PhD Research Scholarship Opportunity at National University of Singapore

In-Work Poverty and the Challenges of Getting By Among the Young

With an ideal start date of August 2019, ONE Research Scholarship (RS) is available at the National University of Singapore (NUS) for prospective PhD students interested in completing research on young working poor in Singapore. Successful applicants will complete their degree in the Department of Social Work, Sociology, Economics, Psychology, Malay Studies, or Southeast Asian Studies. Deadline for application is 26 July 2019.

The RS details can be found here. The end-date of the RS award will be the fourth year of PhD study and it will cover tuition fees and provide a monthly stipend. The scholarship is targeted for applicants who have training and skills in the following areas and will continue to focus on these topics in their PhD programme:

- Inequality
- Youth

The PhD thesis work should be an independent project which fits broadly into the overall research project on “In-Work Poverty and the Challenges of Getting By Among the Young” (Principal Investigator [PI]: A/P Irene Y.H. Ng, Department of Social Work):

New vulnerabilities are being created by the new disrupted economy. This project seeks to gain new insights on the kinds of “in-work” poverty (i.e. poverty while being employed) that the working class are experiencing. It will focus on the challenges faced by lower educated young workers (aged between 21 and 40) and their efforts at advancement, an area that has received less attention.

Using traditional and technology-based mixed methods, the project will gain deep and wide understanding of the lived realities of younger low-waged workers through surveys, interviews, ethnographic studies, and data inputs using a mobile application. Through these, we hope to understand the interactions of work and earnings with young workers’ mental health and cognitive ability, and how they use their social networks to navigate jobs, family and advancement.

The insights gained from this project seeks to inform Singapore on improving the reach of formal programmes to younger low-waged workers, the design of programmes to better meet their needs, and the optimisation of their social networks as a resource to help themselves.

Department of Social Work

Since 1952, our department has trained social workers in Singapore who have positively and significantly impacted our society, at both levels of frontline social work practice addressing the needs of marginalized groups and individuals, as well as policy changes promoting social justice and inclusiveness. Today, we continue to attract some of our country's brightest students who demonstrate talent and passion for the people-helping profession.

Social Work education at NUS strongly advocates a dual focus of thinking and doing. By thinking, we engage students in conceptual, abstract, and critical thinking that is vital for effective leadership in social work practice. By doing, our students undergo a mandatory 800-hour field educational experience -- our
signature pedagogy -- which provides immersion in practice and empowers students for real-life scenarios upon their graduation.

Our team of academic staff have a diversity of strengths, including extensive practice experience, excellent research competence, and teaching domain expertise. We take a serious stance in insureing that our teaching is research-informed and practice-relevant, offering the following programs: Bachelor of Social Sciences in Social Work (with Honours); Graduate Diploma in Social Work; Masters in Social Work (by coursework); Masters in Social Sciences (by research); PhD (by research).

**Department of Sociology**

Teaching in the Department began in 1966 with just three staff members, with 150 students enrolled for three courses. One problem that hampered the Department’s teaching was the lack of sociological material on Malaya and Singapore. The Department began to build an indigenous research based and to focus the teaching on Singapore and Southeast Asia, continuing to expand as both sociologists and anthropologists were recruited from the wider region, and the Department’s own graduates began to return with PhDs from abroad.

The research activities of the Department became more varied over the years; although primarily focused on Singapore, some staff members have always had research interests in other countries of the region. During this time, the Department also emphasized multidisciplinary research. In more recent years, a considerable amount of research interest has been shown in the area of applied sociology. At the turn of the century, the Department engaged in larger scale, multidisciplinary research projects, many of which had a demographic focus, and in collaboration with universities overseas. Today, the Department continues to develop its core research programmes organized in four clusters: Anthropology; Comparative Historical Sociology; Family, Demography and Inequality; and Urban, Mobility and Cultural Studies.

**Department of Economics**

Established in 1934, the Department of Economics is a department in the Faculty of Social Sciences (FASS). The Department conducts courses in Economics leading to degrees of B. A., B. Soc. Sci. (Honours), M.Econ. and Ph.D. It also offers minor programmes in the discipline to students outside FASS.

The Department of Economics has an established reputation as one of the largest and leading departments of Economics in the Asia-Pacific region. Faculty members’ research areas span a wide range of economic fields, with strength in the core areas of microeconomics, macroeconomics and econometrics, as well as in particular fields such as game theory and industrial organization, labor economics, education, financial economics, and growth theory and development with special reference to Asia. Recognition of contributions by the faculty has, inter alia, taken the form of editorships; election to membership of scholarly societies; invitations to scholarly conferences; and consultancies with international organizations and the governments of Singapore and other ASEAN countries. Because of the size and diversity of the faculty and the range of its circular offerings, students can specialize in almost any area of interest in Economics.

The Department was instrumental in the birth in 1956 of the Malayan Economic Society, now known as the Economic Society of Singapore. Together, they have played a key role in the establishment of the Federation of ASEAN Economic Associations (FAEA). Besides this, Department staff actively participate in
several Asia-Pacific associations like the Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference (PECC), Pacific Area for Trade and Development (PAFTAD), and the East Asian Economic Association (EAEA).

Graduate research students in the Department of Economics follow a semi-structured programme that involves a taught component in the first one to two years of registration. The programme allows a PhD student to acquire and develop to a high standard both subject-specific and transferable skills, thus enabling a student to access a broad range of future employment opportunities – in business, industry, consultancy, education, research etc.

**Department of Psychology**

The Department of Psychology in NUS started life in 1986, as a degree programme in the Department of Social Work. This was the first degree programme in psychology to be offered by any institution in Singapore, and had an initial intake of 70 students taught by at first one and then two staff members. In 1988, the Department became a Department of Social Work and Psychology, and continued to host the separate degree programmes, each with their own student intake, while dedicated staff numbers had risen to six. In 1989, 52 general degree holders with psychology major graduated, and in 1990, a first batch of 12 psychology honours graduates followed.

In 2005 a fully distinct and autonomous Department of Psychology was formed. Today nearly 1,000 students take an introductory psychology module every year, and many of them go on to declare a psychology major, in a department with a complement of 44 full-time and 11 adjunct staff. All major areas of psychology are taught and researched. From the inception of the programme it was intended that the programme should be academically eclectic and produce graduates who are academically the equal in coverage and standards of any from overseas institutions.

As the programme developed, postgraduate research students joined the department, the first Masters student being enrolled in 1990 and the first PhD in 1993. Between 2002 and 2007 an applied (non-clinical) psychology Master’s degree was offered, but in 2008 this was discontinued after graduating 26 students, and the Department launched a postgraduate Masters programme in Clinical Psychology (MClinPsy). To date 55 clinically qualified graduates have emerged.

**Department of Malay Studies**

The Department of Malay Studies at the National University of Singapore produces undergraduate and graduate students of high quality with broad knowledge of the developments and problems in the Malay world of Southeast Asia and beyond. The department also actively engages in research on a wide range of issues concerning the Malay world from a multi-disciplinary perspective, promotes exchanges with centres of Malay studies worldwide, and encourages the development of new and alternative approaches to the understanding of Malay history, economy, politics, society and culture.

The Department has always adopted a broad definition of the Malay world. This refers to the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago consisting of Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, southern Thailand and the southern Philippines. It also includes areas with Malay minorities such as Singapore, and countries to which the Malay diaspora had spread such as Sri Lanka, Madagascar and South Africa.

Currently, teaching and research in the Department revolves around three core areas: social development and political economy, history and literature/linguistics. In each of these core areas,
attention is also paid to Islam in terms of its historical development in the Malay world, its interaction with social and political processes, and its various intellectual and literary expressions.

Students in the Department are exposed to the various aspects of Malay world not only through the teaching programme and the research activities of the academic staff, but also through intensive study tours that take students to the region and beyond.

The Department’s programme is an integral part of the arts degree offered by the Faculty of Arts and the Social Sciences, where students combine Malay Studies with other programmes and subjects of studies according to their choice. In view of this, in general the career prospects of Malay Studies students are equal to other students. Nevertheless, students of Malay Studies enjoy particular advantage in careers requiring an intimate and in depth understanding of the Malay/Muslim world of Southeast Asia, be it in the private or public sector. To boot, students of Malay Studies would also be in a good position to appreciate the dynamics of Muslim societies beyond the region.

Our graduates have gone on to careers in a wide range of areas including the corporate sector, foreign and civil service, journalism, translation, communications and education. The Department of Malay Studies offers a broad-based multi-disciplinary undergraduate programme leading to the degrees of BA and BA (Hons) in Malay Studies.

The department also welcomes applications from qualified candidates for the MA and PhD programmes. Graduate students are awarded research scholarships on a competitive basis. Funding for international conferences and fieldwork is also available for graduate students. The Department is keen on receiving applications from students of various nationalities.

Department of Southeast Asian Studies

The idea to establish a new programme in Southeast Asian Studies was first proposed at the Faculty’s Head of Departments meeting in April 1986 by former Dean, Professor Edwin Thumboo. The ad-hoc committee on Southeast Asian Studies was established and chaired by Assoc Prof Ernest Chew (then Head, Department of History). The committee, which included Assoc Prof Chan Heng Chee, Assoc Prof John Wong, Dr Victor R Savage and Dr Tong Chee Kiong, met in January 1987 and made recommendations for the Southeast Asian Studies Programme. In 1989, the Southeast Asian Studies Programme, besides two other programmes - European Studies and Linguistics - was mooted as an undergraduate programme.

The Southeast Asian Studies Programme was finally inaugurated in Academic Year 1991/1992 under Coordinator, Dr Tong Chee Kiong. He was succeeded by Assoc Prof Victor Savage from 1992 to 1997, Dr Hong Lysa from 1997 to 1999, Assoc Prof Victor Savage again from 1999 to June 2001, Prof Chua Beng Huat from July 2001 to May 2003, Prof Reynaldo C. Ileto from June 2003 to December 2005, Prof Brenda S.A. Yeoh from January 2006 to December 2008, and Assoc Prof Goh Beng Lan from January 2009 to December 2014. The present Head of Department is Assoc Prof Itty Abraham. The Department will be celebrating its 25th anniversary in the Academic Year 2016/2017.

One of the department’s key concerns has been to ensure that our undergraduate students are conversant in a Southeast Asian language. It is compulsory for our undergraduates to have a language offering, which is also meant to facilitate their understanding of the region’s customs, traditions, political and social activities. The Department began to conduct Bahasa Indonesia for Year II students in the 1992/93 academic session, Vietnamese in 1995/96 and Thai in 1998/99. In 2007/08, Malay became
the fourth language which SE majors could read. Presently, the language modules are conducted by the Centre for Language Studies (CLS). Students majoring in Southeast Asian Studies have a choice of enrolling in either the Bahasa Indonesia, Malay, Vietnamese or Thai language modules.

Since 1997, the Department has postgraduate candidates both from the region and beyond for the MA (coursework), and MA and PhD research degrees. Since that time 590 have graduated with Masters degrees and 43 with PhDs. Our graduates can be found in professional capacities in Singapore, Southeast Asia and beyond.

In recognition of its maturation as a field of study in the University, the Southeast Asian Studies Programme was accorded the status of a full-fledged department from 1 July 2011.

**Application Procedure**

Applicants must possess an NUS Honours degree (Merit/Second Class and above) or equivalent (e.g. a four-year Bachelor’s degree with at least an average grade of B) in a relevant discipline. Applications from candidates who also already hold a graduate degree (e.g. Masters) are particularly welcome.

There is no restriction on the nationality of applicants.

Interested candidates should submit the application via hardcopy using the form attached below. Candidates should indicate that they are applying for the Research Scholarship by indicating “In-Work Poverty and the Challenges of Getting By Among the Young” which has to be submitted to the Social Service Research Centre (SSR) by hand/post by 26 July 2019. Besides indicating on the application form printouts, candidates must also send a scanned copy of their application to Social Service Research Centre (SSR) [here](#) by 26 July 2019 with the email subject “In-Work Poverty and the Challenges of Getting By Among the Young.”

[Appln form FASS rsh prog_FASS-G69-13]