

The Singapore Model of Leadership
HITO 144GS (pending approval) - Replaces CAT 124GS
Sixth College, UCSD

Professor: Bill Robertson Geibel

Email: wgeibel@ucsd.edu

Class Meeting Times: Monday, Tuesdays, Wednesdays

Class Location:

Excursions: Each Thursday

Location: TBD

Course Overview

This interdisciplinary course explores leadership as a historically situated and culturally constructed phenomenon. Using Singapore as a case study, students will examine how leadership has evolved over time in response to shifting political, economic, and social forces.

Through historical and comparative analysis, the course investigates how leaders in Singapore have navigated complex issues of governance, national identity, and multiculturalism from the colonial era to the present. Students will explore key historical events, institutional developments, and policy shifts that have influenced the country's leadership style and cultural understanding of leadership.

Drawing from history, sociology, political theory, and cultural studies, students will be shown various dimensions of leadership. Field visits to local institutions and cultural sites will offer practical insight into how historical narratives shape contemporary leadership. Guest lectures from scholars and practitioners will further illuminate the interplay between history, leadership, and globalization in the Singaporean context.

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this course, you will have enhanced ability to:

- Critically analyze leadership as a social construct, shaped by cultural, historical, and institutional contexts.
- Explain the role of governance, multiculturalism, and globalization in shaping leadership in Singapore
- Evaluate leadership practices through cross-cultural and global perspectives
- Demonstrate cultural fluency, empathy, awareness and communication

Course Requirements & Grading

- Participation & Attendance: 35%
 - *Includes in class assignments, activities, and debates*
- Weekly Journals Entries: 20%
- Ethnographic Field Notes: 15%
- Final Project: 30%
 - *Paper and Presentation on some aspect of Singaporean leadership (prompt TBD)*

Weekly Schedule

Week 1: Introduction to Leadership and the Singapore Context

Topics: Theories of leadership, postcolonial development, Singapore's founding

Readings:

- Nye, *The Powers to Lead*, Ch. 1
- Barr, *The Ruling Elite of Singapore*, Ch. 2
- Barr, Singapore's national narrative

Excursions:

- National Museum of Singapore

Assignments:

- Reflective journal
- Field notes/analysis

Week 2: Governance, Meritocracy, and the Singaporean State

Topics: Political leadership, technocracy, elitism

Readings:

- Chua, "Communitarian Ideology and Democracy" (select chapters)
- Tan, "[Meritocracy and Elitism](#)"

Excursions:

- Walking tour of Civic District or URA City Gallery

Assignment:

- Reflective journal
- Field notes/analysis

Week 3: Multiculturalism and Everyday Leadership

Topics: National identity, racial harmony, grassroots leadership

Readings:

- Mathew & Soon, "[Multiculturalism in Singapore](#)"
- Rahim, *The Singapore Dilemma*, Ch. 4

Excursions:

- Cultural district tours (Kampong Glam, Little India, Chinatown)

Assignments:

- Reflective journal
- Field notes/analysis

Week 4: Economic Leadership

Topics: Tech leadership, innovation, economic policy

Readings:

- Saxenian, "[Brain Circulation](#)"
- EDB reports (TBD)
- Tinghao Yan, [Singapore Innovation Economy: Present and Future](#)

Excursions:

- Cultural district tours (Kampong Glam, Little India, Chinatown)

Assignment:

- Paper Rough Draft

Week 5: Synthesizing the Singapore Model of Leadership

Topics: Integrating course insights, future of leadership in a globalized world

Readings:

- Nye, The Powers to Lead, Ch. 6: "Leadership and the Future"
- Amy Edmondson, Right Kind of Wrong
- Kevin Rudd, "The Avoidable War"

Final Assignments:

- Final paper and presentation