**Guidelines for History Students intending to Write an Honours Theses (HT) and Independent Study Modules, AY2020-21**

The Department of History encourages Fourth-year students to participate in a semester-long research project. It is during these projects that you will learn how historians conduct research and writing. Should you decide not to proceed with an HT, we encourage you to do at least an ISM, which represents a smaller but valuable work of research.

**Honours Thesis**

In many respects, the ability to conduct research and write an in-depth study of a topic is what separates a fourth-year student from an “Honours Student”. Depending on the topic, sources and approaches are available for a variety of themes and global topics. Topics are not limited to Singapore. To write a good Honours Thesis requires the consideration of a variety of approaches and sources. The key point is to pursue a topic in which you truly have an interest.

There are several steps that you can take to make this process more enjoyable (and easier).

* To have a clear idea of what doing an HT entails, please look carefully through the **HT Style-sheet** **AY2020-21 (attached**). You can also borrow copies of past History HTs to have an even better idea (they are in the Central Library). Also, see the appendix to these guidelines for a list of some topics from previous years.
* When considering an HT topic, think of several topics that interest you. Remember, you will be spending a considerable amount of time and energy (and resources) on your topic. If you are bored with it now, imagine the topic in six months. We encourage you to pursue topics that you have come across in the History modules or new ideas that you find fascinating and would like to explore further.
* Read up on the topic. Do a literature review by reading the most relevant books and articles. Is there anything in the “traditional narrative” that you believe needs further research? Why should anyone care?
* Conduct some preliminary research. Has anyone studied this topic before? If so, how have they approached it? Will you consider it in the same manner, or use the same approach? What sources are available?
* With your topic in mind, approach/email the lecturer that you would like most to work with as your supervisor. Your potential supervisor should preferably have expertise in the field that you intend to research on; e.g. if your topic is on Japan, approach a lecturer specializing on Japan, such as A/P Masuda.

Share with the lecturer your ideas and ask for his/her views as to the viability of your topic. If the lecturer considers the topic totally unworkable, you should then proceed to search for another topic, repeating the process. If the lecturer thinks that the proposal is workable but needs certain improvement, then work on those suggestions.

* Proceed to draft an HT proposal, incorporating the following information:
  + - Why you are interested in this topic.
    - Brief literature review on the topic and how you hope to contribute to the existing scholarship; include conceptual frameworks of analysis, if any come to mind.
    - The kind of sources and methodology that you intend to use.
    - Bibliography of approximately the 10 most relevant works on the topic.
    - Name of the lecturer who has agreed to be your supervisor.

The proposal does not have to be long or very detailed: two to four pages will do. Show it to the lecturer and ask if it is fine and whether he/she would be agreeable to be your supervisor. Once he/she agrees, you will be almost assured of being assigned to that lecturer as his/her supervisee.

If you are passionate about a topic, but are having difficulty finding a supervisor, please contact me and I will try to find a solution.

* Submit a softcopy of your **HT proposal** to me -
* writing your thesis in the first Semester – **by Friday, Week 6 of Sem 2 of last AY – 21 February 2020**
* writing your thesis in the second Semester – **by Friday, Week 6 of Sem 1 – 18 September 2020**

Your supervisor may change, as there needs to be a balance in workloads. I will try to assign your choice of supervisor, but sometimes there can be changes. Once you have been formally assigned a supervisor, you can consult them on matters pertaining to your HT research.

* Serious research and writing will be expected immediately after the end of your final examinations; use your vacation time then for HT work.
* In Week 4 or 5 of the next semester you will need to present your HT topic to a gathering of interested professors and students. These consist of 10 minutes of oral delivery followed by questions from the audience.
* Should you be interested in writing an HT, I strongly encourage you to explore, research, and work out your HT proposal before the semester begins. When the new semester begins, you will be very busy coping with your other modules. If you submit a proposal for a HT and later decide not to do it, that is fine.

If you have further questions or wish to see me, please let me know. I may conduct a brief meeting for students who wish to see me.

**Independent Study Module**

An Independent Study Module (ISM) is usually done as an alternative to an HT. You **cannot** do both. An ISM consists of a 5000-word research paper, which you research and write on your own. It is worth 5 MCs (or one module).

If you are interested in an ISM, you will need to follow a series of steps. The first step is to identify a research topic that you would like to work on. You should then write up a summary (1-2 pages) of the topic and why they would like to explore it, as well as a preliminary bibliography. You should then approach a supervisor. This should be done **before the end of the first week of the semester**.

Once the supervisor approves the topic – they may ask for revisions in the approach or subject – you should fill out the **ISM form** and submit it to Ms Kamariah in the main office of the Department of History. While this task must be done by -

**Friday,** **Week 1 of Semester 1 - 14 August 2020, 4.00pm or**

**Friday, Week 1 of Semester 2 - 15 January 2021, 4.00pm**

(depending on which Semester you are writing your ISM in) it is a good idea to start early so that you can conduct the research and reading for your ISM.

Once everything is approved, the “independent” in the module title comes into force. While most supervisors will require updates, the research, development and writing of the paper are up to you. The 5000-word paper is due by the end of the semester, and the supervisor will mark it.

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