

HP0201 – EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS FOR WORK & CAREERS IN SINGAPORE AY2016/2017 SEMESTER 1

COURSE INSTRUCTOR: Kamal Kant
Email: kkant@ntu.edu.sg
Division of Psychology,
School of Humanities & Social Sciences Building

LECTURES

TIMING – Mondays, 4.30 pm to 7.30 pm

VENUE – LT28

VERY IMPORATANT NOTE → As Monday, 12th September 2016, (Hari Raya Haji) [the sixth lecture date] is a public holiday, the sixth lecture will be rescheduled to another date, time and venue during the same week. You will be informed of the date, time and venue when the booking for the Lecture Theatre has been confirmed. [Tentatively, the replacement lecture will be on Tuesday, 13th September 2016 from 4.30 pm to 7.30 pm.] Any inconvenience is regretted. Thank you for your understanding.

INTRODUCTION

The key objective of the course is to help students to psychologically better manage their transition to the work world in the Singaporean employment landscape through a good understanding of the workings of employment relationships in the workplace. The course content helps students to understand the reality of the prevailing employment relations and how the employment relationship has evolved in Singapore since the middle of the 20th century. The course will also address theoretical concepts that support the employment relationship as well as the current state of employment relations in Singapore.

The course introduces the learner to the basic three perspectives of industrial relations (the forerunner of today's employment relations) viz. the unitarist, pluralist and radical approaches and its implications on the employment relationship in the workplace between the key players in the employment landscape (viz. government, management, unions, employees, and independent workers e.g. freelancers). The course also gives a brief introduction to concepts like soft and hard human resource management, the psychological aspects of employment relations, happiness and well-being at work and fairness and equity in the workplace.

The course facilitates the learner in understanding the roles played in the Singaporean context by government as a legislator, regulator and controller, and the trade unions (as the representative of the unionised employees) and employers in developing a harmonious work environment through tripartism. The course also addresses the emergence of the social partnership between government, employers and employees as the tripartism model is developed further to meet the challenges and changing circumstances and situations of the 21st century workplace.

Issues concerning the non-unionised employees, and professionals, managers and executives (PMEs) will also be addressed. There will also be coverage of the importance of manpower planning in harnessing the strengths of all employees and individuals in the workforce. The course will also address issues related to conflict management among the players, how productivity and performance are achieved as well as current issues faced in the Singaporean employment landscape including recent or new initiatives like raising of the retirement age, the Progressive Wage Model, WorkPro, better work safety, and Continuing Education & Training, Adapt and Grow, SkillsFuture and other initiatives.

The underlying theme of employment relationships will facilitate student taking the course to develop psychological ability to manage their career better on entry to the work world and develop practical skills to deal with the challenges in the employment landscape. It will also enable them to be better managers, leaders and professionals. Practical illustrations will be used during the learning process to enable students to get a good grasp of concepts, theories and principles.

Students will therefore have to read widely news articles, speeches and journal articles besides watching documentaries and videos on 'You Tube'. These are integral to the course as much of the course content pertaining to actions and initiatives in the past decade are not documented in a single text as these are work in progress.

KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

1. Enable students to acquire an understanding of employment relations and workings of the employment 'marketplace' in Singaporean context to better manage psychologically their career and work and prepare students to the vagaries and challenge of the employment 'market place' when they transition to the employment landscape.
2. Introduce students to the basic theory on relationships in workplace viz. industrial relations and employment relations.
3. Facilitate students in psychologically understanding current issues in the employment relations and the rationale and reasons for the nature of Singapore's employment landscape e.g. how issues like productivity and work performance, birth rates and the demographics and diversity of

the work force, the development of trade unions and government policies, an ageing workforce, the challenge faced by PMEs etc., have influenced employment relations and the 'employment market place' in Singapore.

CONDUCT OF COURSE & ASSESSMENT

The course will be conducted through attendance at 13 lecture sessions of 3 hours each. As there are no tutorials or seminars for the course, lectures will generally last approximately 2 hours with a break of 10 mins in-between and the remainder of the time available to students for group discussion among themselves or seek clarification/discussion with the Instructor on the content of the lecture, the assignment or issues related to employment relations.

Assessment will be by:

- A. 4,000 word researched essay based on a topic to be assigned [40% of the course grade]. The assignment is a paired assignment. **All solo efforts will be rejected.** *Zero marks will be given for solo effort submitted. It is therefore very important to attend the first three lectures to find a team partner.* It will be the responsibility of students to find their respective partners.
- B. Teams of three will be permitted by request, and approval by the Instructor, with a 50% increase in workload i.e. the team will be required to submit an essay not exceeding 6,000 word. [Such requests must be submitted before the end of the third lecture by email to the Instructor at kkant@ntu.edu.sg.] The **Assignment must be submitted by the end of the lecture on Monday, 10th October 2016.** Further details are provided in the accompanying Assignment instructions document.
- C. A written 2 hour examination [60% of the course grade] requiring essay type answers to four questions from a choice of six questions based on the course content requiring analytical and critical thinking, and awareness of current issues in the employment landscape. Each exam question will be in two parts viz. parts (a) and (b). Both parts must be answered for each question. **It is a closed-book exam.** [Past exam papers are available on NTU's Library's Past Exam website as a guide on the content and type of questions and style of exam paper. Students are very strongly urged to review past examination papers early to enable them to focus during lectures on key points.]

Students are strongly urged to read the PowerPoints and notes provided, extracts from newspapers, the prescribed text and prescribed readings besides reading speeches and viewing videos to have a better understanding of issues and arguments to craft effective answers to the exam questions as well as write an essay that address the assignment topic well.

The extracts from the newspapers, notes and prescribed readings are an integral part of the course. They provide support to the course delivered at lectures. The resources/readings included for each lecture are additional to facilitate better understanding of the content of the course. Though reading these readings are optional, students are nevertheless strongly encouraged to read them for a better grasp of the course content.

PRESCRIBED TEXT FOR COURSE - Tan, C. H. (2007), *Employment Relations in Singapore*. Singapore: Pearson Education South East Asia Pte. Ltd. The text is available from the bookshop on the campus.

References and Sources for Lectures - At the end of this document there is a list of references, besides the prescribed readings and resources, which were referred to in preparation of this course for the PowerPoints and Notes. Students would find them helpful to seek additional information or clarification of this course. Where website reference is not provided, the article is available from NTU Library, using the 'ONE Search' by stating the paper title. If you have any difficulty in seeking the reading, please approach the instructor after the lecture.

COURSE OUTLINE

LECTURE 1: Introduction to Course

- A general introduction to the course viz. the course content, explaining the requirements for completion of the assignments and brief outline about the written exam at the end of the course.
- Topics covered during the lecture will include a general introduction to employment relations and employment relations perspectives. A brief history of development of employment relations in Singapore would also be covered. This is essentially an introductory lecture to the course.

Suggested Readings

Benson, J. & Ying Zhu (2008), 'Trade unions in Asia' (Chapter 1) in J Benson & Ying Zhue (Editors), *Trade Unions in Asia*, Routledge, London & New York, pp. 1-10.

[NOTE: J Benson & Ying Zhu (Editors), *Trade Unions in Asia*, Routledge, London & New York is available as an e-book in the NTU Library.]

Gospel, H. (2008), 'Trade unions in theory and practice' (Chapter 2) in J Benson & Ying Zhue (Editors), *Trade Unions in Asia*, Routledge, London & New York, pp. 11-23.

[NOTE: J Benson & Ying Zhu (Editors), *Trade Unions in Asia*, Routledge, London & New York is available as an e-book in the NTU Library.]

Resources

de Silva, S. R. (1995): Elements in shaping of Asian Industrial Relations. International Labour Organisation: *ACT/EMP Publications*. Website: http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/actemp/downloads/publications/sr_sindus.pdf viewed on 16 December 2014.

LECTURE 2: Employment Relations, Industrial Relations & Human Resource Management in a Knowledge-based Economy

- Topics covered will introduce students to the integration of Human Resource Management, Industrial Relations and Labour Economics leading to the growth of Employment Relations in today's employment landscape especially in developed economies which increasingly employs knowledge workers and applies terms of engagement in non-traditional ways e.g. based on performance, output and/or outcomes.
- The lecture will also address the importance of understanding the national culture, employment practice, government policies and how they influence career and job opportunities and therefore psychological opportunities as perceived by job hunters and employees

Prescribed Readings

Please read the Notes posted with PowerPoints for Lecture 2 on NTULearn:
Kamal Kant (2013): Notes for HRM, IR & ER

LECTURE 3 – Modernisation of Work and the Environment for Employment Relations in Singapore

- Topics covered will include the shift from an entrepôt economy to manufacturing economy to a progressive modern economy which incorporates a business, research and knowledge hub in Singapore. Topics to be addressed include the Systems Approach to Employment Relations, The Dunlop Model, a brief history on the development of the Trade Union movement in Singapore & the symbiotic relationship between the National Trade Union Congress [NTUC] & the People's Action Party [PAP], the Tripartism Model in Singapore, equal opportunity & Tripartite Alliance for Fair Employment Practices [TAFEP]

Prescribed Reading:

Tan, C. H. (2007), *Employment Relations in Singapore*. Chapters 1-4. Singapore: Pearson Education South East Asia Pte. Ltd.

Chapter 1 – Concepts and Perspectives

Chapter 2 – Overview of Tripartite System

Chapter 3 – The Labour Market

Chapter 4 – Demand and Supply of Manpower

LECTURE 4 – The Role of Government and Employers in Employment Relations in Singapore.

- Topics covered will include distinguishing between the legislative, executive, and judiciary, and respective roles [legislator, regulator & controller]. The lecture will also cover the roles and objectives of various government and related agencies e.g. Central Provident Fund [CPF], Work Development Agency [WDA], Roles played by employers organisations and employer trade union [Singapore National Employers Federation] in employment relations.

Prescribed Reading:

Tan, C. H. (2007), *Employment Relations in Singapore*, Chapters 6-8. Singapore: Pearson Education South East Asia Pte. Ltd.

Chapter 6 – Employer Organisations

Chapter 7 – Government & Tripartism

Chapter 8 – Employment Laws

LECTURE 5 – The Role of Trade Unions In Employment Relations in Singapore.

- A brief history of the trade union movement in Singapore. Role played by National Trade Union Congress (NTUC) in employment relations. Workings of NTUC and affiliated organisations e.g. social enterprises, Employment & Employability Institute [e21i], Ong Teng Cheong Labour Leadership Institute (OTC Institute), etc.

Prescribed Reading:

Tan, C. H. (2007), *Employment Relations in Singapore*. Singapore: Pearson Education South East Asia Pte. Ltd.

Chapter 5 – Trade unions

Wong, Evelyn S. (2000): Partnership of trade unions in national development programmes and in promotion of labour mobility in Singapore. Discussion papers DP/117/2000. International Labour Organization (International Institute for Labour Studies), Geneva, Switzerland.

<http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/gurn/00157.pdf> viewed on 3rd August 2016.

Leggett, C 2008, 'Trade unions in Singapore' (Chapter 7) in J Benson & Ying Zhue (Editors), *Trade Unions in Asia*, Routledge, London & New York, pp. 102-20.

[**Note:** J Benson & Ying Zhue (Editors), *Trade Unions in Asia*, Routledge, London & New York is available as an e-book in the NTU Library.]

LECTURE 6 – No lecture, instead available for consultations.

- Individual and group consultation for students seeking clarifications about assignment, readings and course content delivered up to Lecture 5, etc. are welcome. [As there are no tutorials, seminars or provision for consultation, students are encouraged to use this session to seek clarification about the course content.]

LECTURE 7 – Employment Laws & Contract and the Psychological Contract

- Topics covered will include the legal framework that governs Singapore's employment relationship in the employment landscape.
- The Psychological Contract and the concept of employee well-being including importance of happiness, job satisfaction, Oldham's & Hackman's Job Characteristic Model, Warr's Vitamin Model, etc

Prescribed Reading:

Tan, C. H. (2007), *Employment Relations in Singapore*. Singapore: Pearson Education South East Asia Pte. Ltd.
Chapter 8 – Employment Laws

LECTURE 8 – The Evolution of Employment Relations in Singapore.

- Topics covered will include the changing context of employment relations from the application of the Dunlop Model, the Strategic Choice Model to ultimately the adoption of manpower planning strategies.
- Topic will include the three transformations are from colonial administration to regulated pluralism, 1960–67; from regulated pluralism to corporatism, 1968–78; and from corporatism to corporatist paternalism, 1979–86. The subsequent progression to manpower planning.

Suggested Reading

Leggett, C 2007, 'From industrial relations to manpower planning: the transformation of Singapore's industrial relations', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 642-64.

LECTURE 9 - National Wages Council and Wage Reform

- The role and work of the National Wages Council and Wage Reform in Singapore.

REMINDER [10th October 2016] → Hand in Assignment.

Prescribed Readings:

Tan, C. H. (2007), *Employment Relations in Singapore*. Singapore: Pearson Education South East Asia Pte. Ltd.
Chapter 10 – Wage Reform and Wage Negotiation.

LECTURE 10 – Productivity & Work Performance

- Topics covered will include Total Productivity Factor, Productivity & Productivity Movement in Singapore, Theories of Work Performance and Work Adjustment. The lecture will also emphasise the importance of adaptation and adjustment, besides managing expectation and recognising realities and limitations.

Prescribed Readings:

Tan, C. H. (2007), *Employment Relations in Singapore*. Chapters 11 to 13. Singapore: Pearson Education South East Asia Pte. Ltd.
Chapter 11 – Productivity and Quality Management
Chapter 12 – Skills and Employability
Chapter 13 – Impact of Recession and Sars

Resources

Sonnentag, S. & Frese, M. (2002): Performance concepts and performance theory in S. Sonnentag (Ed.), *Psychological management of individual performance: A handbook in the psychology of management in organizations*. pp. 3-25. Chichester: Wiley. Website: <http://www.staff.uni-giessen.de/~g661/Literatur/Articles/Sonnentag%20Frese%20Performconcepts%202002%20in%20SaSoPsych%20Man.pdf> viewed on 4th August 2015.

Neo Boon Siong (2013): Productivity, it's about mindset. Business Times, 7 May 2013. Website: http://www.nbs.ntu.edu.sg/News_Events/In_the_Media/Pages/Productivity_it%20E2%80%99s_about_mindset.aspx viewed on 4th August 2015.

Spreitzer, G & Porath, C. (2012): Creating Sustainable Performance. *Harvard Business Review*. January-February, 2012

LECTURE 11– Current Issues in Singapore Employment Relations

- Topics covered will include Continuing Education & Training, Assistance to Small- & Medium-sized Enterprise, Low Wages & Older Workers, Encouraging Women into the Work Force, Strengthen the Tripartite Relationship, Employment of Foreign Workers and Non-Singaporean

Executives & Professionals, Impact of Changing Profile of the Singaporean Workforce on Employment Opportunities.

Prescribed Reading

Tan, C. H. (2007), *Employment Relations in Singapore*. Singapore: Pearson Education South East Asia Pte. Ltd.
Chapter 14 – Current Issues and Challenges.

LECTURE 12 – The Equitability and Fairness of Employment Relations & the Reality of Employment Relations in Singapore

- Topics covered will include organisational fairness and justice, employee voice, involvement and participation in Singapore with mention of the Anglo-Saxon and European-German Systems, Singapore's unique approach to employment relationship through tripartism to achieve a harmonious employment relationship through economic growth, making strategic choices and manpower planning.

Suggested Readings

Cropanzano, R, Bowen, D. E., and Gilliland, S. W. (2007): The Management of Organizational Justice. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, Vol. 21, No 4. November, pp. 34-48

Resources

Li, Andrew & Cropanzano (2009): Do East Asians respond more/less strongly to organizational justice than North American. *Journal of Management Studies*, Volume 45, Issue 5, July, pp 787-805

LECTURE 13 – Conclusion.

- The Future of Employment Relations.
- Exam Matters and Consultation.

Resources

Ying Zhu & Benson, J. (2008): Trade Unions in Asia, Chapter 15 in J Benson & Ying Zhue (Editors), *Trade Unions in Asia*, Routledge, London & New York, pp. 256-266.

[NOTE: J Benson & Ying Zhu (Editors), *Trade Unions in Asia*, Routledge, London & New York is available as an e-book in the NTU Library.]