

DR TAN SEOW HON
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF LAW
SJD LLM (Harvard), LLB (First Class Hons)(NUS)
Advocate & Solicitor (Singapore)
seowhontan@smu.edu.sg
www.tanseowhon.com

Capsule Biography

Prior to joining SMU, Seow Hon was an associate professor at the Faculty of Law, National University of Singapore (NUS). Seow Hon has won numerous teaching awards at the school and university levels in both NUS and SMU. Her research interest is primarily in jurisprudence. She is especially interested in natural law theory, liberty and the enforcement of morality, public reason and public decision-making, the relation between justice and mercy, and the application of jurisprudential frameworks in particular contexts. She is also passionate about how legal education influences moral and professional identities and how it may be geared to inculcate salutary legal ideals. Seow Hon has presented papers in international conferences in Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Switzerland.

As a teacher of jurisprudence, Seow Hon seeks to make the classroom a space for students to reflect on the concepts of law and justice. Her aim is for students to discover for themselves the nature, purpose and function of law, what gives law legitimacy, how law interacts with other social phenomena, and how law's transformative potential may be harnessed, thereby facilitating the students' understanding of their future roles in the legal process.

Seow Hon studied in NUS on an OCBC Scholarship and graduated from NUS with First Class Honours. She was the valedictorian for her class, winning prizes for being the best graduate throughout her course of studies and being the top student in several other years, as well as subject prizes for obtaining the highest marks in jurisprudence, public international law, public law, and company law. She obtained an LLM and an SJD from Harvard Law School on scholarships from NUS and was also awarded the Gammon Fellowship and the Byse Fellowship from Harvard Law School. As a Byse Fellow, she taught a seven-session self-designed workshop titled "Law & morality: A critical examination of natural law theory and its relevance in a pluralist world". Her doctoral thesis, titled "Justice as Friendship: A Normative Understanding of Legal Relations", involved study in the fields of jurisprudence, ancient Greek philosophy, and the Western Christian tradition.

EDUCATION

SJD (Harvard Law School)
LLM (Harvard Law School)
LLB (First Class Hons) (National University of Singapore)

OTHER QUALIFICATION

International Entry Course, Singapore Institute of Arbitrators
Advocate & Solicitor (Singapore)
Postgraduate Practical Law Course

ACADEMIC AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIPS

Byse Fellowship (Harvard Law School)	2003–4
NUS Overseas Graduate Scholarship	2001–4, 1998–9
Gammon Fellowship (Harvard Law School)	1998–9
Lee Kuan Yew Gold Medal (NUS)	1997
Adrian Clark Memorial Medal (NUS)	1997

Leow Chia Heng Prize (NUS)	1997
Montrose Prize for Jurisprudence (NUS)	1997
Goh Heng Leong Scholarship (NUS)	1996
Drew and Napier Third Year Prize (NUS)	1996
Koh Han Kok Book Prize for International Law (NUS)	1996
Gower Prize for Company Law (NUS)	1996
Drew and Napier Public Law Prize (NUS)	1995
Law Society of Singapore Book Prize (NUS)	1996, 1995, 1994
Shook Lin & Bok Prize (NUS)	1995, 1994
OCBC Scholarship	1993–7

TEACHING AND RELATED AWARDS/NOMINATION

- Singapore Management University School of Law Dean's Teaching Excellence Award, 2021-2022.
- Singapore Management University School of Law Dean's Teaching Excellence Award, 2019-2020.
- Singapore Management University School of Law Dean's Teaching Excellence Award, 2018-2019.
- Singapore Management University School of Law Most Outstanding Teacher Award, 2017-2018.
- Singapore Management University Student Life Award 2017.
- Singapore Management University School of Law Dean's Teaching Excellence Award, 2016-2017.
- Singapore Management University School of Law Dean's Teaching Excellence Award, 2015-2016.
- Singapore Management University Excellent Teacher Award 2015.
- Singapore Management University School of Law Most Outstanding Teacher Award, 2014-2015.
- Nomination for Singapore Management University Excellent Teacher Award 2014.
- Singapore Management University School of Law Dean's Teaching Excellence Award, 2013-2014.
- Singapore Management University Innovative Teacher Award 2013.
- Singapore Management University School of Law Most Outstanding Teacher Award, 2012-2013.
- Singapore Management University School of Law Dean's Teaching Excellence Award, 2011-2012.
- National University of Singapore Annual Teaching Excellence Award, 2008-2009.
- National University of Singapore Faculty of Law Teaching Award, 2008-2009.
- National University of Singapore Annual Teaching Excellence Award, 2007-2008.
- National University of Singapore Annual Teaching Excellence Award, 2005-2006.

SUBJECTS TAUGHT

Jurisprudence: Modern and Critical Theories of Law: CORLAW2612

Legal Theory and Philosophy: LAW301

PUBLICATIONS

I. Monograph

[JUSTICE AS FRIENDSHIP: A THEORY OF LAW](#). Hardback 2015. Paperback edition issued in 2017. 206pp.

Reviews:

Collin May, <https://voegelinview.com/8506-2/>.

Ethan J Leib, [4 AMITY: JOURNAL OF FRIENDSHIP STUDIES 38-40 \(2017\)](#);

Graham M Smith, [15 CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL THEORY 492-496 \(2016\)](#);

HL Ho, SING. J. LEG. STUD. 276-278 (2016);

Kenny Chng, <http://www.singaporelawblog.sg/blog/article/137>.

II. Journal Articles

- *Punishing Individuals Who Complied with Intolerably Unjust 'Laws' in Predecessor Regimes*, Israel Law Review (forthcoming)

- *Radbruch's Formula Revisited: The 'Lex Injusta Non Est Lex' Maxim in Constitutional Democracies*, CANADIAN JOURNAL OF LAW & JURISPRUDENCE [34 Can J Law & Juris 461-491](#) (2021).
- *Surrogacy and Human Flourishing*, 45 JOURNAL OF LEGAL PHILOSOPHY 49-79 (2020).
- *The Case Against Physician-Assisted Suicide and Voluntary Active Euthanasia: A Jurisprudential Consideration*, [29 SING. ACAD. L.J. 375-400 \(2017\)](#) .
- *The Problems with Moral Subjectivism*, THINK, Vol 16, Issue 46, pp. 25–36 (2017).
- *Between Judicial Oligarchy and Parliamentary Supremacy: Understanding the Court's Dilemma in Constitutional Judicial Review*, [SING. J. LEG. STUD. 307-335 \(2016\)](#).
- *Law Firm Internships and the Making of Future Lawyers: An Empirical Study in Singapore* 17 LEGAL ETHICS 79–106 (2014).
- *Religion in the Abortion Discourse in Singapore: A Case Study of the Relevance of Religious Arguments in Law-making in Multi-Religious Democracies* XXVI JOURNAL OF LAW & RELIGION 505–539 (2011).
- *Birthing the Lawyer: The impact of three years of law school on law students in the National University of Singapore* (2010) SING. J. LEG. STUD. 417–458.
- *Law school and the making of the student into a lawyer: Transformation of first year law students in the National University of Singapore* 12 LEGAL ETHICS 125–170 (2009).
- *Pragmatism, morals legislation and criminalization of homosexual acts in Singapore* 3(2) JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE LAW 285–304 (2009).
- *Teaching Legal Ideals through Jurisprudence* 43 LAW TEACHER 14–36 (2009).
 - Reprinted in LEGAL THEORY AND THE LEGAL ACADEMY (Maksymilian Del Mar, William Twining and Michael Giudice eds.) (Ashgate, 2010).
- *Legal Education, Philosophy and Values Consciousness of the Law Student* 15 INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LEARNING 197–203 (2008).
- *Validity and Obligation in Natural Law Theory* 15 REGENT U.L. REV. 195–221 (2003).
- *Justification in Finnis's Natural Law Theory* (2000) SING. J. LEG. STUD. 590–639.
- *A New-found Significance for Non-Exclusive Jurisdiction Clauses?* SING. J. LEG. STUD. 298–326 (2000).
- *Treatment of Multi-Courts Jurisdiction Agreements* 13 SING. ACAD. L. J. 120–134 (2000).
- *The Constitution as "Comforter" - An Assessment of the Safeguards in Singapore's Constitutional System* 16 SING. L. REV. 104–156 (1995).

III. Case Notes

- Surrogacy, child's welfare and public policy in adoption applications: *UKM v. Attorney-General*, [SING. J. LEG. STUD. 263-273 \(2019\)](#)

IV. Chapters

- *Justice as friendship: The relevance of friendship in theorising about law*, SMITH, DEVERE & VON HEYKING EDS., FRIENDSHIP STUDIES: POLITICS AND PRACTICES 99–125 (Ibidem-Verlag, Oct 2023).
- *Legislating and enforcing for containment in a pandemic: An introduction to jurisprudential issues raised by COVID-19 (Temporary Measures)(Control Order) Regulations 2020*, GURREA-MARTINEZ ETC, EDS., [LAW AND COVID-19](#) 186-201 (2020).
- *Critique, philosophy, and the legally-trained citizen's role in working towards just institutions*, GANE & HUANG, EDS., LEGAL EDUCATION IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT: OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES 111–130 (Ashgate, 2016).
- *Legal Education in Singapore: Current Issues and Challenges*, CHAN & LEE, EDS., THE LEGAL SYSTEM OF SINGAPORE: INSTITUTIONS, PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES 234–275 (Lexis-Nexis, 2015).
- *Constitutional Jurisprudence: Beyond Supreme Law: A Law Higher Still?* THIO & TAN, EDS., EVOLUTION OF A REVOLUTION: 40 YEARS OF THE SINGAPORE CONSTITUTION 79–113 (Routledge-Cavendish, 2009).
- *Religion and abortion in Singapore* KOH & KWA, EDS., ISSUES OF LAW AND JUSTICE IN SINGAPORE 87–113 (Armour, 2009).

V. Other professional periodicals/academic blog posts

- [Strengthening the Institution of Marriage as the Union of One Man and One Woman](#), LAW GAZETTE (March 2023).
- [How Surrogacy Arrangements Fail Children](#), PUBLIC DISCOURSE: THE JOURNAL OF THE WITHERSPOON INSTITUTE (February 16, 2021).
- *Adding value to law firm internships*, LAW GAZETTE, [Nov 2012, p.13](#).

VI. Selected book reviews

- *Review of LAW, LOVE AND FREEDOM: FROM THE SACRED TO THE SECULAR by Joshua Neoh* [Oxford J. Law & Rel](#)
- *Review of LIBERAL LEGALITY: A UNIFIED THEORY OF OUR LAW by Lewis Sargentich* 44 AUST. J. LEGAL PHIL. 142-146 (2019)
- *Review of CITIZENSHIP AND THE PURSUIT OF THE WORTHY LIFE by David Thunder* (2018) SING. J. LEG. STUD. 164-166.
- *Review of A REPLY TO LEGAL POSITIVISM: THE ARGUMENT FROM INJUSTICE by Robert Alexy* (2003) SING. J. LEG. STUD. 302–306.

VII. Op-eds

- *Signposting as a Principle in Lawmaking*, STRAITS TIMES, 27 September 2018.
- *Should Commercial Surrogacy be Legalised?*, STRAITS TIMES, 17 January 2018.
- *Finding and Losing Dad*, SUNDAY TIMES, 19 June 2016.
- *Parsing the 24-Week Rule for Abortions*, STRAITS TIMES, 18 December 2014.
- *Time Again to Review Abortion Laws*, TODAY, 1 April 2013.
- *Internships and the Making of Future Lawyers*, STRAITS TIMES, 3 September 2012.
- *Money Buys Everything?*, STRAITS TIMES, 11 June 2012.
- *Room for Religion in Public Discourse*, TODAY, 7 April 2011.
- *Time for Singapore to Relook Abortion Law*, THE STRAITS TIMES, 24 July 2008.
- *Giving Voice to the Religious*, STRAITS TIMES, 25 October 2007.
- *Redefining Marriage*, STRAITS TIMES, 30 July 2007.
- *The Scandal of Christmas*, STRAITS TIMES, 25 December 2006.
- *True Love? Look No Further than Friendship*, STRAITS TIMES, 14 October 2006.
- *Is it all a Question of Openness?*, STRAITS TIMES, 15 March 2006.
- *Exam Grading - a Worthwhile Exercise*, STRAITS TIMES, 26 November 2005.
- *Make it a Gift from the Heart for Mom*, STRAITS TIMES, 7 May 2005.
- *It's All Right to be Wrong, Sometimes*, STRAITS TIMES, 5 May 2005.
- *A Blog on your Character*, STRAITS TIMES, 21 April 2005.
- *Slaves to Multi-tasking*, STRAITS TIMES, 29 March 2005.
- *No Vision? Youths need Role Models*, STRAITS TIMES, 13 February 2005.
- *Critical Thinking Straight from the Heart*, STRAITS TIMES, 7 January 2005.
- *Charlie Brown ponders Christmas*, STRAITS TIMES, 25 December 2004.
- *Free Will's a Gamble*, STRAITS TIMES, 29 November 2004.
- *True Believers or Moral Absolutists*, STRAITS TIMES, 15 November 2004.
- *Learning to Live a Life that's Full*, STRAITS TIMES, 22 September 2004.
- *Larger Issues at Stake in Unnatural Sex Debate*, STRAITS TIMES, 26 November 2003.

VIII. Teaching/pedagogy-related publications

- *Reflections on Teaching by ATEA and Honour Roll Recipients* CDTL LINK, July 2009, Volume 13, No. 2. ([Online](#)).

- *Encouraging youth engagement in the public square* CDTL BRIEF, May 2009, Volume 12 No. 2.
- *Difficult Conversations: Turning Taboo Topics that Polite People Avoid into Pedagogical Occasions* CDTL LINK, January 2009, Volume 13, No. 1. [\(Online\)](#).
- *Teaching the Weightier Matters of the Law* CDTL BRIEF, September 2007, Volume 10, No. 4.

RESEARCH AFFILIATION

- Affiliated researcher, Research Program on Law and Religion in the Asia-Pacific Region, University of Queensland School of Law.

RESEARCH GRANTS

- Ministry of Education Academic Research Grant (SMU), Tier 1 (Grant No 11-C234-SMU-005), 2011: Law Internships and the Moral and Professional Transformation of Law Students.
- Ministry of Education Academic Research Grant (NUS), Tier 1 (Grant No R-241-000-051-112), 2007: Teaching Legal Theory: Imparting Legal Ideals to Future Lawyers.
- Ministry of Education Academic Research Grant (NUS), Tier 1 (Grant No R-241-000-042-112), 2006: The Making of the Singaporean Lawyer.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS, SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS, TALKS

- *Success and Flourishing: The Impact of Laws, Policies and Legal Discourse in Singapore on the Character and Ethos of the People* (Invited presenter, Special Workshop on Poor Laws, Public Vices and the Deterioration of Character, in World Congress of the International Association for Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy, Soongsil University, Seoul, South Korea, 8 July 2024).
- *Decriminalizing Homosexual Acts, Strengthening Heterosexual Monogamous Marriage: A Jurisprudential Analysis of Singapore's Unique Approach Towards Heterosexual Norms* (Presenter, IVR Japan 2023, Chiba University, 17 September 2023).
- *Globalization, Lawyers, and Emerging Economies: ASEAN* (Invited participant, Invitation-only Workshop, Harvard Law School Center on the Legal Profession and SMU Yong Pung How School of Law, 5 August 2023).
- *Christian Faith and Jurisprudence* (Invited speaker, The 15th CLF Conference & 2023 Asia Christian Lawyers Conference, Online and South Korea, 29 July 2023).
- *Punishing Subjects Who Complied with Intolerably Unjust Laws* (Invited speaker, Edinburgh Centre for Legal Theory seminar, University of Edinburgh, Online, 22 September 2022).
- *Imago Dei and the Right to Life: Understanding the Cultural Divide* (Invited speaker, Arete Academy, Online, 9 May 2022).
- *Radbruch's Formula: Theory and Practice* (Presenter, Faculty Research Seminar, Yong Pung How School of Law, Singapore Management University, Online, 19 November 2021).
- *Surrogacy and Human Flourishing* (Presenter, Inaugural Conference of the Society for Christian Bioethicists (United Kingdom), Online, 4-6 November 2021).
- *Punishing Subjects Who Complied with Intolerably Unjust Laws* (Presenter, IVR Serbia: Rule of Law Beyond the Nation-State: International, Supranational, Transnational Contexts, Serbian Association for Legal and Social Philosophy, Online, 10-11 September 2021).
- *Post-Liberal Religious Liberty* (Invited speaker, Law & Religion Speaker Series, Centre for Asian Legal Studies, Faculty of Law, National University of Singapore, Online, 20 May 2021).
- *Legislating and Enforcing for Containment in a Pandemic: Jurisprudential Issues Raised in Singapore's Covid Laws* (Presenter, IVR Turkey International Workshop 2021: Philosophy and Law in Times of Crisis, International Association for Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy Turkey, Online, 8-9 April 2021).
- *Radbruch's Formula in Constitutional Democracies* (Presenter, IVR Japan International Workshop 2020, International Association for Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy Japan, Online, 21 November 2020).

- *Jurisprudence and Law's World* (Invited Speaker, Continuing Education Program for Justices' Law Clerks, Supreme Court, Singapore, 9 September 2019).
- *Commercial Surrogacy and Human Flourishing* (Presenter, XXIX IVR World Congress, International Association for Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy, University of Lucerne, Switzerland, 7-12 July 2019).
- *Debating about Sanctity of Life in a Pluralistic Society* (Invited speaker, Arete Academy, Bangkok, 14 August 2019).
- *Defending the Most Vulnerable* (Invited panellist, Arete Academy, Bangkok, 14 August 2019).
- *Surrogacy, Child's Welfare, and Public Policy in Adoption Applications* (Presenter, Staff Research Seminar, Singapore Management University School of Law, 26 March 2019).
- *Law-making in a Pluralist Democracy: Abortion Laws* (Speaker, SMU Law For All Outreach Project, Catholic Junior College, 14 November 2018).
- *Surrogacy and Human Flourishing* (Presenter, Staff Research Seminar, Singapore Management University School of Law, 8 November 2018).
- *Focus on Teaching* (Panellist, National Conference on Technology Enhanced Learning, National University of Singapore, Singapore, 21-22 November 2017).
- *A Biblical Jurisprudence* (Presenter, Asian Conference on Ethics, Religion and Philosophy, International Academic Forum, Kobe, Japan, 31 March-3 April 2016).
- *Justice as Friendship* (Presenter, Asian Conference on Ethics, Religion and Philosophy, International Academic Forum, Kobe, Japan, 31 March-3 April 2016).
- *Bringing out the best in students* (Centre of Teaching Excellence, Teaching Award Winners' Series, Singapore Management University, 16 May 2014).
- *Critique, philosophy, and the legally-trained citizen's role in working towards just institutions* (Invited speaker, Law Deans' Summit, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 26 October 2013).
- *Connecting Worlds: Teaching Philosophy in a Professional School* (Centre of Teaching Excellence, Presentation by Nominees of Innovative Teacher Award, Singapore Management University, 17 September 2013).
- *The Impact of Law Firm Internships on the Construction of Professional Identities of Future Lawyers* (Presenter, International Legal Ethics Conference V, Banff, Alberta, Canada, 12-14 July 2012).
- *Jurisprudence and the circulation of critique* (Invited speaker, Panel on "Legal education and the circulation of critique", Global Legal Education Forum, Harvard SJD Association, Harvard Law School, USA, 23-25 March 2012).
- *Making sense of the 'irreducibly religious dimension' of some public square issues* (Invited speaker, Panel on "Time to shine a light on religion", "Reporting Religion: Dilemmas of Public Discourse" Conference, Asia Journalism Fellowship – Institute of Policy Studies, 6-7 April 2011).
- *Birthing the Lawyer: The impact of three years of law school on law students in the National University of Singapore* (Presenter, International Legal Ethics Conference IV, Stanford Law School, USA, 15-18 July 2010).
- *Bringing out the best in students: Creating lively classrooms* (Presenter, Joint NUS Law-LKY School Teaching Seminar, National University of Singapore, 9 November 2009).
- *Use of film in teaching* (Joint presenter, Teaching Seminar, Faculty of Law, National University of Singapore, 7 October 2009).
- *Bringing out the best in students* (Instructor, Professional Development Programme Workshop, Centre for Development of Teaching and Learning, National University of Singapore, 7 August 2009).
- *Engaging students in and beyond the classroom* (Invited speaker, Asian Law Deans' Forum on Legal Education, Temasek Foundation and National University of Singapore, Singapore, 6-8 July 2009).
- *Encouraging youth engagement in the public square* (Presenter, 2nd International Conference on Character Development through Service and Experiential Learning, National Institute of Education, Singapore, 17-19 March 2009).
- *Law school and the making of the student into a lawyer: A case study of the transformation of first year law students in the National University of Singapore* (Presenter, Learning in Law Annual Conference, University of Warwick, United Kingdom, 23-24 January 2009).

- *Education and moral development: Using philosophy to encourage moral and social consciousness in professional schools* (Presenter, Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Conference, National University of Singapore, Singapore, 3-5 December 2008) (Paper published in conference proceedings).
- *Kindling values consciousness* (Presenter, Asia-Pacific Education Research Association Conference 2008, National Institute of Education, Singapore, 26-28 November 2008) (Paper published in conference proceedings).
- *Legal education and moral development: Inculcating a concern for legal ideals through teaching legal philosophy* (Presenter, Learning Conference, University of Illinois-Chicago, USA, 3-6 June 2008).
- Public reason and morals legislation in Singapore (Invited speaker, Workshop on legal theory in the global south, Festival of Legal Theory, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom, 28-31 May 2008).
- *Moral absolutes in a pluralist world* (Invited speaker, Family Life Society seminar for educators, Singapore, 2 June 2005).
- *Justice as friendship: The dialogue of friendship as a model for law* (Presenter, Addressing Dialogue Conference, Harvard University, USA, 8 April 2004).
- *Justice as friendship: A normative understanding of legal relations* (Presenter, SJD Colloquium, Harvard Law School, USA, 1 April 2004).
- *Constitutional law in Singapore* (Invited guest lecturer, Comparative Constitutionalism in the Chinese World course, Harvard Law School, USA, January 2004).
- *Law and morality: A critical examination of natural law theory and its relevance in a pluralist world* (Convenor and teacher, Workshop in 7 sessions, Harvard Law School, USA, September-November 2003).
- *Jurisdiction and arbitration agreements in international commercial litigation* (Presenter, Workshop on Commercial Contract Law and Litigation, Centre for Commercial Law Studies, Singapore, 13 November 1999).

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

- *Justice as Friendship: A Normative Understanding of Legal Relations*, Doctor of Juridical Science diss., Harvard Law School, 2004.

SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY LEVEL SERVICE IN SMU

- Member, University Council of Student Conduct, May 2019-current.
- Member, Dean Search Committee, Aug 2021-Apr 2022.
- Member, School of Law Curriculum Review Committee, 2010-2021.
- Convenor, Law as Calling Lunch Series, July 2017-June 2022.
- Faculty Advisor, Law Outreach Club, June 2019-May 2020.
- Member, Student Disciplinary Review Task and Finish Group, May-July 2019.
- Associate Dean (Students, Alumni and Staff Affairs), School of Law, SMU, July 2017-June 2019.
- Alumni Relations Director, School of Law, SMU, 2011-June 2019.
- Peer Coach, Centre of Teaching Excellence, SMU, 2016-Current.
- Member, Blue Ribbon Commission on Undergraduate Education, SMU, 2017.
- Associate Dean (Research), School of Law, SMU, 2014-2015.
- Member, Humanities Task Force, SMU, 2014-2015.
- Member, University Senate, SMU, March 2011-March 2013.