

## PROGRAMME

2.15pm – 2.30pm	Registration
2.30pm – 2.45pm	Opening Remarks: Dr. Adil Johan Research Fellow, KITA
2.45pm – 3.30pm	Talk by:  <b>Dr. Humairah Zainal</b> Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine Singapore
3.30pm – 4.00pm	Q&A and End

### 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 [govinjega@ukm.edu.my](mailto:govinjega@ukm.edu.my).



**KITA**  
INSTITUT KAJIAN ETNIK  
INSTITUTE OF ETHNIC STUDIES

## KITA Discourse Series 3/2019

Young People's Reception of Inter-Ethnic Themes in  
Malaysian Films

**Dr. Humairah Zainal**  
Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine  
Singapore

19<sup>th</sup> February 2019 (Tuesday)  
2.30pm – 4.00pm

KITA's Meeting Room  
Level 4, Administration Building,  
Kolej Keris Mas,  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi

## **ABSTRACT**

This research is an ethnographic study of young people's attitudes towards inter-ethnic relations in Malaysia based on their interpretations of ethnicised themes in local films. Adopting an intersectional perspective, it interrogates how Malaysian undergraduates engage with selected local films in relation to the broader social, cultural and political contexts of their everyday lives. Despite the burgeoning corpus of literature on intersectionality as a concept, theory and methodology, little has been written on how the socially constructed categories of ethnicity, religion, class and gender are interweaved to shape young people's lived multi-ethnic experience. Furthermore, existing empirical works that examine audience engagement with films have not given much attention to the immediate social context of film viewing. Meaning-making processes have been analysed largely in terms of how personal situations influence the audience's engagement with films. Hence, by treating youth's reception of films as a dynamic social process, this research explores how the audience negotiate inter-ethnic relations in Malaysia in relation to other social subjects. More broadly, by examining the ways in which their narratives converge with or diverge from portrayals of inter-ethnic relations in films, the research aims to uncover macro-level and underground processes behind inter-ethnic discourses in contemporary Malaysian society. This is based on the notion that films are sites where multiple actors lend their artistic voices to the final product. Methodologically, it draws on findings from participant observation of film screening sessions, in-depth individual interviews and focus group discussions with a total of 96 Malaysian undergraduates from two universities in the greater Kuala Lumpur region. Overall, this study argues that a comprehensive understanding of youth's attitudes towards inter-ethnic relations in the country requires not just an examination of micro-level mechanisms behind the tensions that continue to plague the local society, but of the interaction of both micro and macro processes.

## **PRESENTER'S PROFILE**

Dr Humairah Zainal is a Research Fellow at Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine in Singapore. She earned her Ph.D. in Sociology from Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in August 2018. She has lectured courses on Malay films at Singapore University of Social Sciences and has presented at various international conferences including at Harvard University. Her research interests include race, class and gender inequalities, as well as popular culture in Southeast Asia. Her research articles have appeared in *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, *Marriage and Family Review*, *South East Asia Research* and *Indonesia and the Malay World*, amongst others.

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