

## Art, Authoritarianism, Activism in Contemporary Southeast Asia



This faculty collective will investigate artistic and literary responses to authoritarian regimes in Southeast Asia. Recent news from Myanmar, the Philippines, and Thailand demonstrates how authoritarianism is prevalent in Southeast Asian politics. These range from Filipino president Rodrigo Duterte's lethal crackdowns on drugs and dissent, to violent repression of student protests by Thailand's government-military-monarchy triad, to the Singaporean state's technocratic calibrated coercion of social life, to the February 2021 military coup and current conflicts in Myanmar. In the past decade, studies of Southeast Asian authoritarianism come out of political science and focus on the activities of state agents, civil society, and NGOs (Slater 2010; Morgenbesser 2020; Weiss 2020). Two exceptions are collections on Southeast Asian film (Khoo, Barker, and Ainslie 2020) and theater/performance (Tan and Rajendran 2020). Our group addresses this gap by discussing new and emerging Southeast Asian art, music, visual media, and literature that critique authoritarianism and enable activism but have not yet received substantial critical attention.

Group members' research expertise offer interdisciplinary perspectives for discussing Southeast Asian artistic production, political critique, and activism going beyond conventional area studies approaches that often valorize the social sciences. Online talks and presentations by guest speakers hosted throughout the year will be open to UCR faculty and students and members of the public. Research developed in this working group will become scholarly publications or educational materials accessible to the public.

### Faculty Coordinators

Weihsin Gui – English  
Deborah Wong – Music  
Sarita See – Media and Cultural Studies  
Tamara Ho – Gender & Sexuality Studies  
Emily Hue – Ethnic Studies

This project is affiliated with the [UCR Southeast Asia: Ritual, Text and Performance](#) program