

HH2001
Singapore: The Making of a Cosmopolitan City-State
Semester 2 (2022/2023)

Seminar: Thursdays, 10:30 am to 1:20 pm
Venue: LHN-TR+37, LHN-L2-03, The Arc

Instructor: Asst. Prof. Michael Yeo
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Office: SHHK #05-20
Office Hours: By appointment; email me to arrange for a consultation if required.

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 Thursdays, from 10:30 am to 1:20 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 might 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:

Class Participation:	10%
Group Presentation:	10%
Museum Visit Essay:	20%
Major Essay Proposal:	20%
Major Essay:	40%

Class Participation

You are required to attend every seminar, having read all the assigned weekly readings to the extent that you are prepared to discuss them. Your participation in class will be assessed by the depth, frequency, and quality of your contributions to tutorial discussions.

Group Presentation

With your groupmates, you will give a presentation during one of the seminars (either on Weeks 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, or 12). The group presentation involves each group member introducing an event they consider significant in the history of Singapore, which we will use to create our own timeline of Singapore's history. Please refer to the question for each weekly seminar, which can be found in the class schedule. The group presentation should also: (1) allow for each group member to speak for five minutes; and (2) include a question-and-answer session. Do note that your presentation skills will be assessed individually, so the scores of each group member might not be uniform.

Museum Visit Essay

You will write a 1,000-word essay based on your visit to a museum exhibit on Week 5. Your essay should draw upon relevant secondary sources from the weekly readings. This assignment will be due by 11:59 pm on 15 February 2023 on NTU Learn. You can find detailed instructions for this assignment on NTU Learn.

Major Essay Proposal

You will write a 1,000-word proposal for your Major Essay. The purpose of this assignment is to help you develop an essay question, a preliminary argument, a literature review, and a bibliography for your Major Essay. This assignment will be due by 11:59 pm on 27 February 2023 on NTU Learn. You can find detailed instructions for this assignment on NTU Learn.

Major Essay

You will write a 2,000-word essay, excluding the bibliography, on any aspect of Singapore's history of your choice. Your essay should ideally be based on your Major Essay Proposal, with some revisions based on feedback, but it does not have to be. It 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. This assignment will be due by 11:59 pm on 17 April 2023 on NTU Learn. You can find detailed instructions for this assignment on NTU Learn.

Class Schedule and Readings

Week 1 (12 January)

Course Introduction

Week 2 (19 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), 11–25.
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Week 3 (26 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.
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Week 4 (2 February)

Entrepôt and Empire

Readings:

- C.M. Turnbull, *A History of Singapore, 1819–2005*, 3rd ed. (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009), 83–145. [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".]

In-Class Group Presentation:

In your view, what are five or six pivotal events in Singapore's history from 1822 to 1942?

Week 5 (9 February)

Museum Visit

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]
- *Singapore History Gallery* [National Museum of Singapore]
- *Life in Singapore: The Past 100 Years* [National Museum of Singapore]
- *Reflections: LKCNHM x BL5312* [Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum]
- *Surviving the Japanese Occupation: War and Its Legacies* [Former Ford Factory]

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?
- How does the exhibition relate to one or more of the weekly topics of the course?

Please note that certain exhibitions might consist of several galleries; you may choose to focus on a particular gallery for your essay. After your visit, please submit your Museum Visit Essay, critiquing the exhibition and how it approaches Singapore's history, by 15 February 2023. 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 classmates, though you will have to submit this assignment individually.

Week 6 (16 February)

Urbanization and the Environment

Readings:

- Brenda Yeoh, *Contesting Space in Colonial Singapore: Power Relations and the Urban Built Environment* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2003), 28–77. [These pages refer to the chapter titled, “Establishing an Institution of Control over the Urban Built Environment: The Municipal Authority of Singapore, 1819–1930”.]
- 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:

In your view, what are five or six historical events or factors that shaped attitudes in Singapore towards land use or the environment?

Week 7 (23 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 in 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”.]

In-Class Group Presentation:

In your view, what are five or six historical events or factors that shaped attitudes in Singapore towards race and ethnicity?

Term Break

27 February to 3 March

Week 8 (9 March)

Guided Museum Visit

[*War, Autonomy, and Independence*]

We will be visiting the *Radio Malaya* exhibition at the NUS Museum together this week. The two-hour visit will consist of an hour-long tutorial and an hour-long exhibition tour.

Readings:

- S. Rajaratnam, “A Nation in the Making (Part III),” in *The Short Stories and Radio Plays of S. Rajaratnam*, ed. Irene Ng (Singapore: Epigram, 2011), 119–142.
- 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.

Week 9 (16 March)

Building a Nation

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”.]
- Bernard Fook Weng Loo, “Goh Keng Swee and the Emergence of a Modern SAF: The Rearing of a Poisonous Shrimp,” in *Goh Keng Swee: A Legacy of Public Service*, ed. Emrys Chew and Chong Guan Kwa (Singapore: World Scientific, 2012), 127–182.

In-Class Group Presentation:

In your view, what five or six pivotal events shaped Singapore’s economy and military from 1965 to the present?

Week 10 (23 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 five or six pivotal events shaped Singapore’s international outlook from 1965 to the present?

Week 11 (30 March)

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.

In-Class Group Presentation:

Consider the timeline of Singapore’s history that we assembled over this semester. In your view, what four or five events that affected marginalized communities are missing from this timeline?

Week 12 (6 April)

Colonial Legacies

Readings:

- 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.

In-Class Group Presentation:

In your view, what are five or six historical events or factors that shaped attitudes in Singapore towards colonialism and its legacies?

Week 13 (13 April)

Research Week

There will be no seminar this week, please take this time to work on your Major Essay. If required, please email the instructor to arrange for consultations this week.

PROVISIONAL

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 5% 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 5% penalty, assignments submitted 26 hours late will be subject to a 10% penalty, and so on. If you require an extension, please request for it at least 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; a serious extenuating circumstance, which should be supported by relevant documentation; or any personal reasons that might be conveyed in confidence to the instructor.

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 or Helvetica. 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.