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Cruising Chinese Waterways

University of Dayton

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The University of Dayton and Fuyao Glass America have teamed up on a new course that utilizes sociology, political science and economics to study the effect of China's growth on its waterways, and includes a three-week tour to examine key waterways first-hand.
The course, Socio-Economic Change in China: A Case Study of Suzhou and its Waters, is a collaboration between the University and Fuyao, which is helping to coordinate class activities in China. The first class — composed of students in the University's River Stewards program — will leave May 11 and will be based at the University's China Institute in the Suzhou Industrial Park.

Daniel J. Curran, University of Dayton president emeritus and executive-in-residence at the China Institute who designed and is teaching the course, said students will have a rare opportunity to examine how lakes, rivers and groundwater have suffered during the country's economic transformation.

"We're pleased to continue the University's partnership with Fuyao to create a unique academic experience for our students, in this critically important area of study for both countries," Curran said. "Fuyao's chairman, Mr. Cho, is very aware of the environmental issues in both countries and interested in how some of those challenges are being addressed."

Cho Tak Wong, chairman of Fuyao Global, joined Curran and the River Stewards at the company's massive automotive glass manufacturing plant in nearby Moraine, Ohio, on April 19 to talk about the course.

"The river systems here are very clear," Cho said through a translator, adding that such learning can help guide decisions about how to protect these precious resources as well as how to avoid costly clean-up by preventing contamination in the first place.

The class will visit Suzhou's ancient Grand Canal, Tai Lake in Wuxi, the Jujiangyan Irrigation System in Chengdu province, and the Yangtze River's Three Gorges Dam.

The recovery of Tai Lake from a massive algal bloom may hold particular interest for the Stewards, who have studied the algal blooms of Grand Lake St. Mary's in Northeastern Ohio.

Rivers Institute Director Leslie King said the trip marks an important milestone in the institute's growth, which celebrates its 10th anniversary this year.

"What we've done here, focusing on interdisciplinary education and student engagement in the Great Miami River watershed, is distinctive in the region, the state and the nation," she said. "This course offers a global comparative approach examining a different watershed, while also taking what we've learned here and transferring it to empower others around the world to be stewards of the rivers in their areas."

Curran will also teach the course in the fall at the China Institute.

Fuyao and the University already have a close connection. Fuyao made a $7 million gift in 2015 to help the University purchase the five-story building housing the institute in Suzhou and have collaborated on programs there.

Fuyao Glass America, a wholly owned subsidiary of Fuyao Glass Industry Group, the world's leading manufacturer of automotive glass, opened its 116-acre facility in October 2016, in a former General Motors truck plant in Moraine, Ohio.

The River Stewards program is a three-year, interdisciplinary program engaging undergraduates in experiential and
Located in the fastest growing high-tech, research and education park in the world, the China Institute offers year-round programming in business, engineering and the arts and sciences, with opportunities to interact with the University of Dayton's partner companies including Fuyao, Emerson and GE Aviation, among others.

For more information, contact Cilla Shindell, executive director of news and communications, at 937-229-3257 or shindell@udayton.edu.

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Art educator wins national, state and local awards. Business leadership is among upcoming events.