



*School of Social Sciences 2011-2012 Term II*

## **CAPSTONE SEMINAR**

### **SMU COURSE CODE SSCS 400, G1**

*Tuesdays 3:30-6:45pm, Seminar Room 5-2*

*Bridget Welsh, Ph.D.*

*Associate Professor of Political Science*

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*Course website: [www.bridgetwelsh.com](http://www.bridgetwelsh.com)*

*Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10:30-12noon, 2-3pm*

#### **TEACHING ASSISTANT**

Muhammad Rahmat Bin Sulaiman

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#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

*This course provides an introduction to interdisciplinary research. Students have already engaged several disciplines within the social sciences and humanities during their studies at SMU. In this course they will combine different approaches and apply their accumulated knowledge to social issues and problems. This term the seminars are organized around the theme "The Other Side: Marginalization, Difference and Alternatives". Students will be exposed to alternative views and be allowed to engage a variety of perspectives and issues. Among the issues explored are communities/political actors/views that are marginalized, alternative approaches to social issues such as healthcare, the environment and economic policy, and different political perspectives on policy and society. Speakers include practitioners, activists, policy-makers and politicians. The focus of the discussions is on issues in Singapore and neighboring countries, particularly Malaysia.*

#### **COURSE GOALS**

*The aim of this series is to encourage an interdisciplinary approach to contemporary problems and to allow for a better understanding of the "added value" of interdisciplinary and alternative approaches toward contributing to knowledge. Students will develop more integrative analytical tools to understand diversity and contemporary global problems, as well as learn how to engage different/non-traditional views. The course will deepen the ability of students to interpret complex issues, understand the diverse perspectives of stakeholders and develop tools to address real world challenges. Students will develop insights into issues and skills that will help them in any career and in becoming more empowered and informed citizens.*

#### **Specific Learning Objectives**

*By the end of this course, students will be able to:*

- *Understand a Broader Range of Concepts, Theories and Approaches in the Social Sciences*
- *Appreciate the Diversity of Inter-disciplinary Perspectives and Outlooks on Contemporary Issues*
- *Frame Problems from Interdisciplinary Perspectives*
- *Construct and Present their Own Interpretations of Contemporary Issues*
- *Recognize the Diversity of Views on Issues of Marginalization, Difference and Alternatives*

- *Work More Effectively in an Interdisciplinary Group Dynamic*

## ASSESSMENT METHODS

*This course is taught on a pass fail basis. There is no final examination.*

Class Participation:	20%
In-Class Learning Assignments	10%
Two Commentary Analyses	40%
Group Oral Presentation:	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

*a) **Class Attendance & Participation** (20% of total grade) Students are expected to read the recommended reading before class to participate in discussion. Please note that more than **TWO** absences of any class session during the term will result in the failure of the class participation grade. Absences will only be excused for a serious medical illness involving the student or her/his family. Regular patterns of tardiness will also negatively affect a student's performance in class participation. Class participation will be assessed based on the quality of participation in the class, with higher marks given to students who relate their discipline to the seminar topic and express individual ideas articulately and succinctly. Students are not evaluated on the volume that they say, but the degree to which their participation adds value to the discussion. Students are asked to turn their cell phones and PDAs on silent mode and not use them during class time. Laptops are to be used for note-taking, not chatting and emailing during class time. During the term when invited speakers are attending, students are asked to not bring food into class. Student distractions that take away from the overall class learning environment are strongly discouraged and will be assessed in class participation performance.*

*b) **In-Class Learning Assignments** (10% of total grade), As part of the learning process, students will be asked to participate in a series of in-class simulations and problem-solving tasks. These will draw on the requests of speakers. Students will be assessed on the quality of participation in these short assignments.*

*c) **Commentary Analyses-** (40% of total grade) Students are asked to submit **TWO** opinion pieces that make clear arguments and engage the chosen topic of the seminar. The commentaries should be succinct and accessible, no more than 800 words (strictly enforced). Students are required to analytically engage the material and draw from their own discipline and personal experience/knowledge in the analysis. Assignments will be assessed on individuality, writing, evidence, clarity and analysis. The first commentary must be submitted on February 16<sup>th</sup> and the second on March 29<sup>th</sup> through LMS and email to the professor and the TA. All assignments must also simultaneously be processed through TURNITIN accessible on LMS. Students must also turn in a hard copy to the professor by 5pm on the due date in her inbox directly in front of the SOSS Administrative Office on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor. No late assignments will be accepted.*

*d) **Group Oral Presentation** (30% of the total grade). Students working in groups of up to 5 people will be asked to present a topic of their choice that engages the theme of the course, "The Other Side: Marginalization, Difference and Alternatives." Students will sign up in the first two weeks of class on LMS. Groups should comprise at least two members from different disciplines. All of the presentations should be no more than 10 minutes (with five additional minutes for questions), include a two-page written synopsis on the topic and findings. If the presentation includes a power point presentation, it should be forwarded to the TA and professor at least one hour before the presentation. All presentations will take place during class in Week 13. Strict time limits will be imposed. The groups will be selected on a first come, first chosen basis. Students are required to meet with the professor during the term to discuss their group presentation. Students will be assessed on their ability to present material clearly and succinctly, the quality of their synopsis as well as their engagement with interdisciplinary approaches of the course theme.*

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

*Students are expected to uphold high standards of academic integrity. Plagiarism, cheating and disrespect for diversity of views in the classroom are not acceptable. In the beginning of term, the professor will review different guidelines for research and help familiarize students with the techniques needed for report preparation. Throughout the course, a classroom environment of acceptance, respect and tolerance will be reinforced. Specific task-oriented assignments have been selected to reduce the temptation for students to rely on the ideas of others and tap directly into an individual student's abilities. All written assignments must be turned in through TURNITIN accessible through LMS.*

*SMU's policy on academic integrity states that all acts of academic dishonesty (including, but not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, facilitation of acts of academic dishonesty by others, unauthorized possession of exam questions, or tampering with the academic work of other students) are serious offences. All work (whether oral or written) submitted for purposes of assessment must be the student's own work. Penalties for violation of the policy range from zero marks for the component assessment to expulsion, depending on the nature of the offense.*

*When in doubt, students should consult the instructors of the course before the assignment is due. Details on the SMU Code of Academic Integrity may be accessed at <http://www.smuscd.org/resources.html>.*

## **INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND EXPECTATIONS**

*The assignments in this course develop knowledge and skills, with the aim of making students more confident and better prepared to address real world problems they will face. Simultaneously, they introduce students to contemporary problems in the world and teach core issues in the social sciences.*

## **CONSULTATIONS AND TEACHING ASSISTANTS**

*Students are encouraged to meet one-on-one with the professor to discuss course material and their assignments. The professor holds regular office hours where students can meet her. Given the large number of students in the course, students are encouraged to book their time early. Students are also welcome to schedule an appointment, but should provide at least three different alternatives to be accommodated for a meeting outside of office hours. During term, students should schedule appointments early and will receive a response to their emails within two business days. The teaching assistant is also available for consultation and will hold regular office hours in the course of the term. All consultations with the TA are held in SOE/SOSS Group Study Room 2-1.*

## **CLASS SESSIONS**

*Class sessions will be held for three hours per week, with a short break after the speakers. Invited speakers will speak from 4-6:30pm. Most sessions will be invited speakers and discussion, but some sessions will also include class learning assignments and the group presentation.*

## **REQUIRED TEXT AND READINGS**

*The text in this course is recommended. Students will be expected to read the recommended reading before class. The reading provided by the invited speakers will be announced the week before. All the required course reading will be available in the Library on reserve/LMS eLearn or via links.*

## **WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

**WEEK 1 (January 10) Embracing Interdisciplinary Analysis**

**WEEK 2 (January 17) Invited Speakers**

**WEEK 3 (February 4<sup>th</sup>) Class Rescheduled for Chinese New Year January 24<sup>th</sup>. Invited Speakers**

**WEEK 4 (January 31) Invited Speakers**

**WEEK 5 (February 7) Invited Speakers**

**WEEK 6 (February 13) Invited Speakers**

***\*\*\*1<sup>st</sup> Commentary Piece Due, February 16<sup>th</sup>\*\*\****

**WEEK 7 (February 21) Invited Speakers**

**WEEK 8 (February 27-March 4<sup>th</sup>) Recess Break. No Class**

**WEEK 9 (March 6) Invited Speakers**

**WEEK 10 (March 13) Invited Speakers**

**WEEK 11 (March 20) Invited Speakers**

**WEEK 12 (March 27) Invited Speakers**

***\*\*\*2<sup>nd</sup> Commentary Piece Due, March 29<sup>th</sup>\*\*\****

**WEEK 13 (April 3) Group Presentations**

***\*\*\*All In-Class Groups Presentations\*\*\****

**WEEK 14 (April 10-16) Reading Period & Reflection**