Office of Core Curriculum  
Academic Year 2020/2021, Term 2

COURSE CODE: COR2603 [SMU-X]

COURSE TITLE: SINGAPORE - IMAGINING THE NEXT FIFTY YEARS

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PRE-REQUISITE/ CO-REQUISITE/ MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE COURSE(S)

There are no prerequisites for this course. The course content was jointly developed by faculty members from the six local universities and will be delivered using a blended learning approach.

ELIGIBILITY

1. This course will be delivered as an SMU-X course, and will be delivered in partnership with Internal Security Department, Ministry of Home Affairs.
2. This course is open to all undergraduates from SMU.
3. For cohorts <AY2019/2020, this course is offered as a general education elective, in addition to the existing core and elective courses that SMU already has related to Singapore studies.
4. For cohorts ≥AY2019/2020, this course is part of the ‘Cultures of the Modern World’ basket, and satisfies the Singapore Studies graduation requirement.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Singapore is both a city and a country contained in a small geographical space located in Southeast Asia. It houses a diverse population in terms of race, language, religion, class and nationality. It possesses no natural resources, but has a highly educated labour force. Its economy has experienced significant growth rates, particularly in the late 70s and early 80s, coupled with low unemployment.

Like most other more developed economies, Singapore now confronts a range of socioeconomic issues (e.g. rapidly ageing population, declining fertility rates, widening
income inequality, rising costs of living) amidst increasing global competition, technological advancements, and security threats. At the same time, Singaporeans have become more of a people with a stronger national identity, a greater propensity to participate in the decisions that affect the destiny of the country, and a wider range of views and voices on the future direction of Singapore, the challenges it confronts, and the strategies and means by which to achieve their preferred goal(s) for themselves, their children, and the country.

**COURSE GOALS**

Through the online lectures, interview clips and face-to-face discussions, this course invites students to:

1. Critically reflect on Singapore’s post-independence history, and its impact on Singapore’s future development trajectories;
2. Contemplate the kind of Singapore they envision for the future.
3. Understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that can help or hinder Singapore achieving their vision(s) for the country.
4. Deliberate upon the range and nature of strategies and policies that will enable Singapore to achieve their vision(s) for the country.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

At the end of the course, students should be:

1. Well-informed individuals who are able to develop new frameworks and perspectives in understanding different facets of Singapore society and life in Singapore;
2. Critical and knowledgeable individuals with a good grasp of the issues and challenges confronting Singapore;
3. Thinking and active individuals who are able to harness the acquired knowledge and skills to develop strategies and policies that would be beneficial to all Singaporeans in the Singapore they envision for the future.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

This course aims to encourage undergraduates - as future leaders - to reflect on Singapore’s post-independence history, imagine the kind of Singapore they would like to co-create for the future, and deliberate on what it takes to achieve the vision(s) they have for Singapore.

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**Part I: Singapore in the World**

The topic will cover Singapore’s exceptional and extraordinary place in the region and the world from a variety of perspectives. It will first look at Singapore’s role in the region and the
world in the pre-British and colonial periods. It will analyze the city-state’s ties in the region and with the wider world post-1965. It will look in particular at how Singapore’s domestic priorities and foreign policy imperatives have influenced its relationships with trading partners and how these partners have played an important part in its economic and social transformation. It will address the place of Singapore in the world today and how that world has shaped through ideas, trade and cultural links Singapore’s self-image and identity. The third part will examine Singapore’s relations with particular regions and countries including Singapore’s role in international organizations.

Part II: Population

Part II draws attention to the key patterns and consequences of population change in contemporary Singapore. Why is the recent population growth in Singapore at its slowest pace in a decade? Why are Singapore citizens choosing not to have more children? What happens when a quarter of the population is above the age of 60? What does population ageing mean for other segments of society and their livelihoods? Are infectious diseases emerging as one of the major causes of mortality? Does an influx of migrants into Singapore translate into lesser job opportunities for citizens? Guided by these broad queries, this section therefore critically examines the structures of human population and the processes of change in relation to broad socio-economic, cultural and political conditions. 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; household formation, marriage and divorce; human capital and the labour force; care for the elderly and vulnerable; and citizenship and migration issues. An appreciation and 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 demands and challenges of a rapidly changing and diverse population.

Part III: Economy

Part III will provide an overview of Singapore’s economic development from its early industry, growth record to the challenges of restructuring. An understanding of the labour market follows with highlights on tri-partism, changing labour force profile, and foreign manpower. Public finance with relation to taxation, workfare, wage support, and social transfers is also touched on to understand how increasing income inequality have influenced the government’s budgetary approach over the years, and the extent to which government transfers has affected the Gini coefficient has increased. The Monetary policy and international trade of Singapore via the Monetary Authority of Singapore’s Band-basket-Crawl (BBC) approach is contrasted with the monetary policy approaches of countries like the United States and South Korea. Several key FTAs have been concluded, but this has also led to increasing exposure to global economic cycles. 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 fiscal properties of a provident fund
system, such as CPF, will be compared to traditional pension systems; the trade-off between insurance coverage and overall healthcare costs will be discussed. The economics of transport will also be further discussed through the hidden costs of congestion and the alternatives to quota-pricing systems, as well as exploring the principles for regulating, pricing, and subsidizing public transport.

**Part IV: Security and Threats**

Part IV focuses on the security of Singapore and risks that threaten the Singaporean way of life. The lectures explain the meaning of security in the Singapore context and highlights traditional and non-traditional threats faced by Singapore in the past 50 years. It outlines how these threats have been managed and concludes with a projection of likely risks in the future, as well as how Singapore can cope with them. This part begins with understanding security, defining Singapore’s security, confronting Regional dynamics and Singapore’s security, Managing threats in Singapore, preparing for future risks and closing with conclusion on proactive and vigorous approach to safeguard Singapore’s national interests and keeping defence mechanisms in pace with national interests shift with time.

**Part V: Diversity, Social Integration and the Urban Environment**

Social integration is a wide-ranging and all-encompassing subject in Singapore, and to try to address every issue of social integration within 2 weeks of online content would not do justice to the issues at hand. Hence, SIT has chosen two particular areas of focus; the first section being immigration, citizenship and community development. This section will consider Singapore’s migratory past and the challenges of new citizenship post-1965. It will also encourage viewers to understand the process of integration from an immigrant’s point of view, looking at the various grassroots initiatives in citizenship and racial harmony. The second section looks at everyday issues related to society, community and integration. Based on SIT’s expertise in Sustainable Infrastructure Engineering (SIE), we will explain the challenges and opportunities related to the public transport system in Singapore, and the work that goes into moving masses of individuals around, and consider the future of rail transport in Singapore.

**Part VI: Aspirations and Identity**

Part VI explores narratives about the ‘ideal’ Singapore from the perspectives of policymakers and ordinary citizens. It will begin by appraising the SG50 initiative and the complementary Project 50/100 based on theories of utopia and nationalism. Attempts by policymakers to ensure that Singapore stays alluring are also highlighted through its efforts on four areas - entrepreneurship, and how the government is introducing schemes to help local businesses grow; education, especially the move to embrace liberal arts education; heritage, in the form of preservation of sites and artefacts; and lastly, inclusivism at work, which is represented by the introduction of non-graduate scheme and paternity leave. This will be followed by how ordinary citizens in Singapore express their aspirations for a better Singapore. Centred on the thesis that Singapore is transitioning from a materialist society to an idealist one, it will
feature results of an attitude survey on the future and life in Singapore, and also explore in
greater detail two areas that have seen increased participation from ordinary Singaporeans.
These are culture and the arts, as well as social activism in the spheres of civil society and the
new media. Finally, evolving discourses on multiculturalism that have been complicated by
mixed race individuals, interracial marriages and reactions to racialised policies are discussed.
As an area that have seen citizens and policymakers engage each other on how best to move
forward, multiculturalism will be an apt way to end the course because it shows the
transitional nature of this city-state.

COURSE FORMAT

1. Face to face lectures/discussions (approximately 3 hours) will take place every week on
   TBC, at TBC.
2. Your attendance and active participation at these lectures/discussions will contribute
   significantly towards your class participation marks. Mere attendance will not
   contribute towards class participation.
3. This course will be delivered in partnership with Internal Security Department, Ministry
   of Home Affairs, and the group project will be on a topic TBC. Details will be released at
   the start of Term.

PARTNER ORGANISATION FOR THE GROUP PROJECT – Internal Security Department,
Ministry of Home Affairs

ASSESSMENT MODE

1. The course is assessed on a Pass/Fail grading scheme.
2. The 100% Continual Assessment is apportioned in the following manner:-
   a. Class Participation – 10%
   b. Policy Proposal Essay – 40%
   c. Group Project – 50%
3. Class Participation (10%) – You are encouraged to actively participate in the discussions
   and activities that take place in class.
4. Policy Proposal Essay (40%) – Students will write an end of course essay on a policy
   dilemma (of no more than 1,800 words). The details of this assignment will be released
   at a later date, and is to be submitted by TBC.
5. Group Project (50%) – Students will work in groups of FIVE students to submit a group
   project. The details of this assignment will be released at a later date, and will culminate
   in a Group Project Presentation and a 2-page Executive Summary that is to be
   submitted by TBC. Group project presentations will take place on TBC with our partner
   Internal Security Department, Ministry of Home Affairs. A 1-page mid-term review of
   the project is to be submitted by TBC. Consultation slots for guidance on the Group
   Project will be made known at a later date.
6. Consultation slots for guidance on the Policy Proposal Essay will be made known at a later
date.

ASSIGNMENT FORMAT AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
All written assignments are to be submitted in double-spaced typing along with a total word count and a written anti-plagiarism declaration. There is a policy of zero tolerance for late submission (except in exceptional circumstances) and for non-submission of assignments.

SMU LIBRARIES - WHERE CAN I GET HELP FOR THIS COURSE (READINGS / ASSIGNMENTS)?

a) Know your Librarians
- Speak with your Librarians as they offer guidance and research consultations on how to find credible resources, do proper citations and many other helpful topics. URL: https://library.smu.edu.sg/services/services-undergraduate-students

b) Self-Learn (elearn courses)
- Learn how to create in-text citations, bibliographies or reference list in the Avoiding Plagiarism through the APA Citation course.
- Learn how to undertake academic research systematically and effectively, scope and create a research question in The Research Process course.

c) General Enquiries
- Email: library@smu.edu.sg
- Chat: Ask Library
- Digital Library: library.smu.edu.sg

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS:

SMU strives to make learning experiences accessible for all. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers due to disability, please let me know immediately. You are also welcome to contact the university's disability support team if you have questions or concerns about academic accommodations: included@smu.edu.sg. Accessible tables in our seminar room are available for students who require them.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING (EPTL)

As part of emergency preparedness, Instructors may conduct lessons online via the WebEx platform during the term, to prepare students for online learning. During an actual emergency, students will be notified to access the WebEx platform for their online lessons. The class schedule will mirror the current face-to-face class timetable unless otherwise stated.

COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT

Please note that only copyright holders are entitled to reproduce their work, publish their work, perform their work in public, communicate their work to the public and make an adaption of their work. Hence, making course materials (owned by the faculty) available for sale or posting such works on websites for gain, is strictly prohibited. Disciplinary action will be taken against those found infringing copyright.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Below are some readings that students might find useful for this class. A more comprehensive list will be made available in closer to the start of semester. This is not
meant to be an exhaustive list, but rather an indication of the breadth of topics that this course touches on.