**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE**

**GES1035: SINGAPORE – IMAGINING THE NEXT 50 YEARS**

Semester 1, AY 2019/20

Module Outline

Dr Noorman Abdullah

**Module Description**

As an economically-developed powerhouse with a diverse multi-ethnic and multi-religious population, Singapore now confronts a range of socioeconomic issues, a rapidly ageing population, declining fertility rates, widening income inequality and rising living costs. These conditions have been experienced in a context of increasing global competition, technological advancements and heightened security threats. At the same time, Singapore citizens have become a more educated people with a greater propensity to participate in the decisions that affect the nation. This module aims to encourage you to reflect on Singapore’s historical past after its independence, imagine the kind of Singapore you would like to co-create, and envisage the ways to achieve the future aspirations and goals you have pitched for Singapore.

Through the lectures, interview clips and small-group discussion sessions, the module broadly invites you to:

1. critically reflect on Singapore’s post-independence history and its impact on Singapore’s future development;
2. contemplate the kind of Singapore you envision for the future;
3. understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that can facilitate or hinder Singapore achieving your visions for the country; and
4. deliberate upon the range of strategies and policies that would enable Singapore to achieve its visions and aspirations.

At the end of the module, you are expected to be critical and knowledgeable individuals, with a competent grasp of the issues and challenges confronting Singapore. At the same time, you will be able to harness your ability and critical skills to develop future strategies and policy interventions that would be beneficial to the Singapore you envision.

This is a newly mounted Singapore Studies module that is pitched to all students from different disciplinary backgrounds in NUS who have a keen interest in Singapore’s future development.

**Lecture Format**

There will be no face-to-face lectures. All recorded lectures are mounted online on Luminus. You are free to listen to these lectures at your own convenience and for as many times as you require. Each lecture will last for approximately 1 hour, except for the first brief introductory lecture. You should ensure you have viewed the lecture before attending the tutorial sessions. The schedule of tutorial sessions and topics to be discussed are listed in this module outline below.

**Contact Details**

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**Module Requirements and Assessment**

The module will have a 100% continual assessment (CA) component and **will be assessed on a Pass/Fail (CS/CU) grading scheme**. The C.A. will be apportioned in the following manner:

(a) Open-Book Individual Assessment (30%)

There will be an open-book assessment on **Friday, 15 November 2019 from 6.15pm to 7.15pm**. The venue will be confirmed at a later date. You will be required to answer a series of multiple-choice questions and a selection of short questions based on all the topics covered in the module.

(b) Group Presentation and Tutorial Participation (30%)

With the exception of Tutorial 1, each face-to-face discussion will incorporate one group presentation. In the group presentation, your group is required to **propose and describe an organisation that you would like to establish in Singapore** to critically address what your group collectively considers to be the most compelling problem, challenge or issue for the topic under investigation for that week. The schedule of topics for our discussion sessions are as follows:

Tutorial 1 (Week 3, starting 26 August 2019): Singapore in the World (\*No presentation)

Tutorial 2 (Week 5, starting 9 September 2019): Population

Tutorial 3 (Week 7, starting 30 September 2019): Economy

Tutorial 4 (Week 9, starting 14 October 2019): Security & Threats

Tutorial 5 (Week 11, starting 29 October 2019): Diversity, Integration & Urban Environment

Tutorial 6 (Week 13, starting 11 November 2019): Aspirations & Identity

The group presentation will:

1. explicate the problem or issue, and provide support on why this problem or issue has been selected;
2. specify what the proposed organisation will attempt to do and why it will succeed or help ameliorate the problem or issue;
3. employ at least one other relevant scholarly reading/chapter from an academic journal or book to help substantiate your arguments (in addition to the mandatory reading);
4. provide an example of an organisation in Singapore or elsewhere beyond Singapore doing similar work (The organisation need not be tied to the state and can include civil society organisations).

The presentation should last no longer than 20 minutes. After the presentation, the proposal will be assessed by the other groups who are not presenting. Groups will be given 10-15 minutes to discuss with one another. Each representative will then be provided 5-10 minutes to present their questions and comments to the group who has presented. These critical commentaries will be assessed collectively as part of the tutorial participation score (15%).

The group in charge of presenting the proposal for that session should take note of the questions and comments, and provide a final response to all of these collectively after all representatives have provided their feedback. The final grade given to the group will take into account their proposal, presentation, and their responses to the questions and comments made by the representatives of the other groups (15%).

Tutorial participation will also include regular attendance, as well as the informed contributions to class discussion and group presentations. Your participation is crucial to our module. You must arrive on time ready for all tutorial sessions and please come to class having done the readings and bring them to class as well.

(c) Interview Assignment (20%)

You will be required to select any one of the recorded expert interviews from the lecture topics and write a brief response paper pertaining to the interview (other than the tutorials and interviews with students; or the main lecture itself). **The selected interview cannot be the same topic as your group presentation and cannot be the main lecture itself.** Response papers require you to understand the selected interview and evaluate how effective the interview engages with the topic. You should consider some or all of the following:

1. Very briefly, what was the interview about? Why is this interview relevant, interesting and/or important to our module?
2. What are the key ideas and themes addressed in the interview pertaining to the topic you are investigating?
3. What evidence does the speaker present to substantiate her/his arguments?
4. Are you persuaded by the arguments made by the speaker? Why or why not?
5. What strengths or limitations does the interview have, if any? Are there any other issues that could be considered in the interview?

Include your own critical voice in your brief paper by weighing arguments, evaluating evidence and raising critical questions. If there is an important issue that the speaker does not address, point it out and state what you think its significance is. You should also try to be as specific as possible and **use scholarly articles to back up your claims**. My recommendation on the actions you should pursue concerning the response paper are as follows:

1. Do not wait too long to start writing. Remember that understanding the interview is only the first step toward putting the paper together.
2. Do not write an autobiographical essay. Response papers are not about how you feel but rather involves a scholarly and objective appraisal of the arguments made.
3. Do not just summarise the interview. Your aim is to mainly react or respond to the interview, not simply repeating what the speakers say. If there is no analysis involved, then you have not responded, only regurgitated.

If you find this difficult, it would be useful to listen to the interview in segments and take notes after each segment: What did you find compelling? How does the speaker make her or his points? (Write a short summary about each segment that you can use later for your review.) Be sure to take notes on the specific information you will need to respond to the questions provided earlier.

When you submit your paper, do not make a cover page. Make sure however that you submit a hard copy and that your name and matriculation number are included in your paper. Your paper should be concise and not exceed 500 words (Font 12, approximately 2 pages, **double-spaced**, 1” at the top and bottom, 1.25” at the left and right). The word count excludes references/bibliography and footnotes used. Keep a soft copy of the paper for your own reference. **Please submit your paper in your tutor’s mailbox by Friday, 25 October, 6pm.**

*Note on plagiarism*: Please do not plagiarise. The usual citation requirements need to be adhered to. You can refer to the reference style guide on the NUS library website for further information: <http://www.nus.edu.sg/celc/programmes/Proposed%20CELC%20Webpage%20Content%20on%20Plagiarism.php>

In gist, plagiarism is the act of taking someone else’s writing and passing it off as one’s own without due acknowledgement. The University takes a strong view against plagiarism and disciplinary penalties will be meted out if you contravene such academic codes.

(d) Critical Reflections (20%)

For each tutorial, **beginning with the second tutorial session (i.e. Week 3 onwards)**, you are required to submit one 3x5 index card (or any small sheet of paper) on which you write the following:

1. Your name and DG
2. One specific discussion question prompted by your critical appraisal of the mandatory reading (or optional reading) **on the topic covered for that tutorial**
3. Two quotes from the mandatory reading (or optional reading), particularly those which resonated with you in a favourable way. These could also include those quotes you disagreed with.

The index cards/small sheets of paper are an important way to engage with the readings. You should submit your index cards to your tutor at the beginning of class before the discussion commences. Please bring a duplicate card/sheet of paper should you wish to refer to your information during our discussions. At the end of our module, your tutor should receive 5 index cards from each participant on the topics on Population (Tutorial 2); Economy (Tutorial 3); Security (Tutorial 4); Diversity (Tutorial 5); and Aspirations (Tutorial 6).

**Syllabus and Readings**

The module content has been co-developed by six universities in Singapore (NUS, NTU, SMU, SUTD, SIT and UNISIM). There is only one mandatory reading assigned and one optional supplementary reading per topic. All the readings and recorded lectures have been mounted on the Luminus. You are expected to complete viewing the lecture and reading the mandatory article before attending the face-to-face tutorial sessions.

**Introductory Lecture**

**Weeks 1 and 2: Singapore in the World**

**Content Developer: SMU**

There are two lectures for this section – ‘Nation Building and Social Identities’ (Week 1) and ‘Singapore in the Global Context’ (Week 2). The lectures cover Singapore’s exceptional and extraordinary place in the region and the world from a variety of perspectives and interviews. It examines Singapore’s nation-building processes and the construction of its national identity. It also analyses the city-state’s ties in the region and with the wider world, particularly at how Singapore’s domestic priorities and foreign policy imperatives have influenced its relationships with particular regions and countries.

*Mandatory Reading*:

Charlene Tan & Chee Soon Tan (2014). ‘Fostering Social Cohesion and Cultural Sustainability: Character and Citizenship Education in Singapore’, *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, 8(4): 191-206.

*Optional Reading*:

Han, Christine (2016). ‘Citizenship Education: 50 Years of Constructing and Promoting National Identity in Schools’, in Jason Lim and Terence Lee (eds.) *Singapore: Negotiating State and Society 1965-2015*, London: Routledge.

**Weeks 3 and 4: Population**

**Content Developer: NUS**

The two lectures draw attention to the key patterns and consequences of population change in contemporary Singapore. Changes in fertility, morbidity, mortality and migration have significantly affected Singapore and other industrialised nations globally. Such changes have considerable implications for different aspects of social life as well as the allocation and provision of limited and scarce resources in Singapore. These include concerns that revolve around health care and the distribution of illness; human capital and the labour force; care for the elderly and vulnerable; and citizenship and migration issues. An appreciation and critical understanding of these dynamics in Singapore and the relationship to broader structural arrangements is especially pertinent as different social institutions, policy makers and individuals grapple with and manage the future demands and challenges of a rapidly changing and diverse population.

*Mandatory Reading*:

Teo, Youyenn (2011). ‘Making Choices amidst Increasing Burdens: A Feminist Analysis of Singapore’s Pronatal Policies’, *AWARE Working Papers*, pp. 1-14.

*Optional Reading*:

Jones, Gavin W. (2012). Population Policy in a Prosperous City-State: Dilemmas for Singapore, *Population and Development Review*, 38(2): 311-36.

**Weeks 5 and 6: Economy**

**Content Developer: UNISIM**

This section addresses two broad areas – macroeconomic policies (Week 5) and microeconomic policies (Week 6). It provides an overview of Singapore’s economic development as well as an understanding of the labour market, with highlights on tripartism, changing labour force profile and foreign manpower. In the section of microeconomic policies, topics that are covered pertain broadly to public finance in relation to taxation, workfare, wage support, and social transfers so as to understand how increasing income inequality have influenced the government’s budgetary approach over the years. At the same time, it also addresses the economics of ageing, where rising life expectancies, coupled with rapid economic growth, have left many older Singaporeans with inadequate retirement savings for their old age and healthcare needs. The economics of transportation is also further discussed.

*Mandatory Reading*:

Low, Donald (2014). ‘The Four Myths of Inequality in Singapore’, in Donald Low and Sudhir Thomas Vadaketh (eds.) *Hard Choices: Challenging the Singapore Consensus*, Singapore: NUS Press, pp. 17-30.

*Optional Reading*:

Lim, Linda Y.C. (2015). ‘Fifty Years of Development in the Singapore Economy: An Introductory Review’, *The Singapore Economic Review*, 60(3): 1-13.

**\*\*\* RECESS WEEK (24FEB- 4MAR 2018) \*\*\***

**Weeks 7 and 8: Security and Threats**

**Content Developer: NTU**

The two lectures focus on the security of Singapore and risks that threaten the “Singaporean way of life”. These lectures explain the meaning of security in the Singapore context and highlights different threats faced by Singapore. It outlines how these threats have been managed, examines military conscription, and addresses the proactive and vigorous approaches to safeguard Singapore’s national interests and keeping defence mechanisms in pace with national interests.

*Mandatory Reading*:

Rahim, Lily Zubaidah (2010). ‘The Frightened Country and the Geopolitics of Insecurity’, in *Singapore in the Malay World: Building and Breaching Regional Bridges*, Oxon and New York: Routledge, pp. 78-111.

*Optional Reading*:

Wong, Chih Yuan (2013). ‘Geopolitical Landscapes of Terror and Security’, in Singapore in Elaine Lynn-Ee Ho, Chih Yuan Woon and Kamalini Ramdas (eds.) *Changing Landscapes of Singapore: Old Tensions, New Discoveries*, Singapore: NUS Press, pp. 179-95.

**Weeks 9 and 10: Diversity, Social Integration and Urban Environment**

**Content Developer: SIT**

The two lectures in this section cover a wide-ranging and all-encompassing subject in Singapore. The first lecture deals with “Diversity, Social Integration and Community Development” and the second lecture focuses on “Urban Environment”. The first section looks at immigration, citizenship and community development and considers Singapore’s migratory past and the challenges of new citizenship post-1965. It also encourages students to understand the process of social integration, looking at the various grassroots initiatives in citizenship and racial harmony. The second section broadly examines the urban environment with a focus on transportation.

*Mandatory Reading*:

Teo Youyenn and Nicola Piper (2009). ‘Foreigners in Our Homes: Linking Migration and Family Policies in Singapore.’ *Population, Space and Place*, 15: 147-159.

*Optional Reading*:

Yeoh, Brenda S.A. and Theodora Lam (2016). ‘Immigration and Its (Dis)Contents: The Challenges of Highly Skilled Migration in Globalising Singapore’, *American Behavioral Scientist*, 60(5-6): 637-658.

**Weeks 11 and 12: Aspirations and Identity**

**Content Developer: SUTD**

The final two lectures in this section aim to understand and critically assess Singapore’s aspirations. These lectures explain and appraise the ways in which policymakers imagine a better future for the nation-state; and discuss how citizens express their personal and national aspirations. It also closely interrogates Singapore’s multiculturalism model.

*Mandatory Reading*:

Velayutham, Selvaraj (2009). ‘Everyday Racism in Singapore’, in Amanda Wise and Selvaraj Velayutham (eds.) *Everyday Multiculturalism*, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 255-73.

*Optional Reading*:

Barr, Michael D. & Jevon Low (2005). ‘Assimilation as Multiracialism: The Case of Singapore Malays’, *Asian Ethnicity*, 6(3): 161-82.