

semester two

Happy New Year 2026 and Welcome Home, CAPTains!

Dear CAPTains,

A warm welcome back to your home away from home, to all Y1s, Y2s, CAPT Senior Programme (CSP) returning Seniors, Exchangers, Resident Assistants - and not to forget our very own Master and Fellows!

Do look out for these exciting living and learning opportunities this Semester:

- New Junior Seminar on Documentary Photography (Dr Patrick Wade)
- New Senior Seminar on Dengue, Deforestation and Displacement (Dr Debby Ng)
- Reading Group on Minorities & Languages (Ms Wong Soon Fen & A/P Bruce Lockhart), starting Week 3

Dr Daniel Jew
Director of Studies, Jan 2026



Dr Jew with Dr Lavanya Balachandran, Ms Magdalene Tong, and Dr Khattapan Jantarwongsri (Chulalongkorn University) after a recent conference on Community Engagement

NEW JUNIOR SEMINAR:

UTC1423 Documentary Photography: Awareness, Spectatorship, and Storytelling

Dr Patrick Wade



This course explores the ways that documentary photography, from 19th century photography for social reform to contemporary digital storytelling, has shaped collective understandings of truth, accountability, identity, and humanity. Students will learn about significant photographers, analyse their photographs, interrogate ethical issues in documentary practice, and study how visual narratives inform and persuade their audiences. Through readings, case studies, and creative practice, students will gain tools to interpret photography as a social force and produce their own documentary projects. By the end of the semester, students will become both responsible spectators and competent visual storytellers.

Find out more on Junior Seminars, visit

<https://capt.nus.edu.sg/current-students/utcp/junior-seminars>

NEW SENIOR SEMINAR:

UTC2421 Dengue, Deforestation and Displacement

Dr Debby Ng



Every outbreak tells a bigger story — about access to healthcare, housing, income, and political voice within communities. Dengue, Deforestation, and Displacement explores how environment, society, and governance shape infectious diseases in Singapore and the region. Using a One Health lens, this course focuses on dengue and neglected tropical diseases, and examines how urbanisation, deforestation, and politics influence community disease risk. Case studies from Singapore and Southeast Asia ground interdisciplinary readings and lively discussions. Students explore how communities navigate health, development, and environmental justice, and why behavioural measures matter as much as medical ones.

Find out more on Senior Seminars, visit

<https://capt.nus.edu.sg/current-students/utcp/senior-seminars>

ACADEMIC VISITOR THIS SEMESTER

Dr Phyllis Blumberg

Phyllis Blumberg, PhD is a faculty coach who helps university faculty members teach better to improve students learning and foster student success. She will share ways you can succeed both as a student and in your community work. She recently co-edited a book with National University of Singapore colleagues (Lynette Tan, RC4 and Daniel Jew, CAPT) that extends her work for Asian educators. She is happy to share her life story as she came of age in the United States during a time of change and disruption that is like now. With her passion for environmental sustainability, Phyllis helps people to take safe and effective actions that can support our inhabitable world and trains people how to counter climate disinformation and misinformation in social media and in conversations.

During her stay from 16 March to 1 April, she will be interacting with CAPTains and sharing her experiences and expertise, helping students succeed through a skill building session. In her Master's Tea she will share more about her own life story and is happy to answer your questions. Phyllis also welcomes conversations about environmental sustainability. She is quite informal, approachable, and eager to get to know you and learn about her life at NUS.



Programme Highlights

**Master's Tea presentation
and Q&A on her life and
journey as an educator**

Mon, 16 March, 4-6pm
CAPT Master's Commons

**Workshop on Student
Success**

Mon, 23 March, 4-6pm
CAPT Master's Commons

UTC24I0B COMMUNITY, CULTURE, CONSERVATION: INSIGHTS FROM NEPAL : 7 to 20 December 2025

Community, Culture, Conservation: Interplay of Tradition & Innovation

STEER Nepal 2025, guided by the theme of “Community, Culture and Conservation”, focused on exploring community development models, cultural practices and conservation initiatives through the interplay of tradition and innovation. This exploration was conducted through pre-trip preparations and an experiential learning journey in Kathmandu, Pokhara and the Annapurna Region of Nepal from 7 to 20 December 2025. The team included 26 CAPTains, 2 CAPT Fellows (Ms Wong Soon Fen, Dr Kankana Mukhopadhyay) and 2 Teaching Assistants (David Ng, Year 3 CAPTain, and Fong Kai Jun, Year 4 CAPTain).

Eleven pre-trip sessions introduced the students to the various concepts and issues around community, culture and conservation in Nepal through classroom discussions, presentations and guest lectures. Distinguished speakers included Prof Subhasish Ray, Mr Lim Cheng Puay, Ms Shilshila Acharya, Mr Sushil Khadka, and Mr Donovan Liew. Topics ranged from the history and politics of Nepal to indigenous knowledge as climate solutions. Student presentations focused on partner organisations and sites to be visited, while physical training sessions prepared the team for hiking in the Annapurna region.

The 2-week cultural immersion trip fostered learning through interactions with the following partner organisations, institutions and communities:

Kathmandu & Patan

- Avni Centre for Sustainability (ACS): Understanding indigenous knowledge as climate solutions and engaging with recycling units to see up-cycling initiatives in action.
- Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya (MPP): Exploring the preservation of Nepal’s cultural heritage through Nepali language conservation and archiving.
- Heritage Sites: Immersive visits to UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including Kathmandu Durbar Square, Patan Durbar Square and Boudhanath Stupa.

Pokhara

- Prithvi Narayan Campus (PNC), Tribhuvan University & Pokhara Lincoln International College (PLIC): A student-led colloquium was conducted involving presentations and cultural exchange between NUS, PNC and PLIC students. The colloquium was moderated by our TA Fong Kai Jun and PNC post-graduate student Sailtaaj Kunwar.



UTC2410B COMMUNITY, CULTURE, CONSERVATION: INSIGHTS FROM NEPAL : 7 to 20 December 2025



- Namaste Community Foundation (NCF): Visiting the Women's Empowerment Project (WEP) in Ghachowk to understand how skills training facilitates economic and social independence for women.

Annapurna Region

- Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP): Engaging with ACAP teams and village committees in Ghandruk and Bhujung to learn about biodiversity conservation, sustainable tourism and integrated community development projects.

The learning journey was further enriched by insightful dialogues with journalists, industry experts and volunteers, including Mr Kanak Mani Dixit, Chairman of MPP, and Mr Shankar Vaidya, former ACAP hydro power engineer. There were also sharing sessions with Singaporeans Dr Winston, Dr Shermin Chin, Mr Wesley and Ms Serene Lim, who shared their experiences of working and living in Nepal.

Beyond these dialogues, the expedition unfolded as a sensory and emotional odyssey, shifting from the vibrant chaos of Kathmandu to the serene majesty of the Annapurna region. The physical demands of traveling to Ghandruk and Bhujung were rewarded by the warmth of the Gurung community, where conventional barriers between "guest" and "host" dissolved. Whether watching families prepare meals over firewood, dancing with locals, or sharing stories by a campfire under blackout skies, the team witnessed a profound hospitality that prioritised human connection over material comfort.

This immersion challenged students to look past the lack of modern conveniences and recognise the abundance of relational wealth and stewardship in these communities. It was a lesson in cultural humility that brought the course's core theme to life, revealing that true resilience is found not just in economic metrics, but in the dynamic interplay of tradition and innovation across the realms of community, culture and conservation.

Written by Fong Kai Jun, Year 4 CAPTain and TA for STEER Nepal 2025

UTC2420A Sustainability in SEAsia: Study trip to Indochina: 4 to 14 December 2025

The field trip component of UTC2402A Sustainability in Southeast Asia: Study trip to Indochina took place over 11 days in December 2025, bringing together 24 CAPT students at the conclusion of a semester of in-class discussions, guest lectures, and applied assignments.

The study trip began in the mountainous region of Northern Vietnam where students spent time in Mu Cang Chai and Ngoc Chien. By living in the villages, students were immersed in local cultures and livelihoods, gaining deeper understanding of community-based tourism and conservation challenges faced by rural communities. Through dialogues with village leaders and community members, students learned how tourism needs to be carefully planned and managed, and witnessed first-hand how community values and priorities can shape tourism, ensuring that income generation supports the preservation of traditions, skills and local knowledge.



Starting the day with breakfast and a view at the Mu Cang Chai.

A nightly debrief session after a full day of activities in Ngoc Chien, creating space for reflection and shared learning.



CAPTains harvesting potatoes for the first time, gaining hands-on insights into crops grown in the region.

UTC2420A Sustainability in SEAsia: Study trip to Indochina: 4 to 14 December 2025

The second half of the trip was based in Hanoi. Students visited organisations including KOTO, Will to Live Centre, Blue Dragon Children's Foundation, and Think Playgrounds, learning how social enterprises and NGOs contribute to different Sustainable Development Goals in practice. With Friends of Vietnam Heritage, students visited the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology and took part in a guided treasure hunt through the Old Quarter, using the city itself as a site of learning. The programme also included exchanges with students from the Faculty of Tourism Studies at Vietnam National University.



Engagement with students and faculty at the Faculty of Tourism Studies, Vietnam National University. Informal interactions and budding friendships with local youths offered insights into Vietnamese youths' perspectives.



Visit to KOTO in Hanoi. Students learnt how a social enterprise supports youth development through vocational training.



Visit to the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology about Vietnam's multicultural heritage.

In-class presentations - students discussed contemporary issues in Vietnam.



Route planning for a heritage treasure hunt organised by Friends of Vietnam Heritage



Guest lecture by Dr Debby Ng on crafting digital stories and narratives.