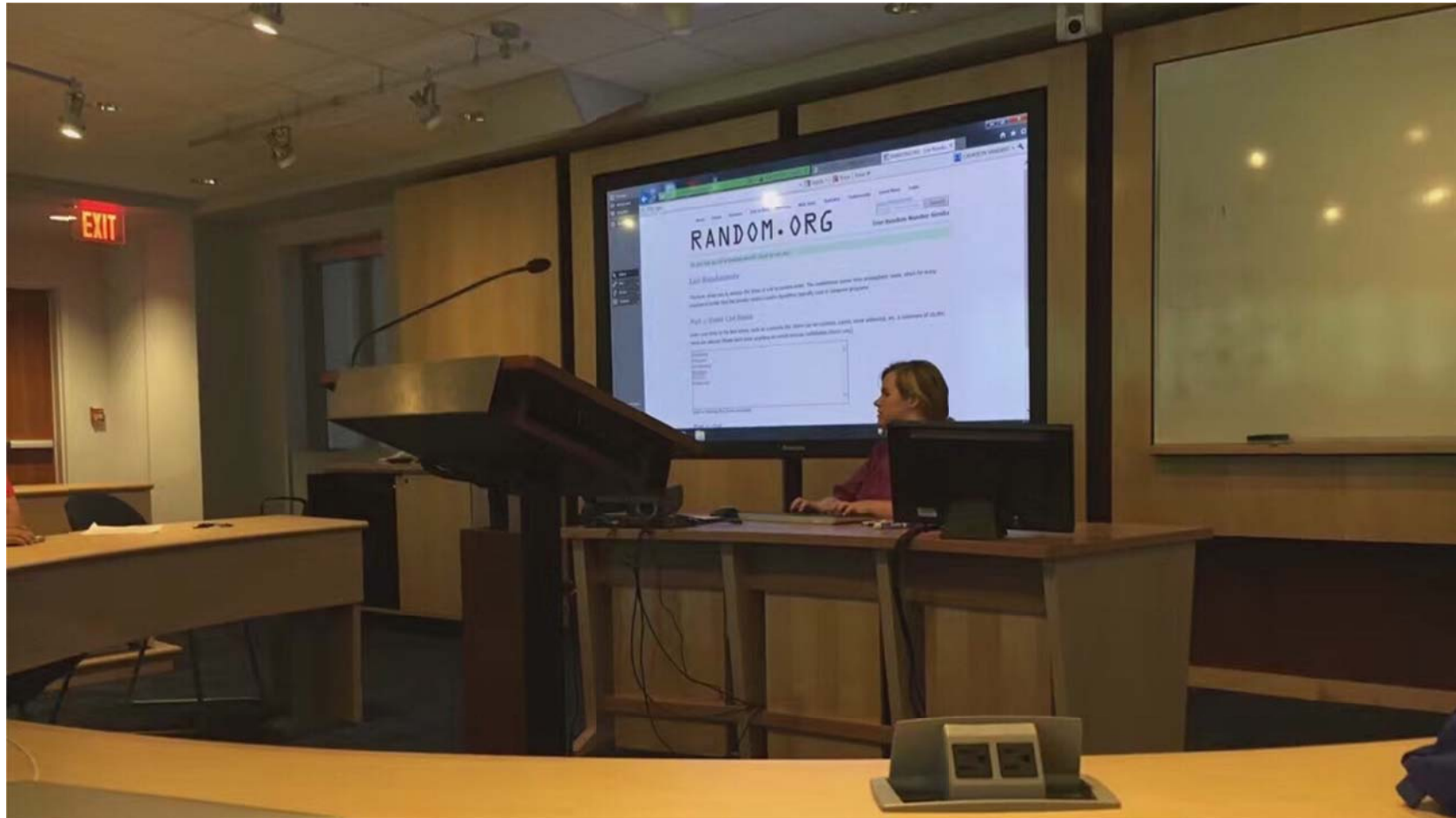


This article is about a summer school I joined at Duke University. I explain how the classes differed from those in China and describe the amazing outcomes of my decision to go global.



The classroom in which I took theory classes

My Global Journey—A Song of Ice and Fire

There are two types of people in the world—arty ones and techie ones. Although both are quirky enthusiasts, the two clans are seen as incompatible as ice and fire. Well, I'd like to sing a song of ice and fire.

People are usually fooled by my ingenious music creations—the old-fashioned songs I write, record and post online—and label me as an artistic youth whose understanding of computers goes no further than that of an intelligent musician. They are always shocked to see my fingers quickstepping briskly across the keyboard in front of a computer screen with C++ code piling up on it.

The highlight of my experience so far of ice-cold computer science came when I participated in a game design summer program at Duke University—yes, this music composer/performer can compose computer games too! I was 17 at the time, and flew all the way to the U.S. to take the 2-week course, because I knew how rare game development programs are in China and I had to grab the chance. Initially, the games I designed were no more complicated than tic-tac-toe, but the experience of giving the computer orders by writing code fascinated me.

It wasn't easy at first. I found that game programming is much like music composing—the initial stage of learning takes a long time and requires great effort, rather like a pyramid, whose base is larger than its top. After completing the first yet hardest stage, I found programming more intriguing and fascinating with every day that went by. One may argue that lots of computer programming classes are offered across China, but game programming is very different, and I found that my game development professors in the U.S. provided a more open forum in which students could discuss things with their classmates and identify mistakes in their programs on their own. In this more student-based environment, my friends and I even created our own competition, as we first coded our own programs then allowed others to try them out, and finally voted for the most complex and entertaining program. I am driven to achieve the best outcomes I can, and I'm so grateful to have been a beneficiary of the "Go Global" mindset.

In Antarctica, glaciers co-exist with active volcanoes, and each contributes to the stunning beauty of this world of ice and fire. Similarly, both art and science are pumping vigorous energy into my veins, shaping a beautiful and unique terrain.

Dogs and cats. Coffee and tea. *The Great Gatsby* and *Catcher in the Rye*. Everyone knows that people are like coins; they each have two sides. Thanks to my global journey, I have found the technical me.