

Good Morning, USA! My name is Gavin, also known as G-Sturg, and I am a junior at South Portland High School. Before taking the 11/12 Seminar class, I had limited experience with other cultures. Having lived in Maine my entire life, I hadn't had the opportunity to travel beyond New England. I'm incredibly grateful to my teacher, Ms. York, for opening my eyes to new experiences, both those I've had and those that are yet to come.

Out of all the places in the world, Hawaii's culture has fascinated me the most. From their concepts of self to their attitudes toward time, Hawaii has intrigued me every step of the way. When Ms. York told us that we would have the chance to meet and talk with a class from Hawaii, I initially thought that they would act, think, and believe the same as my small class in Maine, simply because we are from the same nation. However, while many aspects of life are universal, I soon realized that Hawaii's culture is distinct in its own beautiful way. It was an eye-opening experience to learn about Hawaii through the videos and texts exchanged between our classes.

Fortunately, we didn't just learn about their culture through messages; we were also able to engage with it deeply through a journal our teacher created called the "Philosophies Journal." In this journal, we explored Hawaiian philosophies such as Ho'oponopono, Malama Aina, and Ha. These philosophies not only help Hawaiians connect to the world but also reflect the deep values embedded in their culture.

While it's easy to think of some cultural practices as mundane or unimportant, I've come to realize that every culture offers essential lessons. Experiencing and understanding these different ways of life is vital for expanding our perspectives and developing empathy. As we step into the shoes of others, we grow our continued humanity.