

Research Topics for NUS-MOE HSSR 2025

Whether research topics for a particular subject are offered is dependent on the availability of NUS supervisors for the academic year.

SUBJECT: CHINESE LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE		
Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
C1	<p>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?</p>	<p>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>).</p>
C2	<p>Examining the invisible in the English translation of <i>Invisibility</i> 《市中隐者》英版翻译策略分析</p>	<p>Singaporean Mandarin features words and expressions from other languages, such as English, Malay, and Chinese dialects. Therefore, a play that reflects Chinese Singaporeans' conversation style will have to incorporate the heterolingual feature. Moreover, there are also allusions, puns, jokes, etc. for entertaining audience. This research takes a Chinese play 《市中隐者》 by Quan Sy Ren and its English version <i>Invisibility</i> by Sim Pern Yiau as research materials. The aim is to examine the use of translation strategies and analyse non-textual perspectives, such as characters' tones and the layout of the content. The layout of the content refers to how the Chinese and English texts are arranged on each page of the book for reading purposes.</p>

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SUBJECT: CHINESE LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE		
Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
C3	<p>Poetry and History: A Study of the Nanyang Historian Hsu Yun Tsiao's Classical-Style Poetry</p> <p>诗与史：南洋历史学家许云樵的旧体诗研究</p>	<p>The famous Nanyang historian Hsu Yun Tsiao was a prolific writer. Other than historical research, he also composed the Collection of Poetry and Essays from Xiyi Studio, in which many classical-style poems are about Nanyang history and local culture. This research will focus on his classical-style poetry and probe the relationship between poetry and history, especially with regard to the phenomenon of localisation in Singapore-Malaysian Chinese Literature.</p> <p>Remarks:</p> <p>Relevant materials about Nanyang Chinese history and localisation in Singapore-Malaysian Chinese literature will be provided to support the interpretation of Hsu Yun Tsiao's classical-style poetry.</p> <p>著名的南洋历史学家许云樵，一生著述丰富，除从事历史研究外，又著有《希夷室诗文集》，当中的旧体诗多与南洋史地有关。本研究即以其旧体诗为对象，剖析诗与史之间的关系，进一步探索新、马华文文学的本土化现象。</p> <p>备注：</p> <p>指导教授将提供有关南洋华人史和新马华文文学的本土化书写的文献材料，帮助学生理解和诠释许云樵的旧体诗作。</p>

Research Topics for NUS-MOE HSSR 2025

SUBJECT: ECONOMICS		
Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
E1	Game theory and its applications to real-life examples	<p>Game theory is a mathematical toolbox to analyse strategic interactions among multiple decision makers. It provides a common language for seemingly different economic models such as oligopoly, public goods, price discrimination, moral hazard and adverse selection.</p> <p>Firstly, students will have to apply their knowledge of game theory for this research. He/she will go through a standard textbook on game theory (such as Martin J. Osborne's <i>An Introduction to Game Theory</i>). Secondly, he/she will need to apply the game theoretic tools to at least one real-life example of his/her interest by representing it as a formal game and computing its Nash equilibrium (or its appropriate refinements) thoroughly. The essay should mainly focus on the second component and students are not required to explain general game-theoretic concepts in detail.</p> <p><i>Preclusion: This HSSR project may not be offered together with the SMU Game Theory module or with Singapore–Cambridge General Certificate of Education Advanced Level Higher 3 (2025) Economics (Syllabus 9809).</i></p>
E2	Government debt in advanced economies	<p>Governments in most advanced economies (US, Eurozone, Japan and Singapore) are experiencing historically high debt ratios. How did this come about? Is the government debt too high and becoming unsustainable? What are the ramifications for cutting government budget deficits to reduce its debt? Economists are divided about the answers. By examining economic theory, historical cases and empirical studies and data, the student will attempt to disentangle the various factors that determine government debt usefulness, government debt sustainability and the timing of government debt reduction. Students can work on the general case or choose to focus on specific regions or timeframes. The focus is placed on advanced countries, whose governments can readily obtain loans or issue bonds in their own currencies, though the Eurozone (whose members share a single currency) can also be included.</p>

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Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
E3-1	Digital Markets Act and Competition	This research reviews economics literature on digital market acts, focusing on their regulation and impact on competitions, in both digital and brick-and-mortar economies. It examines how these acts might affect competition, consumers, and innovation. The study then explores the potential implications for Singapore, given its status as a digital hub in Asia. The goal is to provide insights into how the digital market acts might influence Singapore's economy and digital landscape as well as help policymakers adapt these regulations effectively.
E3-2	Understanding Housing Demand	This research aims to provide insights into factors of housing demand to aid policy-making and urban planning. It reviews literature in real estate, focusing on factors contributing to housing demand. It examines the relative strength of various demand factors, before identifying the factors with the largest impact on housing demand, considering factors unique to the market of housing.

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SUBJECT: GEOGRAPHY		
Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
G1	Youth and Liveable Cities	<p>In an ever-changing world, youth are constantly finding ways to shape a viable future. They are also the foundation and key to the future city. In Singapore, many opportunities abound for youth to engage in dialogue and action about their own futures, the future city, and their role in shaping these futures. These include official programmes associated with organisations such as the Youth Corps, school-related events such as the MOE Pre-University Seminar, and more grounded initiatives such as working with community organisations like Participate in Design. On the other hand, personal strategies like securing a variety of internships, participating in informal initiatives and being active on social media also constitute future-making initiatives by youth.</p> <p>This proposed research invites you to explore one or more of the following possible research questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What constitutes a viable future to youth, and how can they secure a viable future for themselves? • What constitutes a viable urban future to youth, and how can youth contribute to making the future city? • What is the relationship between youths' personal futures and the future city? <p>Students are encouraged to work within one of these themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liveable neighbourhoods • The future of work • Playful cities

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Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
G2	Gender and Geography	<p>Gender is more than the study of women in geography. The study of gender roles and relations, gender inequality, and gender politics is of key significance to topics such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Geography • Sustainable Development • Population Studies <p>The student who selects this topic can chose to conduct research on any one of the three topics listed above.</p> <p>Possible research questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has gender (in)equality influenced Singapore’s population? • How might gender be incorporated into urban planning for more liveable cities?
G3	Subterranean Singapore: Designing, Digging, Excavating and Living	<p>In 2019, the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore released a Draft Master Plan (https://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/Planning/Master-Plan/Master-Plan-2019) that foregrounds the country’s vision of tapping into the underground for the “free[ing] up of [surface] space” and creating “a sustainable and resilient city of the future”. This research topic proposes to investigate how such state interventions into the ‘subterranean’ help to realise Singapore’s goal of sustainable urban development. It also aims to delve deeper into how ordinary Singaporeans interpret, respond to or even resist these underground plans/initiatives as they navigate a future in a small city-state where the tensions between land scarcity and socio-economic development become increasingly pronounced.</p>

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SUBJECT: GEOGRAPHY		
Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
G4	Ecosystem Services of Wetlands	<p>Students can work on topics related to any or multiple ecosystem services (human/physical geography/integrated):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. importance of ecosystem services of wetlands, 2. use of novel technology to monitor variations of wetland restoration over time and space, and/or 3. 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 with 8 wildlife cameras and 3 real-time Reconyx wildlife cameras at SBG study and reference sites.</p>

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SUBJECT: HISTORY		
Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
H1	Buddhism in Southeast Asian History	<p>The student who selects this topic can choose to conduct research related to Buddhism in Southeast Asia during the 19th and 20th centuries. The topics of interest include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diaspora • Diplomacy • Migration • Nationalism • Pilgrimage • Reformist movements
H2-1	Authoritarian Rule in Southeast Asia	<p>As the pursuit of nationhood met former colonies in Southeast Asia, the Cold War embodied a further hurdle for these new nation-states. In response, some had imposed authoritarian rule among their people. A student may delve into such response by looking into a particular case study of authoritarian rule in Southeast Asia. S/he may consider its establishment and provenance, its competition, its implication on society and culture, its impact on specific social group(s), among others. S/he may elect to look into the authoritarian rule in the Philippines, Indonesia, or Cambodia from the period of their respective independence until 2000.</p>
H2-2	Separatist Rebellions in Southeast Asia	<p>Rebellions characterise the post-colonial period of some nations in Southeast Asia. The mounting and effectivity of these movements are varied and complex. A student may investigate an uprising at a particular national community, looking into its establishment, narrative and impact in the pursuit of nationhood, history and culture. S/he could look into the phenomenon in the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, or Myanmar from the period of their respective independence to 2000.</p>

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SUBJECT: HISTORY		
Topic No	Proposed Research Topic	Write-up
H3	Everyday life in Cold War Southeast Asia	<p>The Cold War was driven by superpower rivalry, but ordinary people paid the price for the tensions, competitions, and conflicts it caused. In Southeast Asia, a region that became a major battleground during this period, how did common people experience and understand this global conflict that directly impacted their lives?</p> <p>This topic invites you to explore a specific Cold War episode in a Southeast Asian country—such as a political crisis, military intervention, or economic shift—using a microhistorical approach that focuses on individual or community experiences. By examining these narratives against broader political and economic changes, you'll reveal how local experiences intertwined with national and international dynamics.</p>

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SUBJECT: LITERATURE IN ENGLISH			
Topic No	Proposed Topic	Research	Write-up
L1-1	Twentieth Century 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> .

Research Topics for NUS-MOE HSSR 2025

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>