

GES1009/GES1011: The Evolution of a Global City State

FASTrack 2025

Schedule: AM Session (9.30am-1.30pm, Singapore Time)

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday

Course Description

How old is Singapore? 55 years? 201 years? 700 years? 8500 years? In different senses, none of these are wrong. But more importantly, this question and the possible responses thereof make it important to ask what do we know of Singapore's pasts and reflect on the implications of each possibility. What is the significance of this island's pre-1965 and 1819/1824 histories? How much further back in time can we go? When did this island emerge? Is there evidence of pre-human activity? What is the earliest instance of human activity on this island? How do Singapore's pasts connect to larger global unfoldings? Does its connected pasts and present have anything to say about its future?

GES1011/GESS1009 will allow students to engage with all the questions posed above and more through a combination of fieldtrips, discussions and also lectures and readings.

GES1011/GESS1009 allows students an opportunity to inquire into Singaporean pasts deeply situated within larger global formations – geological, biological, human and structural. Instead of a narrow focus on human activity on a small collection of tiny islands immediately adjacent to the southernmost point of the Eurasian landmass, variously referred to as Temasik, Singapura, Syonan and Singapore in the last 700 years, an effort will be made to narrate the histories of these polities, their geological substratum, and its peoples as part of a much larger story.

This larger narrative is a human story that has been unfolding across the globe over the course of the last 100-200,000 years and a story of life on this planet that is more than 4 billion years old. How do we make sense of what is now $1^{\circ}09'N$ and $1^{\circ}29'N$; and $103^{\circ}38'E$ and $104^{\circ}06'E$'s pasts against the larger context of, among other things, continental formation, *homo sapien sapien* migration, trade, the establishment of economic and political settlements, imperialism, decolonisation, the Cold War, the New World Order and the knowledge economy? Students will be invited, with guidance, to ask questions, make salient observations, bring to bear their subjectivities and exercise their historical imaginations on Singaporean pasts as part of wider global unfoldings. In reflecting broadly and deeply on putative connections, their absences thereof, and their bearing on Singaporean pasts and antecedents, students will encounter different aspects of Singapore's geological, cultural, economic, and political history. Students should hope to emerge from this module with a broad, diverse, creative and concrete grasp of Singapore's histories set within larger geological, biological and human happenings across time and space.

Preclusion/ Prerequisite

Nil

Lecturer

Dr. Kelvin Lawrence

Senior Lecturer

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Course Assessment

Component	Weightage	Format	Deadlines
Midterm Test	20%	MCQs and Short Responses (Open Book)	15 July
Term Paper	35%	Written Assignment	24 July
Take Home Final Test	25%	Choose to respond to any 2 of 4 questions. Essay format	questions will be released at 1300hrs Singapore Standard Time on 22 July 2025 with a 24hr turnaround
Class Participation (online forum and in-class)	20%	Tutorial participation	throughout the semester
Face-to-face classes	All classes will be held in person on campus with the exception of the three field trips which will be on-site. Transportation for the latter will be provided.		

1. Marks awarded for class participation during lessons (20%)
2. Term Paper (1000-1200 words) (35%): Students will be required to write one term paper for this module. Students will e-submit the term paper on 24 July 2022. The seminar for Day 8 of this course will be dedicated to helping students with all aspects of the term paper. Additionally, optional individual consultation slots can also be organised
3. Midterm Test: Open book (20%)

Open Book test consisting of mcqs and short response questions

4. Take Home Final Test: Open book e-test (25%)

Students respond to 2 (two) of 4 (four) questions. Essay Format

Course Topics

Week	Day	Topic	Session Activities
1	1	Part 1: an island ... Climate change: How Singapore is saving its shores from rising sea levels The Straits Times	Lecture

		<p>Lee Hsien Loong, “National Education”, <i>Speech by the Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore at the launch of National Education on Saturday 17 May 1997 at TCS TV Theatre at 9.30 AM.</i> (Workbin)</p> <p>Part 2: the World by 1250; and Temasek?</p> <p>Kwa Chong Guan, “Maritime Silk Road: A History of an Idea”, <i>Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre Working Paper Series</i>, No: 23 (October 2016), pp. 1-14 (e-article)</p> <p>Part 3: trade and Temasek Singapura</p> <p>John Miksic, <i>Singapore and the Silk Road of the Sea</i> (Singapore: NUS Press, 2013), pp. 145-55. (e-book)</p> <p><i>Sejarah Melayu, or, Malay Annals: An Annotated Translation by C. C. Brown; with a new introduction by R. Roolvink.</i> (Kuala Lumpur: O.U.P., 1970), pp. 13-30. (Canvas)</p>	
2	1	<p>Part 1: exploration and emptiness?</p> <p>Kwa Chong Guan, Derek Heng, and Tan Tai Yong, <i>Singapore: A 700-Year History: From Early Emporium to World City</i> (Singapore: National Archives of Singapore, 2009), pp. 53-61, 72-81. (Canvas)</p> <p>Part 2: Discussion: Making Sense of the Past</p> <p>Marwick, Arthur. “Justifications and Definitions” in <i>The Nature of History</i> (Macmillan, 1989), pp. 1-27. (Canvas)</p> <p>Thomas Nagel, <i>The View from Nowhere</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 3-12. (Workbin)</p>	Lecture and Discussion
	2	<p>Part 1: Imperial Global Emporium</p> <p>Stephen Dobbs, “The Singapore River/Port in a Global Context” in Derek Heng and Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied, editors,</p>	Lecture and Field Trip

		<p><i>Singapore in Global History</i> (Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2011), pp. 51-65. (e-book)</p> <p>Abdullah Bin Abdul Kadir & Annabel Teh Gallop Cerita kapal asap, <i>Indonesia Circle</i>. School of Oriental & African Studies. Newsletter, 17:47-48 (1989), pp. 3-18. (e-article)</p> <p>Part 2: Visit to Fort Canning Hill and National Museum</p> <p>This tutorial will consist of a fieldtrip to early sites related to the history of Singapura.</p>	
3		<p>Part 1: the Empire writes back ...</p> <p>Abdullah Munshi, <i>The Hikayat Abdullah</i>, tr. by A.H. Hill (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 29-56, 187-196. ((Canvas)- two different files)</p> <p>Amin Sweeney, "A Man of Bananas and Thorns" in <i>Indonesia and the Malay World</i> 34,100 (2006), pp. 223-245. (e-article)</p> <p>Part 2: Global Knowledge</p> <p>Keith Watson, "Rulers and Ruled: Racial Perceptions, Curriculum and schooling in colonial Malaya and Singapore" in J.A. Mangan, editor, <i>The Imperial Curriculum: Racial Images and Education in the British Colonial Experience</i>, Routledge, Oxford and New York, 2012, pp.147-174. (e-book)</p> <p>Charles Hirschmann, "The Making of Race in Colonial Malaya: Political Economy and Racial Ideology" in <i>Sociological Forum</i> 1, 2 (1986), pp. 330-361. (e-article)</p> <p>Part 3: Discussion: Race in post-colonial Singapore</p> <p>Mark R. Frost, "An Unsettled Majority: Immigration and the Racial 'Balance' in Multicultural Singapore" in <i>Journal of</i></p>	Lecture and Discussion

		<i>Ethnic and Migration Studies</i> , 47, 16 (2020), pp. 3729-3751. (e-article)	
	4	<p>Part 1: Imperial Change</p> <p>Paul Kratoska, "Introduction" in Paul Kratoska, editor, <i>Malaya and Singapore during the Japanese Occupation</i> (Singapore: Department of History, National University of Singapore, 1995). (Canvas)</p> <p>Henry P. Frei, "Japan Remembers the Malaya Campaign" in Paul Kratoska, editor, <i>Malaya and Singapore during the Japanese Occupation</i> (Singapore: Department of History, National University of Singapore, 1995). (Canvas)</p> <p>Part 2: Discussion: Imperialism</p>	Lecture and Discussion
3	1	<p>Part 1: Mid-Term Test</p> <p>Part 2: Visit to Indian Heritage Centre and Old Ford Factory</p>	Test and Field Trip
	2	<p>Part 1: Towards 'independence' amidst global division</p> <p>S.R. Joey Long, "Bringing the International and Transnational back in: Singapore, Decolonisation and the Cold War" in Derek Heng and Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljuneid, editors, <i>Singapore in Global History</i> (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), pp.215-23, 231-2. (e-book)</p> <p>Visit to and Singapore City Gallery and Civil Defence Heritage Gallery</p>	Lecture and Field Trip
	3	<p>Part 1: Commenting on Representations of the Past</p> <p>This session is akin to a workshop on how students can meaningfully approach the</p>	Discussion and Lecture

		<p>writing of their draft term paper assignment (1000-1200 words):</p> <p><i>Guidance for Term papers</i></p> <p>Write a letter offering feedback to the director of ... (the heritage site you visited)</p> <p>Like virtually any letter offering feedback, you are free to choose its contents. Conventionally, such letters choose to do one or any of the following: make meaningful commendations, proposals, recommendations and offer substantive criticism. Be reminded that such letters usually seek to be well-received and acted upon thereby often making it an exercise in persuasion.</p> <p>In order to support the contents of your letter, it must reflect an awareness of the aims and aspirations of the centre/institution/site concerned.</p> <p>Depending on the site you chose to visit, your report may also offer comments on the degree to which this centre/institution has globally-inflected its narrative of an aspect of Singapore's (his)story.</p> <p>Students should prepare for this discussion by preparing a brief description of their draft letters to be discuss with their peers during this tutorial.</p> <p>Part 2: Singapore Inc</p> <p>Ravi Menon, <i>An economic history of Singapore – 1965–2065</i></p> <p>(Keynote address Managing Director of the Monetary Authority of Singapore, at the Singapore Economic Review Conference 2015, Singapore, 5 August 2015.) (Workbin)</p> <p>Teo You Yenn, <i>This is what inequality looks like</i> (Singapore: Ethos Books, 2018) (Workbin)</p>	
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	4	<p>Part 1: Tomorrow's Here Today?</p> <p>Eugene Dairianathan and Chee-Hoo Lum, "Soundscapes of Nation(alism): Perspectives from Singapore" in Alexandra Kertz-Weizel, editor, <i>Patriotism and Nationalism in Music Education</i> (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), Chapter 7 (follow (LumiNUS) link and then go to Chapter 7; select download section; the page numbers downloaded will be pp. 94-106.) (e-book)</p> <p>Listen to the following National Day Songs (On Youtube):</p> <p>1984 <i>Stand up for Singapore</i></p> <p>1986 <i>Count on me, Singapore</i></p> <p>1987 <i>We are Singapore</i></p> <p>1998 <i>Home</i></p> <p>2006 <i>My island home</i></p> <p>2016 <i>Tomorrow's here today</i></p> <p>Part 2: Discussion: In Lieu of a Conclusion</p> <p>Selections from Alfian Saat, <i>One Fierce Hour</i> (Singapore: Landmark, 1998) (Canvas)</p> <p>Brenda S. A. Yeoh, "Cosmopolitanism and its Exclusions in Singapore" <i>Urban Studies</i>, Vol. 41, No. 12, 2431–2445 (2004) (Workbin)</p>	Lecture and Discussion

Reading List

Beyond the specific readings encountered in this module, the following materials can help those with no background in Singapore's history to redress such deficiencies:

Mark Frost and Yu-Mei Balasingam Chow, *Singapore: A Biography* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2006)

C.M. Turnbull, *A History of Singapore* (Kuala Lumpur: OUP, 1977)

Ernest C.T. Chew and Edwin Lee, editors, *A history of Singapore* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1991)

Edwin Lee, *Singapore: the unexpected nation* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2008).

Kwa Chong Guan, Derek Heng, and Tan Tai Yong, *Singapore: A 700-Year History: From Early Emporium to World City* (Singapore: National Archives of Singapore, 2009)

The History of Singapore (video recording). Produced by Lion Television for Discovery Networks Asia (Singapore: Discovery Communications, 2006)

For students looking for a greater historiographical challenge, you can start with:

N. Tarling, editor, *Studying Singapore's past: C.M. Turnbull and the history of modern Singapore* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012)

More specifically, please make reference to Karl Hack's piece (Chapter 2) on framing Singapore's history.

Following through on the footnotes and bibliographies of all materials listed above will also lead you on a journey through the historiographical thicket.