

Asia Now!

National University of Singapore
28 June ? 16 July 2010

Students must arrive by: Sunday 27 June 2010

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Course Description

Students will participate in one of two streams: Urban Asia or Cyber Asia

Urban Asia

Urban Asia is a critical survey of Asian urbanism, combining insights from history, sociology, anthropology, architectural theory & criticism, cultural studies, and other urban-related disciplines. Asia's cities are among the largest and most vibrant in the world. They also face problems and challenges which, in the process of resolution, will likely create new urban forms with global consequences. The class will consider the Asian City as a local, regional, and global phenomenon, and discuss such sites as Mumbai, Shanghai, Tokyo, Bangkok, and Jakarta, while paying attention to smaller cities and the process of urbanization itself. Core theories will be introduced and applied, while at the same time considering Asian cities ?on their own ground?.

A unique strength of the class will be its close engagement with Singapore. Students will become intimately acquainted with the host city through regular local field/study trips linked to classroom discussions, and be introduced to some of Singapore's key designers and planners. While there is no ?typical? Asian city, Singapore offers a uniquely accessible model for those interested in how a large, tropical, and complex urban

center has both evolved over time, and sustains itself in a challenging physical and political environment. Singapore is an excellent venue for considering such themes as the transition of colonial cities to post-colonial and global-city status; environmental vulnerability and sustainability; multi-ethnic urbanism and migration; urban tourism; rich cities within developing regions; state and urban security issues; and a host of other topics. Singapore is also in the center of a regional urban cluster that includes Jakarta, Manila, Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City, Kuala Lumpur and other large cities which will be discussed in the class, and which students can easily and cheaply access on their own, either for weekend visits or more extended trips before and after the three-week summer school.

As an introduction to Asian urbanism, the class is particularly designed for students with an interest in the region, but who are not necessarily Asian specialists (even if they come from one of IARU's Asian partner universities).

Students who are (or are intending) to major in some aspect of urban studies, and who want an intensive grounding in Asian manifestations of global phenomenon, will especially profit from this class, as will those who intend to return to Asia for more in-depth study.

Cyber Asia

Cyber Asia specialization takes a close look at social media in Asia. Media such as blogs, social networking, audio-visual sharing, podcasts, gaming, etc. mark a major transformation in the way everyday life is organized. Multiple platforms, technologies and user group dynamics have helped shape such media into a complex domain of human interaction. This phenomenon is true around the world, and certainly nowhere more so than in Asia. Asian societies such as South Korea, Japan, Singapore, and increasingly China and India are among the most 'wired' (or wireless) in the world. Moreover, the politics of social media have intersected with the politics of daily life more dramatically in Asia than in most other parts of the world. Theorists, critics, and intelligent users of media must come to terms with 'cyber-Asia' in order to engage in any contemporary discussion of global trends or processes.

The class will particularly explore theories and perspectives on social media which grow out of or impact Asian societies. As students are increasingly engaging with new media technologies, social networking experiences and arts and culture of the new cyber age, this class will help them locate these developments within a broad theoretical framework. It will not only explore the effect these technologies are having in Asia, but the greater impact Asia is having on other regions (and regions within Asia are having on each other) through inter-active media. The seminar-style class will grapple with theories and case studies describing rapid changes in social relations and individual experiences. A critical exposition of basic concepts and theories of social media will empower students to understand and analyze everyday digital experience with reflection and awareness.

Target Audience

The course particularly targets students with some interest in Asia, but not necessarily deep experience in the region. No prior background in Asia, Asian Studies, or Asian languages is necessary. The course will be entirely conducted in English, which is the official language of instruction at the National University of Singapore.

Urban Asia

For the Urban Asia specialisation, students taking courses at their home universities in fields such as urban history, sociology, geography, urban anthropology, urban and regional planning, architecture, cultural studies, environmental studies/environmental engineering, can all profit from this class.

Cyber Asia

For students taking courses at their home universities in fields such as sociology, anthropology, communication or media studies, cultural studies, and computer science, Cyber Asia can be a useful class for them.

The course is pitched to students in their second or third years of study in a four-year undergraduate

curriculum, though we will accept undergraduates at any level. There are no prerequisites.

Delivery Method

This will be a three-week course with twelve lecture/seminars plus three field-trips. Lecture/seminars will take place over four mornings each week (MTThF) and run for three hours each. This will leave Wednesday of each week entirely free, as well as weekends and most afternoons. There will be a class field-trip within Singapore on one afternoon each week related to that week's lesson.

Each lecture/seminar session will be literally split into a lecture (usually one hour) introducing a theme, followed by two hours of class discussion. The small class sizes should facilitate lively exchanges. Occasional lecture and/or discussion slots will be given to guest speakers from urban-related disciplines, though the majority of lectures will be given by the class chair and regular NUS faculty.

Students will be strongly encouraged to investigate aspects of Singapore in their off-hours, and independent field-work will be counted toward assessment (see below).

The field project will involve students going to public places around Singapore and interviewing local people on their new media usage, the benefits, challenges and concerns they might have about such use. Students will visit areas where ethnic groups gather: e.g. Little India for the South Asians, Golden Landmark for the Thais, Peninsula Plaza for those from Myanmar, and Lucky Plaza for Filipinos. They will also visit Hawker Centers and shopping centers in the heartland, so they can observe how the locals use new media (e.g. observe how older people in Hawker Centers or young people in popular hangout places use new media). They can also visit Sim Lim Square and observe who buys what kind of media.

Going into Singapore to do field work allows students to interact with locals and get a feel for the Singaporean culture. The field work also allows the students from Urban Asia and Cyber Asia do their data gathering together, which would give them the opportunity to interact with each other.

The total number of contact hours in this class, excluding the field trips, will be 36. Inclusive of the field trips it will be in the range of 48-50.

There will also be three 'Asian Conversations' scheduled for after-hours, in which students in this and the other concurrently-running IARU summer school class (Cyber Asia) will come together to engage a distinguished speaker.

Assessment

All students will be assessed on individual efforts and contributions, based on the following:

1. Seminar participation: 30%
2. Seminar presentation: 15%
3. Critical journal: 20%
4. Field work and final report on findings: 35%

Students will have latitude in choosing research topics of their choice, and will be provided sufficient resources to carry out such research.

Accommodation

Prince George's Park Residences (PGPR) is located Prince George's Park Road, off South Buona Vista road, and next to King Edward VII Hall. This residential complex offers 2854 single rooms.

The single rooms are grouped into clusters of 15 and offer its residents an apartment lifestyle. The 15 residents in each cluster are entrusted with collective responsibility for their shared facilities. Each cluster has its own kitchen, dining area, and bathroom facilities. The cluster lifestyle exposes students to independent living and also offers excellent opportunities for close interaction. 10% of the single rooms (Type A) are

air-conditioned, with attached bathrooms, 20% of these are Type B, (single room with washbasin), and remaining 70% are standard Type C rooms.

Points for personal telephone, television and computer linkage to the university's network and the Internet, are provided in every room.

PGPR also houses a lecture theatre, seminar rooms, a multi-purpose hall, gymnasium, basketball and tennis courts, a jogging track, an exercise station, mini-supermarket, four food outlets and other service outlets. Distributed throughout the whole residence, are air-conditioned lounges, television rooms, meetings and reading rooms. PGPR is conveniently linked to the Faculties and other key facilities on campus via a shuttle service. A typical Type A room has a floor area of approximately 13.0 square metres. The air-conditioned room is furnished with an en-suite toilet, a shower, a washbasin, and a ceiling fan.

The single bed provides a comfortable night's rest while the writing table, drawers and bookshelves allows students to work without interruption. Students will also find little features such as a towel rack, a pin-up board, and a full-height wardrobe to make their stay more comfortable. The room rate also includes the use of a fully equipped kitchen that is centrally located on the same level. Cooking utensils however are not provided.

Costs (Singapore Dollars)

Tuition fee: Waived for all students

Miscellaneous compulsory fees for enrolled students (Summer term at NUS): SGD \$69.13 (Subject to change)

Accommodation: SGD \$500 (SGD \$25 per night)

Field-trip costs: NA

A number of field trips will be open to GSP students

Estimated visa cost: SGD \$40

Estimated living expenses: SGD \$350 to \$480

Meals ? weekly on-campus \$90?\$120 (Off campus will be higher)

Transportation (public buses and trains ? 3 weeks) \$80?\$120

This estimate does not include other personal expenses such as groceries, entertainment, toiletries etc.

Further Information

For further information about this course, visit www.fas.nus.edu.sg/asianow.

THE BASICS:

Tuition: Waived

Accommodation costs: SGD \$500 (\$25 per night)

Field-trip costs: NA

Target audience:

- Students with some interest in Asia, but not necessarily deep experience in the region (No prior background in Asia, Asian Studies, or Asian languages is necessary).
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<http://www.iaruni.org/gsp/courses/nus/01/profile>