



# HL 1005 | Singapore Literature & Culture I

Nanyang Technological University  
Division of English  
HL 1005 Singapore Literature & Culture I  
Course coordinator: Asst. Prof. Jane Wong  
Course Blog: <https://hl1005singlit.wordpress.com>  
Office: HSS 03-58  
Email: [yc.wong@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:yc.wong@ntu.edu.sg)

## Course Description

This course examines the development of Singapore as a nation state through literature. We will consider a range of poems, novels, memoirs, films, and plays. In our study of these works, we will examine the use of language and form in the representation of Singapore history and culture, and more importantly, the limits of representation. Time permitting, we will also be consulting various secondary sources to supplement our readings of the primary texts assigned for the course.

## Course Objective

This course introduces students to studies in English by exploring developments in language, literature, and culture. Students will have opportunities to study particular themes and compare

different genres in and across a broad array of texts, placed in their historical and cultural contexts. Recurring themes include the formation of Singapore as a nation state, the development of a national identity, tensions in the usage of “standard” and colloquial English, multiculturalism, and the negotiation of social constraints within different communities. The course will examine the conditions under which texts were originally produced and may consider the reception and reshaping of texts over time.

## Course Guidelines

All students who need to consult should send an email **at least 3 working days ahead of time**. Email queries are only acceptable if they do not involve lengthy discussion sessions to avoid miscommunication, instead you should make an appointment to see me in my office. Please allow at least a day or two for responses to emails (with the exception of weekends and public holidays).

You are welcome to make an appointment to see me in my office if you have any concerns about the course. Please keep in mind that appointments should be arranged at least 3 working days in advance.

All materials distributed in class and on the course blog are strictly meant for class lectures and assignments only. These materials are protected by copyright laws and are not to be re-distributed outside of class for any other purposes. If you wish to use the materials for your assignments, you must cite them accordingly.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of academic integrity. If you are not familiar with plagiarism guidelines, please consult the university’s plagiarism policy here:

<http://www.ntu.edu.sg/ai/Pages/academic-integrity-policy.aspx>

## Course Assessment

Participation: 20%

Coursework Essay: 30%

Final Exam: 50%

## Required Texts:

- Vyvyane Loh’s *Breaking the Tongue* (2005). ISBN: 9780393326543
- Mohamed Latiff Mohamed’s *The Widower* (2015). ISBN: 9789814615129
- Balli Kaur Jaswal’s *Inheritance* (2016). ISBN: 9789814757362
- Goh Poh Seng’s *Tall Tales and Misadventures* (2015). ISBN: 9789971696344

## Online Texts (from course blog under “E-Sources”):

Poems—Selected Poets (For week 2)

Kuo Pao Kun’s dramatic monologues

Joshua Ip: *The Man Who Turned into a Photocopier*

Boey Kim Cheng: *Between Stations*

## Tentative Reading Schedule

Week	Topic	Text
1	Introduction	Contextualizing Singapore Literature in Literary Studies
2	Poetry, Nation, and the Individual	<p>Edwin Thumboo:            “May 1954”            “The Exile”</p> <p>Lee Tzu Pheng:            “My Country and My People”            “Mad Woman Story”</p> <p>Arthur Yap:            “Old House at Ang Siang Hill”            “There is no future in Nostalgia”            “2 Mothers in a HDB Playground”</p> <p>Alvin Pang:            “Upgrading”            “Following a Train of Thought on the MRT”</p> <p>Cyril Wong:            “Close all the Windows”            “Flight Dreams”</p>
3	State & Individual	<p>Kuo Pao Kun:            “The Coffin is Too Big for the Hole”            “No Parking on Odd Days”</p>
4	WWII	Vyvyane Loh: <i>Breaking the Tongue</i>
5	WWII	Vyvyane Loh: <i>Breaking the Tongue</i>
6	Working Class	Joshua Ip: "The Man Who Turned into a Photocopier"

7	Working Class	Film: <i>Ilo Ilo</i>
8	Gender & Race	Balli Kaur Jaswal: <i>Inheritance</i>
9	Gender & Race	Balli Kaur Jaswal: <i>Inheritance</i>
10	Faith & Family	Mohamed Latiff Mohamed: <i>The Widower</i>
11	Travel & Nostalgia	Selected readings from Boey Kim Cheng's <i>Between Stations</i>
12	Travel & Nostalgia	Goh Poh Seng's <i>Tall Tales and Misadventures</i>
13	Review	Exam Review