Module Description
Culture is generally equated with customs, beliefs, and ideas of a particular society. Yet, in the social sciences, the term remains contentious and debatable. This modules probes into what culture means to Malays. The central questions that will be asked in this module include: What are the different components of Malay culture? How does culture shape and govern the Malays? What are the dominant stereotypes about Malay culture and identity? Who are the Malay cultural elites and how do they respond to modernisation? How can we account for cultural diversity in our globalised world today?

Students will be introduced to key sociological concepts related to culture and traditions. The module applies different approaches in studying culture. Students will examine the history of Malay society from the feudal era, through the colonial period, post-independence, and the contemporary era. By comparing cases studies in Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia, the module exposes students to critical issues concerning the Malays. It covers the following issues:

- The concept tradition
- The politics of knowledge production of “Malay culture” in the context of intensified globalised forces and Islamic reformist movements
- Countering stereotypes towards the Malays
- The consumption and production of material and visual culture such as food, film, fashion and music

At the end of the module, students will understand contemporary debates in Malay culture and society. They can also critically analyze a range of social processes, representations, and cultural forms and practices. Students will have a hands-on experience of Malay culture, through fieldwork and attending cultural performances. This module welcomes all NUS and international students, irrespective of disciplinary training. No prior background of social sciences and cultural studies is necessary in order to take this module.

Preclusion/ Prerequisite
Nil

Lecturer
Dr Norshahril Saat (Senior Fellow, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute) norshahril_saat@iseas.edu.sg

To pass this course, students are required to:

a) Complete breakdown of class activities 1 to 9 (see below)
b) Submit an Essay of not more than 2500 words (see Breakdown 9)
c) Actively participate in e-class discussions
   (i) Online Forums (students to make at least 1 posting and comment on at least 1 posting per forum) and
   (ii) Online Tutorials though Zoom meeting
d) Submit a group presentation video of 8 minutes (5 pax/group)
e) Complete essential readings (reflected through quality online postings and class discussions)
Module Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E-Assessments</th>
<th>E-assessment deadlines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>40% 21 July 2020, 5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-tutorial/ Discussion forum participation</td>
<td>30% N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group project</td>
<td>30% 9 July 2020, 5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total for CA:</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Module Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Breakdown of Class Activity (Total Min Hrs: 36)</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Culture, Approaches, and the notion of “Malay-ness”</td>
<td>1. <strong>Opening</strong>&lt;br&gt;a) Live Zoom Meeting&lt;br&gt;(22 June 2020, 2.30pm)&lt;br&gt; 2. <strong>Studying Cultures: Anthropological, Sociological, and Political Approaches</strong>&lt;br&gt;a) Pre-recorded lecture (Zoom Webinar)&lt;br&gt;b) E-tutorial (24 June, 2.30pm)&lt;br&gt; 3. <strong>Malay feudal society to the modern world: Evolution of the Malays</strong>&lt;br&gt;a) Pre-recorded lecture (Zoom Webinar)&lt;br&gt;b) E-discussion forum</td>
<td>2hrs 4 hrs 4hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>External influences to Malay society, culture and perceptions: Encounters and Orientalism</td>
<td>4. <strong>Malay artefacts, arts and heritage, external interactions with Malayness with Arab culture, and other civilization</strong>&lt;br&gt;a) Visit Malay Heritage Centre Website&lt;br&gt;b) Observe Malay Cultural Performance on YouTube&lt;br&gt;c) Online discussion forum on readings&lt;br&gt; 5. <strong>Colonial encounter and myth making</strong>&lt;br&gt;a) Pre-recorded lecture (Zoom Webinar)&lt;br&gt;b) E-tutorial (Thursday 2 July, 230pm)</td>
<td>5hrs 4hrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| III  
(6 July-12 July) | Engaging modernity and globalization | 6. Site visits and Malay Oral history (Group Project)  
a) Student to visit Malay Heritage Centre/Wisma Geylang Serai/Baalwie Mosque (group of 5)/Malay Oral History Documents (NAS Website)  
b) Prepare an 8-minute video presentation and upload on Luminous (Submission Friday 9 July 5pm)  
c) Students to comment on classmates’ project on Discussion Forum (deadline Monday 12 July 5pm) | 6 hrs |
| IV  
(13 July-19 July) | Challenges facing Malay society | 8. Progressivism versus traditionalism in Islamic thought  
a) Pre-recorded lecture  
b) E-tutorial (Wednesday 15 July, 2.30pm)  
7. Modern nation-state and Malay politics  
a) Pre-recorded lecture  
b) E-Discussion Forum | 4 hrs |
| V  
(20 July-24 July) | Conclusion | 9. Final Wrap-up  
a) Submission of Essay  
(Tuesday, 21 July 5pm)  
Essay Question (40% marks )  
In 2500 words, discuss the importance of the concept tradition, as opposed to other approaches (eg. constructivism, situationalism) in understanding Malay culture and society on ONE of the following:  
i) Countering dominant approaches to studying/observing Malays  
ii) Tracing the evolution of Malay institutions and material culture  
iii) Analysing the problems in understanding Malay politics  
iv) Analysing Malay religious life  
b) E-Tutorial  
(Zoom meeting, Friday 24 July, 9.30 am) | 2hrs |
Reading List

*Essential Readings

**Part I**


**Part II**


* Syed Farid Alatas, Notes on Various Theories Regarding the Islamization of the Malay Archipelago.


Part III


* Oral History Interviews (Refer to National Archives of Singapore Website)


Som Said (in Malay) [https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/oral_history_interviews/interview/002733](https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/oral_history_interviews/interview/002733)


Part IV


Textbooks for general reading
