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**12-14 December 2018, Wednesday to Friday**  
*NUS Law (Bukit Timah Campus) Block B Level 3, Executive Seminar Room*

## The Law and Politics of Freedom of Religion in Asia

This conference jointly organized by the National University of Singapore's Faculty of Law (with the support of the Centre for Asian Legal Studies) and the Brigham Young University's International Centre for Law and Religion Studies examines the law and politics of freedom of religion in Asia, specifically in doctrinal, empirical, and theoretical analysis on how religious freedom has been interpreted in Asian jurisdictions, how the state has regulated religion, and the underlying legal, political, and social influences contributing to the politicization of the right.

The right to religious freedom is well-established under international law and is included in most constitutions in the world. However, the scope and content of the right remains highly contested in many Asian jurisdictions. While the right to freedom of religion is included in constitutional texts of most countries the region and the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion has been included in the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, the way this freedom is understood varies widely among Asian states. This is complicated by the fact that Asia is one of the most religiously diverse regions in the world, and that religious freedom is understood differently in these different traditions. Furthermore, insofar as religious freedom is premised upon a particular conception of religion, its applicability to a non-Christian, non-Anglo-European context, may require further interrogation. A strong emphasis on state / government interests among many Asian jurisdictions may result in the under-valuation and under-protection of religious freedom.

Certain trends within the region including politicization of religion and the rise of religious nationalism has impacted religious freedom. Religious freedom is embroiled in political contestation among majority-minority groups: majority groups, striving to assert their privileged status, would seek to impose laws that restricts the rights of minorities to profess, manifest, and practice their religion. While such restrictions have been justified as necessary to maintain inter-group harmony, their effect has been to ensure a priority of one religion over others. The politicization of the freedom of religion further manifests itself in the use of the term to advance and resist restrictions on religious group rights whereby both the proponents and opponents of discriminatory laws employ the language of religious freedom to advocate their respective positions. By engaging with the Asian experience, the conference seeks to contribute to a broader examination of the politicization of religion and religious freedom in the world, while providing insights from Asia.

*Conveners: Jaclyn L. Neo (NUS Law); Brett Scharffs (BYU); and Neville Rochow (BYU)*

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### REGISTRATION

There is no registration fee for this seminar but seats are limited.  
Closing Date: **05 December 2018 (Wednesday)**  
For enquiries, please contact Wendy Wee at [lawwhm@nus.edu.sg](mailto:lawwhm@nus.edu.sg)

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