

Assoc Prof Chang Tou Chuang

Department of Geography



Assoc Prof Chang Tou Chuang is unquestionably one of the outstanding educators in NUS. His pedagogy is predicated on the concept of the 'no-walls classroom'. Thus, he treats the surrounding environs in the NUS campus, the island of Singapore, and indeed the Earth itself, as 'classrooms' in which students can learn something valuable. For example, students this year recall that he brought them to a field outside LT 11 for a tutorial that 'truly inspired our thinking'. Again, he organized field trips to the Singapore River and Singapore Tourism Board where students applied concepts learnt in classes/books to 'real world' environments. He has also, in previous years, brought students on field trips to places such as Cameron Highlands and Malacca.

In his teaching, Assoc Prof Chang aims to equip students with skills applicable across the university setting, as well as for life-long learning. Thus, in the course of his classes, he shows his students how to use 'mind maps' to organize materials, and imparts to them strategies for reading, skills in writing, and so on. He also bears in mind the need to prepare his geography students for their potential careers. Hence, in 2007/08, he invited three FASS/Geography alumni working at the Singapore Tourism Board to share their assessments, based on an industry perspective, on his students' projects. (The ultimate grading of the projects was of course done by Assoc Prof Chang himself.) These alumni were also invited to talk to students about their career and how their time at NUS prepared them for the working world.

His innovation and dedication to teaching have resulted in his obtaining consistently excellent scores in student feedback. These feedback scores are all the more praiseworthy when one takes into account the fact that those modules which Assoc Prof Chang has taught, such as GEK1101 and GE2218, had class sizes comprising hundreds of students. Given the well-known difficulties of teaching such large classes, his scores can indeed be seen as stratospheric. The same holds for his nominations for best teaching.

Despite his teaching success (which includes his winning the Outstanding Educator Award in 2006/07), Assoc Prof Chang remains humble and continues to learn from others. He points to Assoc Prof Milagros Rivera, Professor Alex Ip and the winners of the 2008 Outstanding Educators Award as educators who have helped him to discover novel learning approaches, and pointed to various in/out-of-class elements that can be used to engage students.

In keeping with his 'no-walls' philosophy, Assoc Prof Chang has contributed very actively to the betterment of overall NUS teaching, and of the teaching profession as a whole. He has, with Jon Goss and Christine Yano, authored a paper 'Travelling cultures: tourism and the virtual classroom in Hawai'i and Singapore', which is forthcoming in an edited collection by the University of Hawai'i Press. He also delivered two conference papers on pedagogy in 2007/8. He continues to be actively involved in CDTL programmes, and departmental and faculty teaching evaluation committees. He is thus not only an outstanding teacher, but an excellent citizen of NUS and the wider world of educators.