Welcome," as if I were some sort of magnet or something. It felt nice to be acknowledged, but depending on the shop, the prices can fluctuate drastically. One section in a department store that I decided to browse in had long-sleeve shirts that looked nice, but they were about 9,000 yen, which I believe is well over \$100 dollars in America. I didn't buy a shirt, thankfully, but the clerk was very understanding. I also loved when the clerks were so surprised that I could understand them and respond to their questions so clearly and efficiently.

The IFL and JOIN-US clubs at Rikkyo hold all sorts of events for the exchange students. On Friday this week, we had a Halloween Party in one of the cafeterias at Rikkyo. It was nice to get out of the dorm and socialize, especially after the homework load that I had during that week. When I arrived, everyone was in their costumes, but I wasn't even dressed yet. After a quick rush to the restroom so I could change, I jumped out, wearing my costume. I decided to dress up as a Jiang-Shi, which is a Chinese "hopping vampire" or "hopping zombie." I wore paper claws, which made eating difficult, yet fun. It was like having chopsticks for fingers, which intrigued some of the club members. What really entertained them about my costume was that I had the worst time trying to remove plastic wrap off of the foods in plastic packaging. Thanks to that, they got dinner and a show at my expense. I found it funny, really.

That's all for this month. This is Steven Crowder, signing off. I hope the next journal entry won't be so long as this one, but much more entertaining to read. Let's keep our fingers crossed, okay? Until next time, dear readers!