

PROGRAMME

10.00 – 10.10 am	Introduction by moderator: Dr. Adil Johan Research Fellow KITA
10.15 – 11.00 am	Talk by: Dr Benjamin YH Loh Senior Lecturer <i>School of Media and Communication</i> <i>Faculty of Social Sciences and Leisure Management, Taylor's University</i>
11.00 – 11.50 am	Q & A Session
11.50 pm – 12.00 pm	Closing remarks

About KITA Discourse Series

KITA Discourse Series provides a platform for interested scholars and graduate students to present his or her ideas on any social issues pertaining to ethnicity which may be subsequently published in UKM Ethnic Studies Paper Series. For further information, please email rachelchansuetkay@ukm.edu.my.



KITA Series Discourse 3/2021

Exploring and understanding Internet bubbles and how they deepen ethnic divides in Malaysia through digital ethnography

Dr Benjamin YH Loh
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School of Media and Communication
Faculty of Social Sciences and Leisure Management
Taylor's University

26th November 2021 (Friday)
10.00 am – 12.00 pm
This seminar will be broadcasted on:
Zoom & KITA Facebook Live

ABSTRACT

The advent of the Internet brought about the promise of a borderless world, free from the trappings and inequalities of the physical world. This did not come to pass as offline structures are replicated in online spaces. Social media brought with it AI-driven algorithms and filter bubbles that further entrench people's echo chambers. Even as big data appears to be a natural response to analyze these digital frontiers, a more humanistic approach is needed to dissect how people can be misled by algorithms and cultivate warped worldviews. Digital ethnography is the ideal approach where the researcher immerses themselves into these online spaces, to understand the inherent contexts, biases, coded language and behavioural ticks that emerge. Akin to traditional anthropology, the researcher has to exercise self-reflexivity to maintain objectivity, understand alternative perspectives, and to avoid creeping biases. In Malaysia's fractured online spaces where online discourses are divided by race and language, digital ethnography is an important tool to understand how racial divides extend into the online space, are allowed to fester through troll interference and can entrench and deepen racialized thought. Dr Benjamin Loh will share his experience in studying these online spaces and how they are used as a convenient shadow of "public opinion".

PRESENTER'S PROFILE

DR BENJAMIN YH LOH is a media scholar that employs digital ethnography to study online communities and the digital public sphere in Malaysia and the region. He focuses much of his work on the confluence between technology and society, with a particular focus on minority and marginalized communities. He is the co-editor of "Sabah from the Ground: The 2020 Elections and the Politics of Survival" (SIRD/ISEAS, 2021) and publishes Op-Eds with Malaysiakini, SCMP and Nikkei Asia Review. He is currently a senior lecturer at the School of Media and Communication at Taylor's University and an Associate with the Asia Centre.

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