Course Description

Contemporary Singapore has been described by observers in many different ways. The country has been perceived by some as a model of economic success and multi-ethnic harmony. Others have criticized the high degree of state regulation in the nation-state. This course provides a sociological perspective on various aspects of Singapore society, from its historical formation to its post-independence social transformation. Issues to be covered include the question of national identity and culture. We examine whether Singaporeans possess a common identity and a culture to call their own. Matters concerning the exercise of political power and the maintenance of authority will also be analyzed. We explore methods of governance that shape society and individuals. Finally, we examine social divisions, for example, class, gender, and religious affiliations. Students will learn to develop the ‘sociological imagination’- the ability to relate personal problems of everyday life to the larger political, economic, social and cultural issues.

General Expectations

- Students are expected to have perused all the readings before each lecture. Required readings will be uploaded onto edveNTUre at least a week before the lecture.

- Films, newspaper articles, and other media content will also be used for this course. Students will occasionally be asked to provide critical comments on these materials.

- Hand in all assignments on time; late submissions are subjected to penalties unless accompanied by medical certificates or other legitimate proof of incapacity/incapacitation.

- Students are expected to demonstrate the ability to formulate and present rigorous arguments through written assignments.

- Please bring along your CLICKER for every class
Evaluation

- Term Paper: 30% of final grade
- Tutorial Participation and Class Attendance: 10% of final grade
- Class Presentation: 10% of final grade
- Final examination (consisting of essays): 50% of final grade

Course Text


Useful resources:


Course Schedule

**Week 1: The Sociological Imagination**

What is sociology and what do we mean by the *Sociological Imagination*? How do we go about studying Singapore sociologically?

Readings:


**Week 2: The Formation of Modern Singapore**

What is modernity? How did Singapore become the way it is today? Why do we remember certain portions of Singapore’s history and not others?

Readings:


**Week 3: Governing Singapore**

What do we mean by power and authority? How did certain individuals come to possess both? How is authority maintained and how has its exercise shaped Singapore and Singaporeans?

Readings:


**Week 4: The Singaporean Culture**

Who exactly are Singaporeans? How is the Singaporean identity related to the formation of the ‘nation-state’? What is this thing called culture? Is there such a thing as a unique Singapore culture? How is culture related to the question of race and ethnicity?

Readings:

- Chapter 4 - Kamaludeen Mohamed Nasir and Bryan Turner (2014) Conscription, the Singaporean Core and the Question of Loyalty pp. 51-63.


**Week 5: Social Stratification – Who Gets Ahead?**

What is class? How are Singaporeans divided into different socio-economic statuses? What has class to do with the political-economy of Singapore and other forms of social divisions?

Readings:


**Week 6: Screening of Documentaries**


- Film: *Gods Must be Hungry* (2005) produced by Oak 3 Films with Discovery Networks Asia.

**Week 7: Practicing Religion in Singapore**

What is religion? Are Singaporeans religious? What has religiosity to do with the modernization of Singapore? How do we account for the transformation in the patterns of religious practices?

Readings:


**Week 8: Gender and Family**

What is the difference between sex and gender? How are the roles of men and women in Singapore constructed and for what purposes? How is the family related to gender identities and responsibilities?

Readings:


**Week 9: Inter-Ethnic Relations - Minorities at Risk?**

What is ethnicity? How do we understand minorities sociologically? To what extent have education and state policies shaped the beliefs and conduct of Singaporeans?

Readings:


**Week 10: Consumerism - Between the Global and the Local**

What is consumerism? Why do Singaporeans consume certain commodities over others? What has consumption patterns to do with identity, social divisions and politics?

Readings:


**Week 11: Managing the Singaporean Space**

What is the Singaporean space and what does it entail? Who are the stakeholders in shaping these spaces? What are the considerations that go into determining the outcomes of these sites?


**Week 12: Civil Society in Singapore**

What do we mean by a civil society? Does Singapore possess one? What roles does civil society play and how is it related to the practices of the state?

Readings:


Final Exam (Time and Venue): To be announced

Academic Honesty

All members of the NTU community are responsible for upholding the values of academic integrity in all academic undertakings. At the beginning of the semester, students are required to submit a signed declaration guaranteeing that all graded and non-graded work throughout the semester is original and was created without assistance from others except where explicitly allowed by the professor. Students are expected to have fully read current academic policies regarding academic honesty at http://academicintegrity.ntu.edu.sg/policy/ before signing the declaration. No marks will be awarded until a signed declaration has been received by the professor. The declaration can be found at the end of the syllabus.