

HL0201/ HL5002: Images of Singapore: Literature, Film and Culture

Academic Year: 2025/2026 (Semester 2)

Lecture Day: Thursdays, 10:30am-1:30pm, LT22

Academic Units: 3AU

Pre-requisite: NIL

Lecturer: Candice Balete (balete@ntu.edu.sg)

Course Description:

In large part, images – textual or visual – inform how we perceive the world around us. Especially in today's digital world, images proliferate our lives and screens, undoubtedly influencing how we comprehend the societal events happening around us.

The question that then follows is, to what extent do representations of Singapore inform our understanding of the workings of Singapore society? In the same vein, to what extent can one's current notions of contemporary Singapore help them appreciate depictions of Singapore in literature and film – and by extension, the (trans)national, socio-political, and historical contexts in which they are produced?

Based on these lines of inquiry, this course explores various depictions of Singapore through the reading of literary and filmic texts, with the view of investigating how these representations either inform or challenge our understanding of the predominant narratives of Singapore's culture and identity.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will be expected to:

1. Identify and engage with representations of Singapore in literary and filmic texts.
2. Produced informed critical responses (in the form of the midterm essay and final exam) that involve close-reading and analysis of their chosen text(s) from the syllabus, as well as apply optional secondary research.

Course Assessment:

1. **Midterm essay (1300 words, \pm 15% upper/lower limit): 50%**
 - a. Due Week 10: Mar 26, 2026 (Thu) 11:59PM
2. **Final examination: 50%**
 - a. 8 May (Friday), 9AM-11AM

Generative AI policy:

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become more ubiquitous in recent times. In this course, students are allowed to use Generative AI, but only in specific ways:

- **Midterm essay:** It is acknowledged that AI tools may be useful when gathering information from different sources or assimilating information to aid understanding. Students may use AI tools in brainstorming or creating an outline for the midterm assignment, but the final submitted assignment **must be the student's original work, written and produced by the individual student alone.**
 - o In other words, students are **not allowed to copy or paraphrase from generative AI tools or apps** – generative AI is only allowed as a planning or brainstorming tool.
 - o **Citations:** Citing generative AI is **not accepted** in this course. You are expected to cite your primary and secondary sources directly.
- **Final exam:** Students are **not allowed** to use AI tools in the final examination.

These are the course's generative AI guidelines, given the potential concerns the course instructor has anticipated at the point of writing the syllabus. These may be further refined in consideration of any relevant developments in the fast-evolving domain of AI.

Required Texts (for purchasing):

- Hook and Eye: Stories from the Margins (2018), Philip Holden (ed.)
(<https://www.ethosbooks.com.sg/products/hook-and-eye-stories-from-the-margins>)
- Sugarbread (2016) by Balli Kaur Jaswal (<https://shop.epigrambooks.sg/products/sugarbread>)

Texts may be purchased from Booklink at NTU or from the publisher's website (either hardcopy or ebook). Poetry readings and other secondary material will be accessible from NTULearn.

Films: The films will be screened in-class on their scheduled weeks, followed by the lecture content.

Week	Reading	
1	Introduction	
2	Selected Poetry Readings <i>**to be uploaded on NTULearn</i>	
3	Selected Poetry Readings <i>**to be uploaded on NTULearn</i>	
4	Selected Short Stories from <i>Hook and Eye: Stories from the Margins</i> (2018)	Short stories to read: - "Everest" by Balli Kaur Jaswal - "The Borrowed Boy" by Alfian Sa'at
5	Film: <i>Singapore Dreaming</i> (2006)	Film screening in lecture theatre, followed by content lecture
6	Novel: <i>Sugarbread</i> (2016)	Week of Chinese New Year
7	Novel: <i>Sugarbread</i> (2016)	
Recess week		
8	Writing Skills Week/ Essay Consultation	Online – Zoom
9	Film: <i>7 Letters</i> (2015)	Film screening in lecture theatre, followed by content lecture
10	Play: <i>Those Who Can't, Teach</i> (2010) <i>**out of print – to be uploaded on NTULearn</i>	Online – Zoom **Midterm Essay due on 11:59PM, NTULearn
11	Selected Short Stories from <i>Hook and Eye: Stories from the Margins</i> (2018)	Short stories to read: - "Identity" by Latha - "Rich Man Country" by Leonora Liow
12	Film: <i>Unlucky Plaza</i> (2017)	Film screening in lecture theatre, followed by content lecture
13	Conclusion and Revision	Online – Zoom