

Research Topics for NUS-MOE HSSR 2024

Note: Whether research topics for a particular subject are offered is dependent on the availability of NUS supervisors for the academic year. Please note that in 2024, Economics is **not** offered.

SUBJECT: CHINESE LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
C1	Why does Singapore Chinese sound different from Mainland and Taiwan Chinese? 为什么新加坡华语听起来不一样?	Have you ever wondered why people living in Singapore are born with the ability to distinguish three Chinese accents spoken in different areas: 华语 (<i>Hua Yu</i>) in Singapore, 普通话 (<i>Pu Tong Hua</i>) in China, and 国语 (<i>Guo Yu</i>) in Taiwan? Besides lexical and grammar differences, the most robust factor to distinguish these accents is probably the pronunciation. With the development of technology, it is possible to use computer software to study the phonetic details. This could also be applied to the study of the three Chinese accents, and thus achieve a better understanding of the linguistic nature of 华语 (<i>Hua Yu</i>).
C2-1	Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction - A literary and cultural analysis of Liu Cixin's novel, <i>The Three-Body-Problem</i>	From Liu Cixin's <i>The Three-Body Problem</i> to Chen Qiufan's <i>Waste Tide</i> , a new wave of science fiction has energized twenty-first-century Chinese literature. These works capture the anticipation and anxieties of China's new era, speaking to a future filled with uncertainties. Deeply entangled with the politics and culture of a changing China, contemporary science fiction has also attracted a growing global readership. Through a literary and cultural analysis of Liu Cixin's novel, <i>The Three-Body-Problem</i> , students will focus on Liu's distinct aesthetics, and focus on this question: how did he bring science fiction topics, such as dystopia, cyborgs and the posthuman, into interaction with Chinese history and politics?

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C2-2	Contemporary Chinese Science Fiction - A Comparative Study of Chinese and Western science fiction	Through a comparative analysis of Chinese and Western science fiction, students can think about what makes Chinese science fiction different from its Western contemporaries. Students can choose a Western science fiction novel and compare it to the works of contemporary Chinese science fiction writers, such as Liu Cixin, Han Song, Hao Jingfang, Ken Liu, etc.
C3	A comparison of Chinese and English languages: grammar, lexicon or phonology	There are many similarities and differences in the grammars, lexicon, phonology of the Chinese and English languages. Discovering the corresponding regularities is a good practice in scientific research and may help students to improve their linguistic abilities in these two languages.

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SUBJECT: GEOGRAPHY

Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
G1	Ecosystem Services of Wetlands	<p>Students can work on topics related to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the importance of ecosystem services of wetlands, 2. the use of novel technology to monitor variations of wetland restoration over time and space, and/or 3. the anthropogenic effects on wetland ecosystem service. <p>Students will have the opportunity to gain field skills monitoring wetland restoration success on our long-term research project at the Singapore Botanic Gardens (SBG). We monitor wildlife habitat annually at eight long-term plots (5m x 5m) across 2 study sites. Also, we monitor wildlife habitat use daily at the SBG study and reference sites with the use of 8 wildlife cameras and 3 real-time Reconyx wildlife cameras.</p>
G2	Development and the Global Economy	<p>Any empirical project focusing on one or more of these issues in relation to the contemporary remaking of the global economy: (1) the changing organisation of global production networks, (2) the diverse strategies and operations of transnational corporations, and (3) the complex governance of the global economy by the state, international organisations, and/or non-state actors.</p> <p>Each project is expected to learn about and utilise cutting-edge concepts in economic geography and to apply them to specific empirical contexts at multiple geographical scales (i.e., beyond Singapore).</p>

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SUBJECT: HISTORY

Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
H1	The Cold War & Southeast Asia	<p>Students to propose a topic on EITHER</p> <p>(a) Why and how the major powers intervened during the Cold War and how the intervention affected developments in one Southeast Asian state.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>(b) The major powers' interventions/policies and their impact on the trajectory of ASEAN's policies during the Cold War.</p>
H2-1	Economic Development: Singapore and Early Industrialisation	This topic explores Singapore's shift to an industrial economy from 1965-1980. Students may choose to focus on a key industry such as the maritime industry or the role of foreign advisors, or on industrial estates.
H2-2	ASEAN and the South China Sea	This topic prompts students to explore the history of ASEAN with emphasis on its role in mediating tensions relating to the contested waters of the South China Sea. Students can focus on the 1980s and 1990s, and, in particular, on the historical background to the development of a Code of Conduct relating to the South China Sea.

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SUBJECT: LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Topic No	Proposed Topic	Research	Write-up
L1-1	Twentieth Literature	Century	Students can explore any significant author, topic or critical issue in Anglophone literature of the twentieth century. Literary works can be drawn from the modernist period in the early decades of the twentieth century or from the postmodern period after WW2. Students may also work on contemporary writing that has emerged in our current era of globalisation. Possible authors for study include Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, J. M. Coetzee, Kazuo Ishiguro and Toni Morrison.
L1-2	The fiction of J. M. Coetzee		J. M. Coetzee's writing is intensely political as it is profoundly ethical and captivatingly aesthetic. Students are welcome to explore any aspect of Coetzee's writing and can draw on works in any phase of his <i>oeuvre</i> (early, middle or late; South African, "Australian," or global). Possible novels for study include <i>Waiting for the Barbarians</i> , <i>Foe</i> , <i>Disgrace</i> , <i>Elizabeth Costello</i> and <i>Slow Man</i> .

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SUBJECT: MALAY LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
M1-1	Malay writers: Social thought and contributions	<p>The focus on this research is to document, analyse and evaluate the role and contribution of leading Malay writers (in Singapore/Malaysia/Brunei) with the aim of highlighting the significance of their ideas in the context of contending ideas in Malay discourses. Critical analysis of their ideas will be the main emphasis for the research.</p> <p><i>Special Requirement: Students need to be proficient in both Malay/Bahasa Indonesia and English.</i></p>
M1-2	Leading figures in Malay Language studies and research	<p>The focus of this research is to document, analyse and evaluate the role and contribution of leading figures in Malay Language studies and research (in Singapore/Malaysia/Brunei) with the aim of highlighting the significance of their ideas in the context of language planning and politics of language in contemporary Malay society. Critical analysis of their ideas will be the main emphasis for the research.</p> <p><i>Special Requirement: Students need to be proficient in both Malay/Bahasa Indonesia and English.</i></p>
M1-3	Cultural arts and heritage of Singapore Malays	<p>The focus of this research is to document, analyse and evaluate the Malay cultural arts and heritage that have evolved and developed in Singapore. These can include the performative, visual and musical art forms. The aim is not only to look at the contents and aims of the selected cultural arts but also to delineate how it has been supported and sustained. An appreciative survey and discussion should be the main thrust of this research.</p> <p><i>Special Requirement: Students need to be proficient in both Malay/Bahasa Indonesia and English.</i></p>

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M2	Malay cultural practices: Promotion and preservation	<p>The focus of this research is on any tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Malays (e.g. food, fashion, dance, music etc.), and looks at experiences, whether individually and/or as a group in societies or associations, to promote and preserve these cultural practices.</p> <p><i>Special Requirement: Students need to be proficient in both Malay/Bahasa Indonesia and English.</i></p>
M3	Malay folk beliefs and mental health	<p>The proposed study will examine the nature of common Malay folk beliefs relating to mental/psychological illnesses. Causes attributed to these illnesses, remedies prescribed and their implications on the health and wellbeing of the community will be discussed. The study will also identify dominant agencies who propagate and practise these alternative forms of healing. Perspectives from Malay cultural traditions, health literacy and discourse on culture bound syndrome will be utilised. Data for analysis will also be obtained from interviews conducted with a selected sample of respondents.</p> <p><i>Special Requirement: Students need to be proficient in both Malay/Bahasa Indonesia and English.</i></p>