Managing “Success”: The Politics of Malaysia, Singapore & Brunei

Southeast Asia Studies Program
Johns Hopkins University-SAIS
Tuesdays 2:15-4:15pm, Rome 408
Fall 2007

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I. Overview

Three Southeast Asian countries – Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei – are considered the most stable regimes in Southeast Asia and have managed to promote economic growth steadily and maintain racial harmony since their independence. This course examines how and why the governments of these countries have achieved this “success” and at what costs. The course covers the period from 1945 to the present and is organized both chronologically and thematically. We will examine the legacies of colonial rule, independence struggles, the development of political institutions, styles of leadership and leadership transitions, the successes (and failures) of economic policies, changing political identities and political cultures, gender issues, race relations, civil society, human rights practices and foreign relations. We will pay particular attention to the contemporary political environment to understand the current challenges facing these countries.

This course does not presume any background in these countries. The aim is to deepen students’ understanding of the politics of these countries and their role in Southeast Asia.

II. Course Texts/Material

There are two sets of readings in this course, required and recommended. Students will be expected to read all the required reading. Students are encouraged to read the recommended reading for a deeper understanding of the issues, particularly for their selected paper topics, but will not be tested on this material in the course. All the required course material is either in the require texts or on reserve (as hard copies) or ereserve in the SAIS library. All material is listed by title. The recommended material should be available in the library stacks. Additional optional reading material is available on the course website.

Required for purchase:

Recommended for purchase:
III. Course Requirements

a) Class Attendance and Participation (15% of the final grade): Students are expected to read the required reading before class and participate in class discussions. Please note that more than two absences will significantly lower a student’s final grade. This class extends beyond the allocated period: four sessions of the course extend to 4:30pm and there will be an additional class session held in the course of the semester to provide an opportunity for more in-depth discussion. Students will also be expected to attend at least three of the seven films screened outside of class on Friday afternoons during the course of the semester.

b) Two Short Topic Papers (5-6 pages) (20% each, 40% final grade): This assignment evaluates a student’s ability to concisely analyze political issues and write persuasively. Students are expected to write analytical papers on two different countries in the course and to answer the topic questions provided by the professor listed on the course website. In each paper, students are asked to develop an original argument (that contains at least three points) and support the argument using concrete evidence found primarily in the course materials. Students should rely primarily on course readings and lectures for analysis, but should also consult additional material as needed. Papers should include parenthetical citations and a short bibliography.

c) Film Review (4-5 pages) (15% of the final grade): Students are asked to interpret the social, economic and political issues in one of the seven films screened during the course of the semester and assess how the film provides insight into Malaysia or Singapore. Films are scheduled from 4:30-6:30pm in Rome 200 on September 14th, September 21st, September 28th, October 5th and October 12th, October 19th and October 26th.

d) Final Examination (30% of the final grade): This in-class exam will include both subjective and objective questions, including identifications, multiple-choice questions and short answers. The final exam is scheduled on Tuesday, December 18th from 1-3pm.

IV. Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

Part I: Introduction and Historical Overview

Week 1 - 9/11 Course Introduction: Issues & Challenges

Required Reading:

***MSB Film Series: Friday, September 14th “Home Run”, 4:30-6:30, Rome Auditorium***

Week 2 - 9/18 Historical Overview: Colonial Legacies (Class extends to 4:30pm)

Required Reading:
**Recommended Reading:**

**MSB Film Series: Friday, September 21st “Big Durian”, 4:30-6:30, 200 Rome Building**

**Part II: Political Histories**

**Week 3 - 9/25 Malaysia: Bargains and Development (Class Extends to 4:30pm)**

**Required Reading:**

**Recommended Reading:**

**Extra class. Dinner at Professor Welsh’s Sunday, September 23rd, 6:30pm***

**MSB Film Series: Friday, September 28th “Sepet”, 4:30-6:30, 200 Rome Building***
Week 4 - 10/2 Brunei: Independent Sultanate (Class extends to 4:30pm)

**Required Reading:**
- Allen Maxwell. 2001 “Malay Polysemy and Political Power: Census Categories, Ethnicity and Citizenship in Brunei Darussalam” in *Southeast Asia Research*, (July)

**Recommended Reading:**

***MSB Film Series: Friday, October 5th “I Not Stupid”, 4:30-6:30, 200 Rome Building***

Week 5- 10/9 Singapore: From Swamp to Modern City (Class Extends to 4:30pm)

**Required Reading:**

**Recommended Reading:**

***MSB Film Series: Friday, October 12th “Just Follow Law”, 4:30-6:30, 200 Rome Building***
Part Two: Issue Areas

Week 6-10/16 Leadership: Strong-Men or Developmentalists?

Required Reading

Recommended Reading:

***MSB Film Series: Friday, October 19th “Be With Me”, 4:30-6:30, 200 Rome Building***
Week 7 - 10/23 Political Parties & Institutions: The Backbone of Power?

Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:

***MSB Film Series: Friday, October 26th “The Last Communist”, 4:30-6:30, 200 Rome Building***

Week 8 - 10/30 Elections or Selections? Skewed Rules, Civil Society and New Class Dynamics

***FILM REVIEW DUE Wednesday 10/31 by midnight (email)***

Required Reading:


**Recommended Reading:**


Derek da Cunha. 1998. The 1997 Singapore General Election and Beyond. ISEAS: Singapore

**Week 9-11/6 Ethnic Identity and Relations: From Riots to Terrorism**

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


**Week 10 - 11/13 Economic Policy & Performance: Maintaining Economic Legitimacy**

***FIRST ANALYTICAL PAPER DUE THURSDAY 11/15 by midnight (email)***

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


Week 11-11/20 Women, Human Rights and Marginalized Communities

Required Reading:


US Department of State. 2007. 2006 Human Rights Report Malaysia

US Department of State. 2007. 2006 Human Rights Report Brunei


Required Reading: Choose One of the Following Two Topics


Recommended Reading:

Week 12-11/27 Foreign Relations

Required Reading:

Edward Elgar Publishers, Chapter 3


Recommended Reading:


**Week 13- 12/4 Third Generation Leadership: Challenges Ahead & Conclusion**

***SECOND ANALYTICAL PAPER DUE THURSDAY 12/7 by midnight (email)***

**Required Reading:**


***FINAL EXAMINATION TUESDAY, DECEMBER 18th, 1:00-3:00pm***