

## **GESS1009/GES1011: The Evolution of a Global City-State**

**FASStrack 2026**

**Schedule: AM Session (10am-1pm, Singapore Time)**

**Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday**

### **Course Description**

Do you want to spend a good amount of your curriculum time outside the classroom to travel locally? And then go on to learn to grow your field trip observations and experiences into a term paper? If yes, then GES1011/GESS1009 will allow you to travel and learn at the same time!

This class allows you to spend time outside the classroom to engage with all the questions posed below and more through a combination of fieldtrips, discussions, lectures, writing workshops and readings.

Have you ever asked yourself, how old is Singapore? 60 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 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, hislk@nus.edu.sg

### Course Assessment

Component	Weightage	Format	Deadlines
Midterm Test	20%	MCQs and Short Responses (Open Book)	10 July
Term Paper	40%	Written Assignment	22 July
Take Home Final Test	20%	Choose to respond to any 2 of 6 questions. Essay format	questions will be released at 1300hrs Singapore Standard Time on 23 July 2026 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.		

- Midterm Test (20%): In class test with MCQs and short response questions (open book)
- Term Paper (40%): Write a letter of feedback to a heritage centre/museum that we have visited (1000 words). Students will e-submit the term paper on 23 July 2026. The seminar for Day 10 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.
- Take Home Test (20%): Take home test with 24 hr turnaround. Students choose to respond to any 2 of 6 questions using an essay format. There is no minimum or maximum requirement prescribed word length. (open book)
- Class Participation (20%): There will be many opportunities for students to discuss issues raised during class. There will also be an online forum open on Canvas for students to chime in with their thoughts and questions. All such activity will contribute to this participation grade.

## Course Topics

Week	Day	Topic	Session Activities
1	1	Part 1: an island ...  Part 2: the World by 1250; and Temasek?	Lecture  Lecture
	2	Part 1: trade and Temasek Singapura  Part 2: Discussion: Making Sense of the Past	Lecture  Tutorial
	3	Part 1: exploration and emptiness?  Part 2: Visit to Fort Canning Hill and National Museum	Lecture  Fieldtrip
	4	Part 1: Imperial Global Emporium  Part 2: the Empire writes back ...	Lecture  Lecture
2	1	Part 1: Global Knowledge  Part 2: Discussion: Race in post-colonial Singapore	Lecture  Tutorial
	2	Part 1: Imperial Change  Part 2: Discussion: Imperialism	Lecture  Tutorial
	3	Visit to Indian Heritage Centre and Old Ford Factory	Fieldtrip
	4	Part 1: Mid-Term Test  Part 2: Towards 'independence' amidst global division	Test  Lecture
3	1	Visit to and Singapore City Gallery and Civil Defence Heritage Gallery	Fieldtrip

	2	Commenting on Representations of the Past	Paper Writing Workshop
	3	Singapore Inc.	Lecture and Discussion
	4	Part 1: Tomorrow's Here Today?  Part 2: Discussion: In Lieu of a Conclusion	Lecture  Tutorial