

HH4046
The Urban Coast
Semester 1 (AY2024/25)

Seminar: Monday, 9:30 a.m. to 1:20 p.m.
Venue: LHS-TR+50, LHS-02-04, The Hive

Instructor: Asst. Prof. Michael Yeo
Email: m.yeo@ntu.edu.sg
Office: SHHK #05-20
Office Hours: By appointment; email me to arrange for a consultation if required.

Course Outline

This is an advanced undergraduate course on the history of the “urban coast”, which rests at the intersection of environmental, maritime, and urban histories. We will examine how various factors shaped urbanization and urban places in coastal regions around the world from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. The course is structured around the two main parts. The first part introduces the historiographical concepts and debates that underpin the course, and the second part explores different thematic approaches to the history of the urban coast, with each week focused on a specific coast or sea. Together, these elements will provide you with a keen sense of how to critique, research, and write histories of coastal towns and cities.

Learning Goals

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Compare, contrast, and critique various approaches to the history of coastal towns and cities.
2. Articulate novel, evidence-based, and well-reasoned arguments related to the urban history of coastal regions in written and oral form.
3. Investigate and explain various factors that shaped urbanization and urban places in coastal regions.
4. Collect and synthesize large quantities of historical evidence related to coastal cities and towns.
5. Present historical ideas and evidence on the urban coast to specialist and non-specialist audiences.

Class Structure

Seminars will be carried out in person and will take place on Mondays, from 9:30 a.m. to 1:20 p.m., interspersed with short breaks. You will be assigned a group at the beginning of the first class, which you will have to sit with for the rest of the semester.

Course Assessment

You will be assessed according to the following criteria:

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| Class Participation: | 15% |
| Group Lecture and Guided Discussion: | 15% |
| Research Proposal: | 15% |
| Historiographical Essay: | 15% |
| Research Essay: | 40% |

Class Participation

You are required to attend seminars having read all the assigned weekly readings to the extent that you are prepared to discuss them. Your participation in class will be assessed by the depth, frequency, and quality of your contributions to seminar discussions. Outstanding participants will demonstrate a thorough and critical understanding of the readings by asking informed questions and offering perceptive comments.

Group Lecture and Guided Discussion

With your groupmates, you will give a lecture and lead a discussion during one of the seminars (either on Weeks 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, or 11). Your group will give a 20-minute lecture on the history of one or two coastal urban places in relation to the theme of the week. The lecture should not merely be descriptive but also analytical. This will be followed immediately by a 30-minute guided class discussion prepared by your group, which should be related to your lecture. You are free to be as original as you wish when designing the guided discussion. For example, you might prepare any one of the following elements: (1) two guiding questions; (2) a primary source; or (3) an object. Please include some time for the class to study the material you have prepared for the class-wide discussion. Do note that your presentation and facilitation skills will be assessed individually, so the scores of each group member might not be uniform. Your group is required to submit any presentation slides used for the lecture and discussion.

Research Proposal

You will write a 1,500-word proposal for your Research Essay. The Research Proposal should consist of a 500-word abstract and a 1,000-word analysis of two or three primary sources. The purpose of this assignment is to help you develop a question and analyze a small selection of primary sources for your Research Essay. This assignment will be due by 11:59 p.m. on 20 September 2023 on NTU Learn. You can find detailed instructions for this assignment on NTU Learn.

Historiographical Essay

You will write a 1,500-word essay analysing the historiography of the topic of your Research Essay. The Historiographical Essay should discuss between five to eight secondary sources, including *at least one* reading from Weeks 2, 3, or 4. The purpose of this assignment is to help you develop a historiographical overview for your Research Essay. This assignment will be due by 11:59 p.m. on 11 October 2023 on NTU Learn. You can find detailed instructions for this assignment on NTU Learn.

Research Essay

You will write a 4,000-word essay on any aspect of the history of the urban coast. You may choose, for example, to write about topics such as: (1) the growth, decline, or redevelopment of a single coastal city; (2) the connections between two coastal towns; (3) the interaction between a city and its hinterland, coastline, or marine environment; (4) the changing society and mores of a coastal town; or (5) the ways that geography affected urbanization in a coastal region. Take this as an opportunity to explore your interest in the history of the urban coast. The Research Essay must draw on both primary and secondary sources, and it should present a clear research question and a persuasive central argument. The Research Essay should ideally be based on your Research Proposal and Historiographical Essay, with some revisions based on feedback. However, you are welcome to change or modify your topic at any point before the submission of this assignment. This assignment will be due by 11:59 p.m. on 18 November 2023 on NTU Learn. You can find detailed instructions for this assignment on NTU Learn.

Class Schedule and Readings

Week 1 (12 August)

Course Introduction

This seminar is an introduction to the course. It includes a brief lecture intended for student who have not taken any undergraduate courses on urban history before.

Reading:

- Shane Ewen, *What is Urban History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 1–9. [These pages refer to the chapter titled, “Introduction: Why Urban History?”.]

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Part I

Concepts and Debates

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Week 2 (19 August)

What is the Urban Coast?

Readings:

- Isaac Land, “Tidal Waves: The New Coastal History,” *Journal of Social History* 40, no. 3 (2007): 731–743.
- Isaac Land, “The Urban Amphibious,” in *The New Coastal History: Cultural and Environmental Perspectives from Scotland and Beyond*, ed. David Worthington (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 31–48.
- Ben Mendelsohn, “Making the Urban Coast: A Geosocial Reading of Land, Sand, and Water in Lagos, Nigeria,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 38, no. 3 (2018): 455–472.

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Week 3 (26 August)

Beyond Maritime History

Themes: maritime history, oceanic history, littoral history, coastal history

Readings:

- John R. Gillis, *The Human Shore: Seacoasts in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 1–38 and 99–127. [These pages refer to the chapters titled, “Introduction”, “An Alternative to Eden”, and “Settling the Shores”.]
- Michael N. Pearson, “Littoral Society: The Case for the Coast,” *The Great Circle* 7, no. 1 (1985): 1–8.
- Michael N. Pearson, “Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problems,” *Journal of World History* 17, no. 4 (2006): 353–373.

Supplementary Reading:

- Daniel Vickers, “Beyond Jack Tar,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (1993): 418–424.

Week 4 (2 September)

Beyond the Port City

Themes: coastal towns and cities, port towns and cities

Readings:

- Frank Broeze, “Port Cities: The Search for an Identity,” *Journal of Urban History* 11, no. 2 (1985): 209–225.
- Carola Hein, Sabine Luning, and Paul van de Laar, “Port City Cultures, Values, and Maritime Mindsets: Defining What Makes Port Cities Special,” *European Journal of Creative Practices in Cities and Landscapes* 4, no. 1 (2021) 7–20.
- Stephen Mosley, “Coastal Cities and Environmental Change,” *Environment and History* 20, no. 4 (2014): 517–33.

Supplementary Reading:

- Eric Tagliacozzo, “An Urban Ocean: Notes on the Historical Evolution of Coastal Cities in Greater Southeast Asia,” *Journal of Urban History* 33, no. 6 (2007): 911–932.

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Part II

Thematic Studies

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Week 5 (9 September)

Ecology: The Caribbean Sea

Themes: disease, ecology, empire, the Caribbean Sea, war

Readings:

- J.R. McNeill, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1–11 and 137–191. [These pages refer to the chapters titled, “The Argument (and Its Limits) in Brief” and “Yellow Fever Rampant and British Ambition Repulsed, 1690–1780”.]

Supplementary Reading:

- Philip D. Morgan, “The Caribbean Environment to 1850,” in *Sea and Land: An Environmental History of the Caribbean*, ed. Philip D. Morgan, J.R. McNeill, Matthew Mulcahy, and Stuart B. Schwartz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 19–129.

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Week 6 (16 September)

Economy: The South China Sea

Themes: commerce, economic life, the South China Sea

Readings:

- Melissa Macauley, *Distant Shores: Colonial Encounters on China's Maritime Frontier* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 1–18, 45–74, and 245–281. [These pages refer to the chapters titled, “Introduction: The Great Convergence”, “Back in the World: The Emergence of Maritime Chaozhou, 1767–1840”, and “Maritime Chaozhou at Full Moon, 1891–1929”.]

Supplementary Reading:

- John M. Carroll, *Edge of Empires: Chinese Elites and British Colonials in Hong Kong* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), 37–57. [These pages refer to the chapter titled, “A Better Class of Chinese: Building the Emporium of the East”.]

Week 7 (23 September)

Gender: The Atlantic Ocean

Themes: economic life, gender history, the Atlantic Ocean

Readings:

- Jessica Marie Johnson, *Wicked Flesh: Black Women, Intimacy, and Freedom in the Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 1–15 and 77–152. [These pages refer to the chapters titled, “Introduction: The Women in the Water”, “*La Traversée*: Gender, Commodification, and the Long Middle Passage”, and “Full Use of Her: Intimacy, Service, and Labor in New Orleans”.]

Supplementary Reading:

- Philip J. Havik, “Gendering the Black Atlantic: Women’s Agency in Coastal Trade Settlements in the Guinea Bissau Region,” in *Women in Port: Gendering Communities, Economies, and Social Networks in Atlantic Port Cities, 1500–1800*, ed. Douglas Catterall and Jodi Campbell (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 315–356.
- David Armitage, “The Atlantic Ocean,” in *Oceanic Histories*, ed. David Armitage, Alison Bashford, and Sujit Sivasundaram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 85–110.

Term Break

30 September to 4 October

Week 8 (7 October)

Mobility: The Bornean Coast

Themes: Borneo, mobility, smuggling, the Sulu Sea

Readings:

- Eric Tagliacozzo, “Borneo in Fragments: Geology, Biota, and Contraband in Trans-National Circuits,” *TRaNS: Trans –Regional and –National Studies of Southeast Asia* 1, no. 1 (2013): 63–85.
- Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States Along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865–1915* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 186–258. [These pages refer to the chapters titled, “The Smuggling of Narcotics”, “Counterfeiters across the Frontier”, and “Illicit Human Cargoes”.]

Week 9 (14 October)

Faith: The Malabar Coast

Themes: faith, religion, southwestern India, the Arabian Sea

Readings:

- Sebastian R. Prange, *Monsoon Islam: Trade and Faith on the Medieval Malabar Coast* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1–157. [These pages refer to the chapters titled, “Introduction: The First Indian Muslim”, “The Port”, and “The Mosque”.]

Supplementary Reading:

- Stephen F. Dale, *Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier: The Māppilas of Malabar, 1498–1922* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 1–32. [These pages refer to the chapters titled, “Introduction” and “Trade, Politics, and Society in Sixteenth-Century Kerala”.]
- Barbara Andaya Watson, “Seas, Oceans and Cosmologies in Southeast Asia,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 48, no. 3 (2017): 349–371.

Week 10 (21 October)

Cosmopolitanism: The Mediterranean Coast

Themes: cosmopolitanism, the Mediterranean Sea, port cities

Readings:

- Henk Driessen, “Mediterranean Port Cities: Cosmopolitanism Reconsidered,” *History and Anthropology* 16, no. 1 (2005): 129–141.
- Dieter Haller, “The Cosmopolitan Mediterranean: Myth and Reality,” *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, Bd. 129, H. 1 (2004): 29–47.
- Will Hanley, “Grieving Cosmopolitanism in Middle East Studies,” *History Compass* 6, no. 5 (2008): 1346–67.

Supplementary Reading:

- Molly Greene, “The Mediterranean Sea,” in *Oceanic Histories*, ed. David Armitage, Alison Bashford, and Sujit Sivasundaram (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 134–155.
- Heather Sutherland, “Southeast Asian History and the Mediterranean Analogy,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34, no. 1 (2003): 1–20.

Week 11 (28 October)

Light: Maritime Asia

Themes: artificial lighting, lighthouses, Maritime Southeast Asia

Readings:

- Robert Bickers, “Infrastructural Globalization: Lighting the China Coast, 1860s–1930s,” *The Historical Journal* 56, no. 2 (2013): 431–458.
- Eric Tagliacozzo, “The Lit Archipelago: Coast Lighting and the Imperial Optic in Insular Southeast Asia, 1860–1910,” *Technology and Culture* 46, no. 2 (2005): 306–328.
- Nadi Tofighian, “Mapping ‘the Whirligig of Amusements’ in Colonial Southeast Asia,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 49, no. 2 (2018): 277–296.

Week 12 (4 November)

Revision and Research

The seminar this week consists of a brief lecture recapitulating the course. Please feel free to schedule research consultations after the lecture.

Week 13 (11 November)

No Seminar

There will be no seminar this week because it is a public holiday.

Course Policies and Student Responsibilities

General

You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the information in this document, especially assignment deadlines and requirements. You are also responsible for finding out about any course-related announcements if you miss any seminars. You are expected to complete all pre-class readings, attend all seminars punctually, and participate in all tutorial discussions. You should adhere to accepted scholarly practices in all of your written work; any source material used should be properly cited.

Absenteeism

This course requires you to be in class to contribute to discussions and team presentations. These in-class activities make up a significant portion of your course grade. Absence from class without a valid reason will thus affect your overall course grade. Valid reasons include: falling ill, which must be supported by a medical certificate; or participating in an NTU-approved activity, which must be supported by an excuse letter from a relevant body; or a serious extenuating circumstance, which should be supported by documentation. There will be no make-up opportunities for group presentations. If you miss a seminar, you must inform the instructor before the start of the seminar by email.

Late Policy

Assignments submitted after their assigned deadlines will be penalised by the deduction of 5% of the maximum score for each 24-hour period after the submission date. For example, assignments submitted 2 hours late will be subject to a 5% penalty, assignments submitted 26 hours late will be subject to a 10% penalty, and so on. If you require an extension, please request for it at least a day before the assignment is due with a valid reason. Valid reasons include: falling ill, which must be supported by a medical certificate; participating in an NTU-approved activity, which must be supported by an excuse letter from a relevant body; a serious extenuating circumstance, which should be supported by relevant documentation; or any personal reasons that might be conveyed in confidence to the instructor.

Cheating and Plagiarism

Universities consider using the works of others without properly acknowledging that use to be “cheating”; this includes contract cheating or injudicious use of artificial intelligence (AI). What counts as “injudicious use” largely refers, but is not limited, to using AI to write entire chunks of your work. Egregious cases of such behaviour will result in a score of zero for the assignment in question. In accordance with school policy, the instructor will also report such cases to the university to be placed on record in your academic file. Learn how to cite the work of others properly. If in doubt, ask.

Word Limits

All assignments have clearly stated word limits and instructions on what is included in the word count. Please adhere to this word limit. If your assignment exceeds the maximum word limit by 10%, it will be penalised by the deduction of 10% of the maximum score. If your assignment exceeds the maximum word limit by 15%, it will incur further penalties.

Course Style Guide

Please cite your sources according to the notes and bibliography system of the Chicago Manual of Style. For all assignments, please select an easily readable font, such as Times New Roman or Garamond, and refrain from using Arial or Helvetica. The main body of the text should be in font size 12pt, and the footnotes should be in font size 10pt. The main body of the text should be in double spacing, with footnotes in single spacing.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the feedback and suggestions offered by the students who previously participated in HH4046 during the first semester of AY2023/24.

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