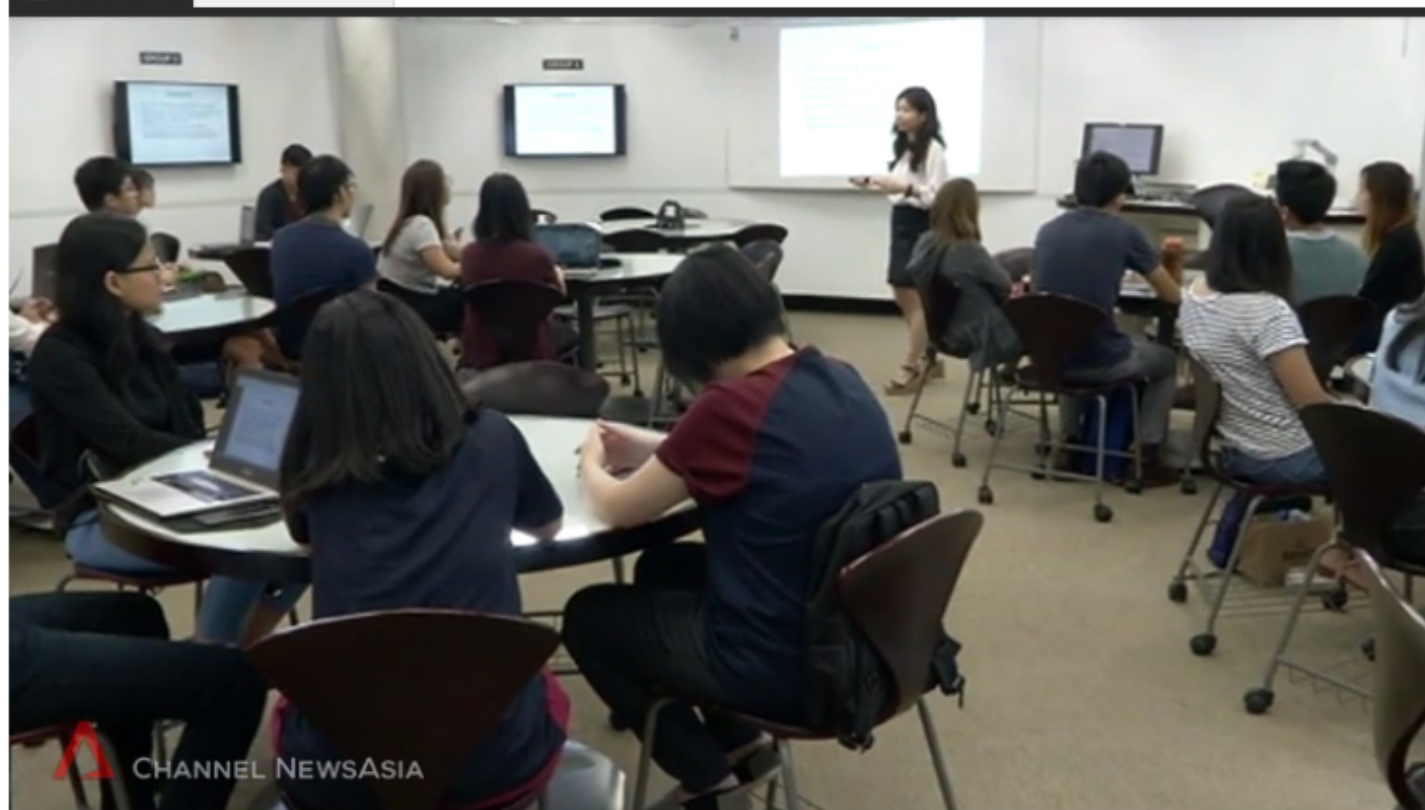


Local universities roll out common course on Singapore's future

By Lee Li Ying, Channel NewsAsia Posted 16 Feb 2017 22:54 Updated 16 Feb 2017 23:00

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SINGAPORE: To prepare the next generation of citizens for the challenges that the country will face, a course named Singapore: Imagining the Next 50 Years will be offered across all six universities here.

It was rolled out in at the National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Singapore Management University (SMU) last month, and will be launched by the other three – Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT), Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD), as well as UniSIM – by the second half of the year.

Initiated by a council under the Ministry of Defence that aims to raise awareness on defence and National Service issues, the course was developed by all six universities and seeks to get students to think about issues of national interest, like security threats and rising global competition.

Some of the issues raised in the 12-week undergraduate course include the rising tide of protectionism in the United States and its impact on Singapore's economy.

"I think it's very important to give students the perspective of policymakers in Singapore, to see and perceive how problems – global and local – can impact Singapore's survival," said Dr Kenneth Ong, NTU's coordinator for the course.

"One of the things that I've learnt so far is that Singapore is a very small economy, and we are oftentimes at the mercy of larger economies in the world, especially with current trends leading towards protectionism, which is a little bit worrying for me as an individual as well," said NTU Year 4 student Low Zhi Hong.

Another student, Syed Faris who is in his second year at NTU, said touchy topics are addressed as well: "What we feel is that there's this underlying tension beneath the calm surface of Singaporean society. For instance, we are talking about race, which is quite a sensitive topic. We cannot just depend on a sense of multiculturalism; there's this sense of tolerance of each other's differences, but what we actually need is to embrace these differences."

The course has proven to be popular among students so far, with classes oversubscribed at the three universities.

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