GES1009 Singapore’s Business History

Tutorial 5

The *Kopitiam*: a microcosm of Singapore Business?

**Preparation:**

Visit a *kopitiam* or foodcourt and take note of: the types of stalls you see, cuisines, customers, and the general ambience.

**Read:**

Lai Ah Eng, “The *kopitiam* in Singapore: An Evolving Story About Cultural Diversity and Cultural Politics” in Lily Kong and Vineeta Sinha, *Food, Foodways and Foodscapes: Culture, Community and Consumption in Postcolonial Singapore.* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2015)

This is a very readable work, and ideally you should read the entire chapter.

(TIP: The chapter has four sections: divide up the reading with your classmates and share the notes!)

**Questions:**

* What are the key characteristics of the *kopitiam* in the colonial era, post-1965 era and from the 1980s onwards?
* What are some of the biggest challenges faced by *kopitiams* over the years?

(What can this tell us about the business environment?)

* “How will the story of the *kopitiam* unfold in the future?” What is *your* response to the author’s question?