

# HL1005 Singapore Literature and Culture I

**Professor:** Dr. Michelle Chiang ([michellechiang@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:michellechiang@ntu.edu.sg))

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 10:00 – Noon (SoH-03-69)

**Exam:** 27 April 2020 (Monday), 2.5 Hr

**Lecture:** Tuesdays 1030-1230 (HSS Auditorium)

Singapura, which means “Lion City” in Sanskrit, is a misnomer. Lions are not native to the region, so Sang Nila Utama, if he was indeed the one who named the city after the magnificent beast, probably made a mistake when he thought he sighted one here. Or perhaps we were simply “Singgah,” a Malay word which could mean ‘sojourn’, as in “Would you like to stay and have a rest for a while?” and ‘stopping by’, “I’ll stop by there before I leave.” Somewhere along the way, we lost a ‘g’ and a ‘h’, acquired a ‘pura’, then a ‘pore’. If this has all along been Singgah, if this is indeed a stopover, where do we go from here? How did this become an extended stay for some? How does a temporary place become a permanent home? *When are we ever home?* These are the questions we will explore through the texts in this course. Surveying literature of Singapore written in English between 1950 to the present, we will consider the meaning of nostalgia, of home and homelessness, of belonging and foreignness, and the individual’s place, both real and imagined, in an increasingly diverse world.

## Required Texts

Balli Kaur Jaswal’s *Inheritance* (Epigram, 2016) ISBN: 9789814757362

Alfian Sa’at’s *Corridor: 12 Short Stories* (Ethos Books, 2015) ISBN: 978-981-07-7993-1

Isa Kamari’s *1819* (Silverfish Books, 2013) ISBN: 978-983-3221-42-4

*All other texts will be made available in NTULearn’s Course Content Folder*

## Assessment

Presentation: 20%

Coursework Essay (1200 words) 30%

Final Exam 50%

## Reading Schedule

Week 1 14 Jan	Introduction to SingLit	
Week 2 21 Jan	Multiple Perspectives	“Three Faces of Night” by Wang Gungwu, from <i>Pulse</i> (1950)  “Point of View” by Wong May, from <i>A Bad Girl’s Book of Animals</i> (1969)  “location” by Arthur Yap, from <i>only lines</i> (1971)

<b>Week 3</b> 28 Jan	<b>Communal</b>	<p>"May 1954" by Edwin Thumboo, from <i>Ulysses by the Merlion</i></p> <p>"Renovation" by Edwin Thumboo, from <i>A Third Map: New and Selected Poems</i> (1993)</p>
<b>Week 4</b> 4 Feb	<b>Alienation</b>	Kuo Pao Kun's <i>Mama looking for her cat</i> from <i>The Complete Works of Kuo Pao Kun</i> (1988)
<b>Week 5</b> 11 Feb	<b>Marginality</b>	"Video" and "Orphans" from Alfian Sa'at's <i>Corridor: 12 Short Stories</i> (1999)
<b>Week 6</b> 18 Feb	<b>Gender and Sexuality</b>	Balli Kaur Jaswal's <i>Inheritance</i> (2013)
<b>Week 7</b> 25 Feb	<b>Mental Health</b>	Balli Kaur Jaswal's <i>Inheritance</i> (2013)
<b>3 Mar</b>	<b>Recess</b>	
<b>Week 8</b> 10 Mar	<b>Supernatural (Non-examinable)</b>	<i>Revenge of the Pontianak</i> (2019)
<b>Week 9</b> 17 Mar	<b>Nostalgia I</b>	<p>Mohamed Latiff Mohamed's "Lost", from <i>Living in Babel</i> (2017), translated by Nur-El-Hudaa Binte Jaffar</p> <p>Mohamed Latiff Mohamed's "Vanished", from <i>Lost Nostalgia: Stories</i> (2017), translated by Nazry Bahrawi</p>
<b>Week 10</b> 24 Mar	<b>Nostalgia II</b> [Essay due. Refer to assignment handout.]	<p>Boey Kim Cheng's "Clear Brightness" from <i>Clear Brightness: New Poems</i> (2012)</p> <p>"There is no future in Nostalgia" by Arthur Yap, from <i>The Collected Poems of Arthur Yap</i> (2013)</p>
<b>Week 11</b> 31 Mar	<b>Reimagining a world I</b>	Isa Kamari's <i>1819</i> (2013)
<b>Week 12</b> 7 Apr	<b>Reimagining a world II</b>	Isa Kamari's <i>1819</i> (2013)
<b>Week 13</b> 14 Apr	<b>Review and Exam Preparations</b> Non-examinable. Return of essays during tutorials.	