LAS 199: Diversity and Integration in Singapore


Tentative Program

Special Topic: Language Diversity and Multiculturalism

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on accommodation as one of the many faces of globalization and the rich and challenging consequences of cultures in contact. Specifically, we will explore multiculturalism and multilingualism as they operate in a relatively small geographic space, the city-state of Singapore. We will explore the motivations behind migration of cultures, the challenges of cultural diversity, and the management of multiculturalism primarily using Singapore as our case study, but also reflecting on the United States’ experience as a point of reference. We will learn how Singapore offers an efficient model of managing local diversity, even as it faces pressures of global homogeny of language and culture.

Participants will observe, study, and experience the cultural and linguistic practices of three Asian cultures: the Chinese, the Malay and Indian in Singapore, to better understand how they maintain their ethnic distinctiveness in food, dress, religious practices and other day-to-day practices, yet manage their differences through the development of a shared national, and uniquely Singaporean, identity. We will discover how their rich history, physical location, and drive to excel have made Singapore a global player in various sectors, including trade, finance and education.

Our group will be hosted by the National University of Singapore (NUS), where we will stay in dorms, have access to university resources like the computer labs and sports facilities, and convene for in-class lectures and discussions. Generally we will have class in the morning and do our program excursions in the afternoon. There will be free mornings and afternoons to ensure participants explore their own personal interests in Singapore.

And there is much to see! Explore the Singapore Tourist Board website at: http://www.visitsingapore.com/publish/stbportal/en/home.html to get a sense of what this country has to offer. Some participants choose to explore the numerous parks to discover the diverse tropical vegetation and natural highlights on the island. Others focus on spending time in the ethnic neighborhoods to get to know the local communities, their stores, restaurants and places of worship. Still others head downtown to the museums and financial and shopping districts. Participants always remark that there is a wide range of activities to pursue and highly value the chance to get to know three distinct sets of Asian cultures within a small geographic space and relatively short amount of time.

PLAN: The tentative plan for the course abroad is as follows.

On-campus meetings during 2nd 8 weeks term: Dates and times TBA

Meeting #1 What is globalization?
Meeting #2 Multiculturalism as a consequence of globalization
Motivations for migration
- Issues of diversity and integration
- The U.S. experience
- Introduction to the Singapore experience

#3, possibly 4
- Historical sketch of Singapore with focus on migration of Chinese, Indians and Malay
- Diversity and integration in Singapore
- Singapore Today: A global player

#4, possibly 5
- Logistics of program abroad

On-site program: Outline of Topics

Days 1-2: Orientation to Singapore and NUS; history of Singapore’s multiculturalism
Days 3-4: Focus on Malay Experience
Days 5-6: Focus on Chinese Experience
Days 7-8: Focus on Tamil /Indian Experience
Days 9-10: Managing multiculturalism in Singapore; compare to US experience; global culture
Days 11-12: Managing multilingualism in Singapore; Singaporean English; language policy; compare to US experience; Global English issues
Days 13-14: Singaporean Identity: Perspectives and Retrospectives; Singapore as a global player

COURSE EVALUATION

Participation: class, web-based discussions and web project 30%
Four 2-page Thought Papers 40%
Final Project 30%

Participation:
You are expected to attend and participate actively in every class and program excursion. You will also be working in groups to develop a website for the class that represents what you are learning and experiencing on the program. Each group of 2-4 students will select or be assigned one area of the site to complete. Students are to make observations, ask questions of and dialogue with Singaporeans and with each other to develop their section. You are encouraged to use images, pdf files, and web links to support your ideas. Each group will design their site, collect information through excursions and discussions, write and edit the information they want to present, and eventually submit it to the instructor for posting. There is likely to be a web-based discussion board to enhance communication among participants.

Thought Paper Topics
Participants will synthesize their observations/understanding from their readings, site excursions, class discussions, and other experiences into Singaporean cultures. These papers will also be an opportunity to explore comparisons between the Singaporean and US experiences. 2 pages each, typed, DS.

Final Project
A 10 to 12-page paper (typed, DS) on the operation of multilingualism and/or multiculturalism in Singapore: choose any aspect of multiculturalism/multilingualism (e.g., language policy/planning; language in education policy; language and race) Paper will be due approximately 1 week after returning from Singapore.
**Some options for Free-time:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience Singapore's Natural World</th>
<th>Know Singapore’s History and Culture</th>
<th>Other fun activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Botanic Gardens</td>
<td>Singapore Art Museum</td>
<td>Singapore Science Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Orchid Gardens</td>
<td>Asian Civilization Museum</td>
<td>Discovery Center</td>
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<td>Hike in Bukit Timah</td>
<td>Singapore History Museum</td>
<td>Shopping along Orchard Road</td>
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<td>Zoological Park</td>
<td>Tour of Porcelain Factory, Ming</td>
<td>Visit Sentosa Island</td>
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<td>East Coast Park</td>
<td>Village</td>
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<td>Kayak or bike in Pasir Ris Park</td>
<td>Feng Shui Tour</td>
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<td>Jurong BirdPark: Enjoy breakfast with the birds.</td>
<td>Arab St. and other ethnic neighborhoods</td>
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<td>Explore Pulau Ubin</td>
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For more information on Singapore, we encourage you to visit the following sites:

Dept. of State Country Background Notes: [http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2798.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2798.htm)