

HH2001
Singapore: The Making of a Cosmopolitan City-State
Semester 2 (2021/2022)

Seminar: Tuesdays, 9:30 am to 12:30 am
Venue: LHN-TR+37, LHN-L2-03, The Arc

Instructor: Asst. Prof. Michael Yeo
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Office: SHHK #05-20
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:30 pm to 4:30 pm, and by appointment

Course Outline

This course is about the emergence of Singapore as a city-state, framed in its regional and global contexts. It will discuss the various factors—cultural, geographical, institutional, international, and socio-political—that shaped the trajectory of the island’s history, mainly focusing on the twentieth century. We will examine Singapore’s oft-vaunted development through its colonial legacies, multi-ethnic mosaic, and regional relationships. The interplay of these elements precipitated the rise and challenges of a cosmopolitan city-state still grappling with its national identity.

Learning Goals

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Analyse and explain key processes, forces, and individuals that shaped contemporary Singapore.
2. Interpret historical events in Singapore’s history since 1400 from a regional and global perspective.
3. Demonstrate how history influences debates and discussions about national identity in Singapore.

Class Structure

Seminars will be carried out in person and will take place on Tuesdays, from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm, interspersed with short breaks. You will be assigned a group at the beginning of the first class, which you will have to sit with for the rest of the semester. Please keep your mask on for the duration of the class. On some weeks, you will use the seminar time to visit museums in Singapore either alone or with your groupmates. Please adhere to the current COVID-19 regulations on social gatherings in public.

Course Assessment

You will be assessed according to the following criteria:

In-Class Participation:	20%
Museum Visit Essay:	20%
Museum Object Essay:	20%
Major Essay:	40%

In-Class Participation

You are required to attend every seminar, having read and prepared to discuss the assigned readings for each week. Your participation in class will be assessed by the depth, frequency, and quality of your contributions to tutorial discussions, including your contributions during in-class group presentations (on Weeks 5, 7, and 11). Do note that these presentations consist of each group member presenting on one key event, so the scores of each member will not be uniform.

Museum Visit Essay

You will write an 800-word essay based on your visit to a museum exhibit in Week 4. Your essay should draw upon relevant secondary sources from the weekly readings. This assignment will be due by 11:59 pm on 14 February 2022 on NTU Learn. You can find detailed instructions for this assignment on NTU Learn.

Museum Object Essay

You will write an 800-word essay based on an object you have selected on your visit to a museum exhibit in Week 10. Your essay should draw upon relevant secondary sources from the weekly readings. This assignment will be due by 11:59 pm on 4 April 2022 on NTU Learn. You can find detailed instructions for this assignment on NTU Learn.

Major Essay

You will write an essay between 2,000 to 2,500 words, excluding the bibliography, on any aspect of Singapore's history of your choice. Your essay must draw upon both primary and secondary sources that are relevant and properly cited. The Major Essay should present a clear research question and a persuasive central argument. You should choose a topic for the Major Essay in consultation with the instructor by Week 8 at the latest. This assignment will be due by 11:59 pm on 18 April 2022 on NTU Learn.

Class Schedule and Readings

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Week 1 (11 January)

Approaches to Singapore History

Readings:

- Karl Hack, "Framing Singapore's History," in *Studying Singapore's Past: C.M. Turnbull and the History of Modern Singapore*, ed. Nicholas Tarling (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012), 17–64.
- Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied and Derek Heng, "Globalizing the History of Singapore," in *Singapore in Global History*, ed. Derek Heng and Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 13–25.

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Week 2 (18 January)

Singapore Before 1819: Place, Region, and World

Readings:

- Peter Borschberg, *The Singapore and Melaka Straits: Violence, Security and Diplomacy in the 17th Century* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2010), 17–59. [These pages refer to the chapter titled, "Landscapes, Seascapes and Imagination at the Southern Tip of the Malay Peninsula".]
- Kwa Chong Guan, "Locating Singapore on the Maritime Silk Road: Evidence from Maritime Archaeology, Ninth to Early Nineteenth Centuries," Nalanda-Srivijaya Centre Working Paper Series No. 10, January 2012.

Week 3 (25 January)

Entrepot and Empire

Readings:

- C.M. Turnbull, *A History of Singapore, 1819–2005*, 3rd ed. (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009), 53–92. [These pages refer to the chapter titled, “This Spirited and Splendid Little Colony”.]
- W.G. Huff, *The Economic Growth of Singapore: Trade and Development in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 7–42. [These pages refer to the chapter titled, “Patterns in the Economic Development of Singapore, 1870–1990”.]

Week 4 (1 February)

Museum Visit 1

There will be no seminar this week, but you will visit, at a time of your choice, one of the following exhibitions:

- *Siapa Nama Kamu? Art in Singapore since the 19th Century* [National Gallery Singapore]
- *Law of the Land: Highlights of Singapore's Constitutional Documents* [National Gallery Singapore]
- *Singapore History Gallery* [National Museum of Singapore]
- *Modern Colony* [National Museum of Singapore]
- *Voices of Singapore* [National Museum of Singapore]

During this visit, you should take notes on your impressions of the exhibition with the following questions in mind:

- What is the narrative presented in the exhibition, and how does it contribute or challenge the national historical narrative?
- What artifacts and artworks are used in the exhibition, and to what effect?
- What are the strengths, limitations, and possibilities of the exhibition?

After your visit, please submit your Museum Visit Essay, critiquing the exhibition and how it approaches Singapore’s history, by 14 February 2022. You can find detailed instructions for this assignment on NTU Learn. Please note that you may choose to visit the exhibition alone or with your coursemates, though you will have to submit this assignment as an individual.

Week 5 (8 February)

Urbanization and the Environment

Readings:

- Ole Johan Dale, *Urban Planning in Singapore: The Transformation of a City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1–28. [These pages refer to the chapter titled, “The First 140 Years”.]
- Miles Powell, “People in Peril, Environments at Risk: Coolies, Tigers and Singapore’s Ecology of Poverty,” *Environment and History* 22, no. 3 (2016): 455–482.

In-Class Group Presentation:

What are four or five factors that shaped attitudes in Singapore towards land use and the environment during the colonial era?

Week 6 (15 February)

Race and Ethnicity from Colony to Country

Readings:

- Charles Hirschman, “The Making of Race in Colonial Malaya: Political Economy and Racial Ideology,” *Sociological Forum* 1, no. 2 (1986): 330–361.
- Anthony Milner, “Singapore’s Role Constituting the Malay Narrative,” in *Studying Singapore’s Past: C.M. Turnbull and the History of Modern Singapore*, ed. Nicholas Tarling (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012), 125–45.
- Chua Beng Huat, *Liberalism Disavowed: Communitarianism and State Capitalism in Singapore* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2017), 123–156. [These pages refer to the chapter titled, “Governing Race: State Multiracialism and Social Stability”.]

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Week 7 (22 February)

War, Autonomy, and Independence

Readings:

- Kwa Chong Guan, Derek Heng, Peter Borschberg, and Tan Tai Yong, *700 Years: A History of Singapore* (Marshall Cavendish, 2019), 228–276. [These pages refer to the chapter titled, “The Twentieth Century: The Making of a Global City State”; please pay close attention to the following pages: 238–268.]
- Sunil S. Amrith, “Internationalism and Political Pluralism in Singapore, 1950–1963,” in *Paths Not Taken: Political Pluralism in Post-War Singapore*, ed. Michael D. Barr and Carl A. Trocki (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008), 37–56.
- Kah Seng Loh, Edgar Liao, Cheng Tju Lim, and Guo-Quan Seng, *The University Socialist Club and the Contest for Malaya: Tangled Strands of Modernity* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2012), 61–80. [These pages refer to the chapter titled, “The Fajar Trial”.]

In-Class Group Presentation:

In your view, what are four or five pivotal events in Singapore’s history from 1945 to 1965?

Term Break

28 February to 4 March

Week 8 (8 March)

Industrialization and Economic Change

Readings:

- W.G. Huff, *The Economic Growth of Singapore: Trade and Development in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 299–360. [These pages refer to the chapter titled, “Markets, Government and Growth, 1960–1990”.]
- Linda Y.C. Lim and Lee Soo Ann, “Globalizing State, Disappearing Nation: The Impact of Foreign Participation in the Singapore Economy,” in *Management of Success: Singapore Revisited*, ed. Terence Chong (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2010), 139–158.

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Week 9 (15 March)

Housing and Educating a Nation

Readings:

- Loh Kah Seng, “The Politics of Fires in Post-1950s Singapore and the Making of the Modernist Nation-State,” in *Reframing Singapore: Memory – Identity – Trans-Regionalism*, ed. Derek Heng and Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 89–108.
- Michael D. Barr and Zlatko Skrbiš, *Constructing Singapore: Elitism, Ethnicity and the Nation-Building Project* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2008), 179–207. [These pages refer to the chapter titled, “Sorting the ‘Scholars’ from the ‘Commoners’: Secondary School and Junior College”.]
- R. Quinn Moore, “Multiculturalism and Meritocracy: Singapore’s Approach to Race and Inequality,” *Review of Social Economy* 58, no. 3 (2000): 339–360.

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Week 10 (22 March)

Museum Visit 2

There will be no seminar this week, but you will visit, at a time of your choice, one of the following museums:

- Asian Civilizations Museum
- Eurasian Heritage Gallery
- Indian Heritage Centre
- Kreta Ayer Heritage Centre
- Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum
- Malay Heritage Centre
- NUS Baba House

During this visit, please select an exhibition about Singapore’s human or natural histories and complete the following:

- After exploring the entire exhibition, select an object presented in it to study. You may select anything you wish—such as a piece of clothing, a machine, or a poster—but you must be able to meaningfully relate it to any one of the weekly topics of this course.
- Consider the following questions:
 - How does this object fit into the exhibition, and how well does it supports the narrative of the exhibition?
 - How was the object described in the exhibition, and how might you change this description?
 - How does this object help us to better understand one or more of the weekly topics of the course?

After your visit, please submit your Museum Object Essay, scrutinizing your chosen object and its place in the exhibition, by 4 April 2022. You can find detailed instructions for this assignment on NTU Learn. Please note that you may choose to visit the exhibition alone or with your coursemates, though you will have to submit this assignment as an individual.

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Week 11 (29 March)

Globalization, Regionalism, and “Asian Values”

Readings:

- S. Rajaratnam, “ASEAN: The Way Ahead,” in *The ASEAN Reader*, comp. K.S. Sandhu, Sharon Siddique, Chandran Jeshurun, Ananda Rajah, Joseph L.H. Tan, Pushpa Thambipillai (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1992), xxiii–xxvi.
- Ang Cheng Guan, “The Global and the Regional in Lee Kuan Yew’s Strategic Thought: The Early Cold War Years,” in *Singapore in Global History*, ed. Derek Heng and Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 235–267.
- Mark Thompson, “Whatever Happened to Asian Values?” *Journal of Democracy* 12, no. 4 (2001): 154–65.

In-Class Group Presentation:

In your view, what four or five pivotal events shaped Singapore’s international outlook from 1965 to the present?

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Week 12 (5 April)

Life on the Margins of a Cosmopolitan City-State

Readings:

- James Francis Warren, “Japanese Brothel Prostitution, Daily Life, and the Client: Colonial Singapore, 1870–1940,” in *Sex, Power, and Slavery*, ed. Gwyn Campbell and Elizabeth Elbourne (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2014), 291–318.
- Noorashikin Abdul Rahman, “Managing Labour Flows: Foreign Talent, Foreign Workers and Domestic Help,” in *Management of Success: Singapore Revisited*, ed. Terence Chong (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2010), 199–216.
- Russell Heng Hiang Khng, “Tiptoe Out of the Closet: The Before and After of the Increasingly Visible Gay Community in Singapore,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 40, no. 3/4 (2001): 81–97.

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Week 13 (12 April)

Memory and Heritage

Readings:

- Kevin Blackburn and Tan Peng Hong Alvin, “The Emergence of Heritage Conservation in Singapore and the Preservation of Monuments Board (1958–1976),” *Southeast Asian Studies* 4, no. 2 (2015): 341–364.
- Kevin Blackburn, “The ‘Democratization’ of Memories of Singapore’s Past,” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 169, no. 4 (2013): 431–456.
- Sai Siew Min, “Why Raffles is Still Standing: Colonialism, Migration and Singapore’s Scripting of the Present,” in *Raffles Renounced: Towards a Merdeka History*, ed. Alfian Sa’at, Faris Joraimi, and Sai Siew Min (Singapore: Ethos Books, 2021), 145–167.

Course Policies and Student Responsibilities

General

You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the information in this document, especially assignment deadlines and requirements. You are also responsible for finding out about any course-related announcements if you miss any seminars. You are expected to complete all pre-class readings, attend all seminars punctually, and participate in all tutorial discussions. Please bring something to take notes with during the seminar.

Absenteeism

This course requires you to be in class to contribute to discussions and team presentations. These in-class activities make up a significant portion of your course grade. Absence from class without a valid reason will thus affect your overall course grade. Valid reasons include: falling ill, which must be supported by a medical certificate; or participating in an NTU-approved activity, which must be supported by an excuse letter from a relevant body; or a serious extenuating circumstance, which should be supported by relevant documentation. There will be no make-up opportunities for group presentations. If you miss a seminar, you must inform the instructor before the start of the seminar via email.

Late Policy

Assignments submitted after their assigned deadlines will be penalised by the deduction of 10% of the maximum score for each 24-hour period after the submission date. For example, assignments submitted 2 hours late will be subject to a 10% penalty, assignments submitted 26 hours late will be subject to a 20% penalty, and so on. If you require an extension, please request for it a day before the assignment is due with a valid reason. Valid reasons include: falling ill, which must be supported by a medical certificate; participating in an NTU-approved activity, which must be supported by an excuse letter from a relevant body; or a serious extenuating circumstance, which should be supported by relevant documentation.

Plagiarism and Cheating

Universities consider using the works of others without properly acknowledging that use (that is, copying) to be “cheating.” In this course, such behaviour will result in a score of zero on the assignment in question. In accordance with school policy, the instructor will also report egregious cases to the university to be placed on record in your academic file. Learn how to cite the work of others properly. If in doubt, ask.

Policy on Academic Integrity

You should adhere to accepted scholarly practices in all of your written work. Notes taken for all essays and papers should accurately record sources of material to be cited, appropriately quoted, paraphrased, or summarized. Papers and research projects should acknowledge these sources in the appropriate places of the text using the notes and bibliography system of the Chicago Manual of Style (https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html).

Course Style Guide

For all assignments, please select an easily readable font, such as Times New Roman or Garamond, and refrain from using Arial. The main body of the text should be in font size 12pt, and the footnotes should be in font size 10pt. The main body of the text should be in double spacing, with footnotes in single spacing.