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Journaling in Everyday Ethics

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Overview

- 1. GES1041: Everyday Ethics in Singapore**
2. Core pedagogical challenge
3. Challenges in implementation
4. Evaluation

GES1041 Everyday Ethics in Singapore

Module description: This module examines the ethical dimensions of everyday life in Singapore. It focuses on moral encounters and dilemmas that arise in our pursuit of “happiness, prosperity, and progress”.

- We will explore how the tools of moral reasoning and engagement apply to local concerns, such as inequality, meritocracy, multiculturalism, immigration, and marriage.
- This will challenge us to clarify moral values transformed by social and technological changes, combine moral principles with practical constraints, and balance other interests with our own.
- We will also consider how moral dialogue can be cultivated in Singapore’s multicultural society, so as to manage diverse traditions and divergent values.

Ethos of GES1041

1. Be creative
2. Be collaborative
3. Be compassionate

Core pedagogical challenge

1. Personal perspective
2. Moral attention and emotion
3. Moral dialogue

Journaling in tertiary education

1. Culture-centred research (Dutta 2018)
2. Experiential learning (Hubbs & Brand 2005)
3. Business and management ethics (Hedberg 2017)
4. Social work ethics (Swindell & Watson 2006)

Journal entries (10%)

- Experiment in ethical reflection
- Basis for tutorial dialogue
- Basis for group project

- 500-word entries due in Weeks 3, 5, 7, 9, 11
- Submit on IVLE Assessment by Friday 12 midnight
- 2 points per entry

Instructions: journal entry on inequality

Conduct an experiment in ethical reflection. Please write 500 words in response to a moral value, problem, or conflict in our readings and discussions on inequality.

Write from your ethical perspective. Write quickly; do not edit or censor yourself, but make your words meaningful to everyday ethics in Singapore.

Prompts: journal entry on inequality

- Which passage in our readings on inequality moved or frustrated you most? Write about its ethical significance.
- Examine the assumptions about inequality in a news article, a short story, or a conversation.
- Imagine what Singapore would be like with more extreme forms of inequality. How would we live there?
- Imagine a more fruitful dialogue between Teo (2017) and Osman (2018).

Instructions: dialogue on inequality

Choose one journal entry to be the basis of today's dialogue in your ethics committee.

- By relating that entry to the relevant parts of other entries, compare your ethical perspectives and assess your ethical positions.
- Use the ethical toolbox of values, norms, and strategies to guide your dialogue.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequality in the middle class • Sports deferment in a meritocracy • Workplace discrimination against mentally ill professionals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bilingualism and Chinese privilege • Singlish: solidarity and stigma • <i>Tudung</i> and Muslim marginalization • Inequality in <i>Crazy Rich Asians</i> • HDB ethnic integration policy • “Punching up” jokes about race | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical treatment for migrants • Mistreatment of migrant construction workers • Vulnerabilities of migrant domestic workers |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequality in primary school enrollment • Inequality in the PSLE • GEP: merit and parental choice • GEP: merit and inequality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race in political representation • Reserved presidency as positive discrimination | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of migrant workers • Integration of foreign talent • Migrant workers and national identity |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combined classrooms and merit • “Every school a good school” • Elitism in the JC mergers • Inequality in the bell curve • Scholarships in a meritocracy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 377A: religious diversity and solidarity • 377A: inequality and solidarity • 377A: inequality and traditional values | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migration out of Singapore |

Student feedback (Semester 1, 2018)

- ‘Having each of us voice our opinions in journals and dialogues, while being mindful of not being harsh on others, created a safe space for me to try and use the ethical tools, to generate an ethical perspective on issues in Singapore. I think this has really been eye-opening for us as it sheds light on Singapore in a way that I never saw while equipping us with ethical tools that can be used in any moral conflicts.’
- ‘Journaling required students to learn actively, responsibly and cooperatively.’
- ‘Using our journal entries = fair in giving everyone a chance to participate in the dialogue.’
- ‘There were clear takeaways in terms of becoming more honest in personal reflection and conducting more productive moral dialogues.’

Evaluation

1. Experimental ethos
2. Knowledge gaps
3. Specific feedback

References

- D.L. Hubbs & C.F. Brand (2005). 'The paper mirror: understanding reflective journaling', *Journal of Experiential Education* 28(1).
- M.L. Swindell & J. Watson (2006). 'Teaching ethics through self-reflective journaling', *Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics* 3(1).
- P.R. Hedberg (2017). 'Guiding moral behavior through a reflective learning practice', *Journal of Management Education* 41(4).
- A.L. Cunliffe (2004). 'On becoming a critically reflexive practitioner', *Journal of Management Education* 28(4).