the Singapore WAY

TEACHER GUIDE

Public Trust and Governance

Table of Contents

Chapter 10: Public Trust and Governance

1. Introduction to the Case

Why Public Trust Is a National Asset

Public trust is often treated as a soft metric—but in reality, it's the **hard currency of stable governance**. Without trust, laws are ignored, public goods go unused, and social cohesion unravels. With trust, nations unlock the conditions for **shared sacrifice, long-term policy, and collective progress**.

Singapore's journey is not just about GDP or infrastructure. It's about a government that earned legitimacy through **consistency, integrity, and shared duty.**

What This Case Offers

This case invites students to explore:

- How **anti-corruption efforts** go beyond arrests and into cultural norms
- How policies like **National Service** build shared identity and duty
- Why **transparent enforcement and equal accountability** drive long-term legitimacy
- How **governance systems shape civic imagination and public morale**
- What it means to **govern by trust rather than by fear or force**

Why It Matters Today

Across the world, many nations are experiencing:

- Erosion of public trust in institutions
- Polarization, fake news, and political fatigue
- Corruption scandals that drain public morale
- Youth disillusionment with civic engagement

Singapore offers a counter-example: a society where **the public largely believes that "the system works"**—and where high standards are applied top-down and bottom-up.

Framing Questions to Guide the Session

- Can public trust be engineered?
- What does "clean government" really look like?
- Is a strong social compact compatible with democracy and dissent?
- How can nations recover from deep distrust?
- What role do duty, symbolism, and policy enforcement play in shaping a fair society?

Key Governance Levers Explored in the Case

Lever	Purpose
Corruption Control (CPIB)	Centralized, independent anti-corruption investigations with full prosecutorial reach
National Service (NS)	Builds shared sacrifice across ethnicity and class, reinforces national identity
Transparent Meritocracy	Promotes fairness in civil service, education, and leadership recruitment
Public Sector Performance	High service delivery standards reinforce legitimacy and public confidence
Rule of Law + Swift Justice	Maintains consistent expectations of behavior and public consequences for abuse

This case is not just about **what government does**—it's about **how citizens respond when they believe it's worth believing in.**

2. Pre-Class Preparation

This session depends on students arriving with a **clear understanding of governance systems and their lived experience with trust or distrust in public institutions**.

Required Reading

- **Chapter 10 of _The Singapore Way_** by Maher Kaddoura
  Key concepts to focus on:
    - The evolution of Singapore's social compact
    - The role of **CPIB (Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau)**
    - National Service and its civic purpose
    - Meritocracy and performance-based legitimacy
    - Shared duty and visible consequences

Optional Multimedia Enhancers

Title	Format	Why It's Useful
Why Singapore Ranks Among the Least Corrupt Countries	Transparency International / CNA	Offers global benchmarking and public reaction
National Service: Sacrifice or Symbolism?	Gov.sg short doc	Explores the civic and emotional weight of shared duty
Public Trust in an Age of Distrust – WEF panel	Podcast / Panel	Frames Singapore within the global decline in institutional faith
Governing by Example	TEDx / Lee Kuan Yew Institute	Ethical leadership as culture, not just control

Reflection Questions to Assign

Ask students to write or think through:

1. What does "trust in government" look and feel like to you?
2. Have you ever felt proud of—or deeply disappointed by—a government system? Why?
3. Should national service (or equivalent civic duty) be mandatory in your country?
4. Can a society demand integrity from leaders without it in everyday life?
5. What does "earning the public's trust" require beyond honesty?

Optional Activity: Civic Trust Self-Assessment

Ask students to rate their own country or city on the following:

Area	Score (1–5)
Corruption Enforcement	
Trust in Law Enforcement	
Fairness in Civil Service	
Shared Sacrifice or Civic Duty	
Trust in Political Leadership	

They can bring this to class for small-group comparison or post-discussion reflection.

Instructor Preparation Checklist

Item

Bring a case summary or visual chart of Singapore's trust milestones

Prepare quotes or statistics on global trust erosion (e.g., Edelman Trust Barometer)

Load a short video or visual on CPIB or National Service

Prepare group roles for simulation (if running a cabinet or ethics commission scenario)

This section ensures that students come to class ready to **debate not just what makes a strong government—but what makes one worth believing in.**

3. Session Plan

This session challenges students to explore the **architecture of public trust**—how it is earned, broken, and rebuilt. It balances reflection, design, and debate around **governance, integrity, and national cohesion**.

Session Duration Options

Duration	Structure
60 min	Core case discussion + trust mapping lab
90 min	Case analysis + civic duty simulation or ethics commission redesign
120 min	Full immersion: debate + policy design sprint + trust reflection gallery

Learning Objectives

By the end of the session, students should be able to:

1. Analyse how Singapore built a durable and fair social compact
2. Understand how **anti-corruption, civic duty, and fairness** strengthen national unity
3. Critically assess the **limits and risks of state-engineered trust**
4. Design policies or initiatives to build trust in fragile or divided societies
5. Reflect on their personal values related to **governance, sacrifice, and legitimacy**

Suggested 90-Minute Session Flow

Time	Segment	Purpose
0–10 min	Opening Poll: "Do You Trust Your Government?"	Icebreaker and values check
10–25 min	Case Overview: Singapore's Social Compact	Explore CPIB, National Service, and rule of law mechanisms
25–45 min	Small Group Debate: "Can Trust Be Engineered?"	Frame policy vs. cultural approaches
45–65 min	Simulation: National Ethics Commission Reform	Teams propose new civic trust initiatives post-crisis
65–85 min	Design Sprint: Build a Social Compact Pyramid	Groups visualize shared rights, duties, and principles
85–90 min	Wrap-Up: "One Thing That Builds My Trust in a System Is…"	Personal share-out and mindset check-in

Key Discussion Questions

- What does "visible integrity" look like in a leader or institution?
- Can civic rituals (like National Service) build real trust—or just compliance?
- How do enforcement and fairness interact in public trust?
- What are the dangers of over-relying on state-driven trust-building?
- Is it possible to rebuild trust in systems that have historically betrayed people?

Suggested Visual Tools

- **Social Compact Pyramid** – visualize shared rights, responsibilities, and expectations
- **Timeline of Singapore Trust Milestones** – CPIB, NS, anti-corruption acts, meritocratic reforms
- **Global Trust Comparison Chart** – OECD / Transparency International / Edelman Barometer
- **Public Trust Map** – show breakdown by sector: healthcare, police, courts, elected leaders

4. Case Facilitation Tools

These tools help students **visualize trust as a system**, not just a feeling—and show how policy, symbolism, and enforcement can either **build or erode legitimacy.**

A. Trust-Building Milestones Timeline (Singapore)

Use a visual timeline to highlight key moments in Singapore's governance journey:

Year	Milestone
1959	CPIB made independent from the police force
1967	National Service (NS) introduced for all male citizens
1970s–80s	Civil service salaries tied to private sector standards
1991	Public Sector (Governance) Act introduced
2000s+	Integrity campaigns, public housing equity, citizen feedback platforms
Present	92% trust rating in key government institutions

Discussion Prompt:

"What patterns do you see? Are these technical, symbolic, or behavioural reforms—or all three?"

B. The Social Compact Pyramid

Present a 3-tier pyramid to define the components of a social contract:

Level	Component	Examples from Singapore
Top (Shared Values)	Integrity, sacrifice, unity	National Service, education equity
Middle (Shared Duties)	Serve, comply, support	Military conscription, tax, voting
Base (Shared Rights)	Safety, fairness, opportunity	Public housing, clean governance, education access

Ask students to build their own pyramid for another country—or redesign Singapore's.

C. Global Trust & Corruption Dashboard

Use Transparency International or Edelman Barometer data to compare:

Country	Trust in Gov (%)	Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) Score
Singapore	92%	83 (Top 5 globally)
South Korea	44%	63
Nigeria	21%	24
Sweden	85%	85
Brazil	28%	38

Prompt students to explore:

"What do high-trust countries have in common—and what can low-trust countries learn from them?"

D. Stakeholder Role Cards for Simulation

Use for Ethics Commission or Post-Scandal Reform Exercise:

Role	Perspective
Integrity Minister	Wants strong, visible enforcement
Community Youth Leader	Concerned about inequality in enforcement
Business Executive	Seeks fast processes, not red tape
Civil Society Activist	Demands transparency and accountability
Ex-Politician	Advocates for restorative justice, not only punishment

These role cards help students explore **differing priorities in building back trust**.

E. Trust Dilemma Cards (Optional Warm-Ups or Cool-Downs)

Use to spark reflection or small-group discussion:

- "Would you report your boss for corruption if you risked your job?"
- "Should politicians be held to stricter standards than citizens?"
- "Can trust be rebuilt after betrayal—or does it need to be replaced?"
- "Is it better to have fair rules—or fair leaders?"

5. Group Activities & Teaching Tactics

These activities empower students to engage with the **ethical, cultural, and political complexities** of building and maintaining trust in public systems.

Activity 1: Build a Social Compact for Your Country

Task:
In groups, students create a new or revised **Social Compact Pyramid** for their country or a fictional post-crisis state.

Must include:

- 3 shared rights (base)
- 3 shared responsibilities (middle)
- 2–3 shared national values (top)

Bonus Challenge: Include 1 civic ritual or symbolic policy (e.g., like Singapore's National Service) to reinforce unity and shared sacrifice.

Debrief:

"What did your group prioritize—and why? What trade-offs did you face?"

Activity 2: Ethics Commission Simulation

Scenario:
Your country has just experienced a corruption scandal. You've been appointed to lead a reform team.

Roles (assigned or chosen):

- Government Accountability Director
- Journalist / Media Reformer
- Youth Activist
- Religious Leader
- Anti-Corruption Prosecutor
- Social Psychologist

Objective:
Propose a 5-point plan to rebuild public trust within 18 months.

Key Questions:

- Should you name and shame?
- Will you focus on transparency, punishment, or cultural change?
- What "quick wins" will restore confidence—and what long-term shifts will make trust last?

Activity 3: Trust Mapping Lab

Prompt:
Map how different public institutions are trusted in your country—from police and courts to education and health systems.

Steps:

1. Create a visual "trust meter" or spectrum
2. Rank institutions from "high trust" to "low trust"
3. Brainstorm what shapes that perception (media? behavior? performance?)
4. Choose 1 low-trust institution and propose a reform to rebuild credibility

Activity 4: Flash Debate – "Can Trust Be Engineered?"

Pro Side:

- Institutions like CPIB prove that structure matters
- Laws, enforcement, and policy design shape culture
- Singapore's model shows trust can be built intentionally

Con Side:

- Trust is emotional, cultural, and cannot be manufactured
- Over-reliance on enforcement leads to fear, not faith
- Real trust requires moral leadership and social healing

Debrief:

"Is trust a result—or a tool—of governance?"

Quick Tactics for Active Engagement

Tactic	Purpose
🧱 "Trust Tower" Exercise	Students build a tower of policies that stack up to trust—then challenge each other to remove weak bricks
📣 "I Would Trust My Government If..." Wall	Invite anonymous student responses on post-its or digital whiteboards
⚖️ "True or Trust?" Quiz	Present headlines or stats and ask: Is this a matter of truth—or a matter of trust? Explore the distinction

These activities help students move beyond critique to design—asking **"What would trust look like in practice—and how would we build it together?"**

6. Assignments and Post-Class Engagement

These assignments are designed to help students **connect case insights to real-world governance**, personal ethics, and institutional innovation—whether through policy, design, or personal reflection.

Assignment 1: Policy Memo – "Rebuilding Trust in Crisis"

Length: 1,000–1,200 words
Prompt:
A recent scandal has shattered trust in your country's legal, health, or political system. Draft a 4-point policy response plan.

Your memo should include:

- A quick analysis of what caused the breakdown
- 1–2 urgent actions (e.g., investigations, public addresses, symbolic reforms)
- 2 longer-term structural changes (e.g., civic education, transparency tools)
- Reflection: How do you define "earned trust" in public life?

Evaluation Focus: Systems thinking, realism, empathy, cultural awareness

Assignment 2: Trust Audit – "My Country's Integrity Scorecard"

Format: Scorecard + 500-word analysis
Task:
Rate your country (or city/organization) on five dimensions of public trust:

Dimension	Rating (1–5)	Notes
Corruption enforcement		
Equality under the law		
Transparency of government		
Public service fairness		
Civic responsibility		

Then answer:
What surprised you most?
Which 1–2 reforms would build the most trust—and how?

Assignment 3: Reflective Essay – "A Moment of Trust (or Betrayal)"

Length: 700–900 words
Prompt:
Describe a moment when you or someone you know experienced either:

- Profound trust in a public system (or leader)
- Disillusionment from a betrayal of that trust

Reflect on:

- What made the moment meaningful or harmful
- What this revealed about your view of government, leadership, or society
- What lesson you would bring into your own leadership or citizenship

Post-Class Engagement Ideas

Activity	Purpose
"Trust Talks" Podcast	Students record short reflections on what makes them trust a system or leader
Social Compact Manifesto	Students co-author a 1-page declaration of shared civic values they'd want in their nation
Ethics Watch	Track and report on one current corruption or transparency story from any country—how it's being handled, and what's at stake

These assignments are not just academic—they challenge students to think about the **kind of society they want to help build.**

7. Assessment and Feedback Tools

These rubrics and reflection tools are designed to help you evaluate **critical thinking, systems insight, ethical clarity, and design creativity** in student work on trust, governance, and civic engagement.

A. Policy Memo Rubric – "Rebuilding Trust in Crisis"

Criteria	Excellent (5 pts)	Good (3–4 pts)	Needs Work (1–2 pts)
Situation Analysis	Clear diagnosis of root causes	Basic understanding, may lack nuance	Vague or misidentifies issues
Policy Proposals	Practical, bold, and well-justified	Mostly realistic but may lack innovation	Unfeasible, unclear, or underdeveloped
Cultural Sensitivity	Respects context and diversity of views	Mentions, but doesn't fully explore	Ignores complexity or imposes assumptions
Integration of Case Ideas	Strong use of Singapore insights	Case references present but surface-level	No visible connection to case
Writing & Structure	Clear, persuasive, and well-organized	Understandable with some gaps	Unfocused or difficult to follow

Total: ____ / 25

B. Integrity Scorecard Rubric

Criteria	Excellent (5 pts)	Good (3–4 pts)	Needs Work (1–2 pts)
Accuracy of Ratings	Realistic and well-reasoned	Acceptable but may generalize	Uncritical or arbitrary
Insightfulness	Highlights surprising or deep reflections	Covers expected territory	Superficial or rushed
Reform Thinking	Suggests bold and viable improvements	Proposes some ideas, needs more depth	Lacks proposals or overly vague
Personal Voice	Thoughtful and grounded	Honest, with room to go deeper	Detached or minimal engagement

Total: ____ / 20

C. Reflective Essay Rubric – "A Moment of Trust or Betrayal"

Criteria	Excellent (5 pts)	Good (3–4 pts)	Needs Work (1–2 pts)
Storytelling Power	Personal, vivid, and emotionally compelling	Clear story, moderate impact	Vague, impersonal, or lacking detail
Systems Insight	Connects story to broader civic implications	General reference to systems or leaders	No link to governance or trust systems
Ethical Awareness	Reflects on values, consequences, and choices	Mentions ethics or values briefly	Avoids or oversimplifies moral dimensions
Use of Case Perspective	Integrates Singapore lessons meaningfully	Mentions case but underutilized	No case connection or relevance

Total: ____ / 25

Exit Reflection Prompts (Quick Assessment)

Use these to check understanding, values alignment, or growth in perspective:

- "One civic value I now care more about is _____."
- "I would trust a system more if it _____."
- "The most powerful tool for rebuilding trust is _____."
- "What I admired about Singapore's approach was _____."

You can collect these anonymously or use them as openers for future sessions.

8. Instructor Notes and Commentary

This section offers guidance for teaching a case that intersects **ethics, governance, psychology, and civic imagination.** Trust is a sensitive and powerful topic—expect passionate responses, especially in countries with complex political histories.

Core Teaching Message: Trust Is Designed, Not Assumed

Trust isn't a side effect of good government—it's a **central outcome of consistent, inclusive, transparent design.** Singapore succeeded because it invested in:

- **Institutions that worked**
- **Symbols that unified**
- **Standards that applied to all**

Help students explore how **trust lives in both the systems we build and the stories we tell**.

Common Student Reactions & How to Frame Them

Reaction	Instructor Reframe Tip
"Singapore only works because it's authoritarian."	Ask: What's the difference between control and credibility? Highlight consent.
"Trust can't be engineered—it's emotional."	Yes—and emotion is shaped by structure. Invite exploration of behaviour design.
"Our country could never do this."	Ask: What *would* it take? Focus on transferable ideas, not imitation.
"National Service is unfair or outdated."	Use this to explore *symbolic equality vs. operational equity*.

Core Teaching Themes to Emphasize

- **Public trust is built on delivery, dignity, and inclusion.**
- **Anti-corruption is about design, not just punishment.**
- **Duty-based systems (like NS) succeed when they're perceived as fair and shared.**
- **Meritocracy must be paired with accountability—trust breaks if it feels rigged.**
- **Trust can't be demanded—it must be experienced.**

Suggested Anchor Quote

"We do not demand trust.
We earn it, in silence, through consistency."
– Adapted from Singapore governance commentary

Use this to frame the discussion around **quiet, daily legitimacy—not showy reforms.**

Instructor Tips

- Open with a personal story or quote about trust—it grounds abstract ideas in lived experience.
- Allow space for critique—Singapore's model is not above scrutiny. Encourage **"adapt, not adopt."**
- Connect current events—look at scandals, whistleblowing, or trust-building reforms from students' countries.
- Consider pairing with cases from Rwanda (post-conflict trust), New Zealand (transparency), or Estonia (digital trust systems) for comparative depth.

9. Additional Resources

These readings, tools, and case studies offer further exploration of **public trust, anti-corruption, meritocracy, and civic culture**—helping students go deeper into how integrity is built and sustained across systems.

Recommended Readings & Reports

Title	Source	Why It's Useful
Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)	Transparency International	Annual rankings and global insights on governance credibility
The Trust Crisis	Edelman Trust Barometer	Survey-based analysis of trust in institutions by country and sector
Meritocracy and Its Discontents	Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy	Singapore-specific reflections on fairness, access, and system fatigue
From Fragility to Functionality	World Bank Governance Global Practice	Tools for trust-building in post-conflict and low-trust societies
National Service and Identity in Singapore	RSIS / IPS	Research on civic duty, youth, and social cohesion

Videos & Documentaries

Title	Platform	Focus
The Story of CPIB	Gov.sg / CNA	Explains Singapore's anti-corruption backbone through real cases
Trust in an Age of Polarization	WEF / TED	Global perspectives on rebuilding legitimacy
Why We Trust Some Governments and Not Others	Vox Explains / World101	Simplified exploration of enforcement, fairness, and consistency
Inside National Service	Singapore Army / Youth Voices	Humanized portrait of NS beyond uniform and drills
The Power of Public Institutions	UNDP	Global case studies on service delivery and public confidence

Useful Data Tools & Platforms

- https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi – Global corruption perception index
- https://www.edelman.com/trust – Public trust barometer and sector analysis
- https://data.worldbank.org/topic/public-sector – Governance, accountability, and civil service metrics
- https://integritywatch.eu – Open data on public ethics, conflicts of interest, and government disclosures
- https://www.psd.gov.sg – Singapore's public service transformation portal

Global Case Comparisons

Country / City	Why It's Relevant
Rwanda	Post-genocide trust rebuilding and performance-driven civil service
New Zealand	High-trust society with strong ethics laws and citizen engagement
Estonia	Digital government and institutional trust through radical transparency
Georgia	Formerly corrupt state that rebooted its public sector through enforcement and reform
Denmark	Rule of law + egalitarian governance + civic trust culture