

# CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND WORK OF GAVIN W. JONES

9 MARCH 2023, THU  
16:00 - 17:45 (SGT)

Hybrid (Online &  
AS8 04-04, NUS)



Professor Gavin W. Jones was a leading figure in Asian Demography and a remarkable person who will be fondly remembered in the Asia Research Institute (ARI) and at the National University of Singapore (NUS) more widely. As the leader of ARI's Changing Family in Asia cluster from 2003 to 2012, he was instrumental in organizing a host of international conferences on changing families and the consequences of those changes in Asian societies. While at ARI, Professor Jones also founded the journal *Asian Population Studies* and served as its editor from 2003 to 2014. Under his editorship, the journal prospered and was indexed in Social Science Citation Index and Scopus, among others.

In addition to holding a joint appointment in the Department of Sociology for much of this time at NUS, Professor Jones served as the Director of the JY Pillay Comparative Asia Research Centre, Global Asia Institute, NUS from 2012 to 2014. During his illustrious career spanning over 50 years, he published about 30 books and monographs as well as 170 refereed journal articles and book chapters. Professor Jones also supervised 42 PhD candidates and served as a mentor to many cohorts of postdoctoral fellows (including at ARI) and so contributed to nurturing a new generation of demographers in Asia, Australia and beyond.

This workshop will highlight some of the key contributions that Professor Jones made during his 11 years at NUS, by bringing together speakers to reflect on the impact of his work across five specific thematic strands:

- Families and Fertility
- Marriage
- Divorce
- Urbanisation
- Population and Development

The event is intended not only to celebrate and honour Professor Jones' academic work, but also as an opportunity to remember him as an extraordinary man who touched the lives of many colleagues at ARI, past and present.

#### **WORKSHOP CONVENORS**

**Prof Brenda S.A. YEOH FBA**

Asia Research Institute, and Department of Geography, NUS

**Prof Tim BUNNELL**

Asia Research Institute, and Department of Geography, NUS

**Ms Stephanie Christine HENG**

Asia Research Institute, NUS

## PROGRAMME

16:00 – 16:10	<b>OPENING REMARKS</b>  <a href="#">Tim Bunnell</a>   <i>National University of Singapore</i>
16:10 – 17:25	<b>PROF GAVIN W. JONES'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO RESEARCH</b>  Moderator: <a href="#">Brenda Yeoh</a>   <i>National University of Singapore</i> <hr/> <p>Gavin Jones - Demography Detective and the Mystery of the MURs <a href="#">Mike Douglass</a>   <i>University of Hawai'i</i></p> <hr/> <p>Beyond Later and Less Marriage in Asia: Reflections on Gavin W. Jones' Contributions to the Scholarship on Marriage <a href="#">Ariane Utomo</a>   <i>University of Melbourne</i></p> <hr/> <p>Recent Divorce Trends in Asia <a href="#">Premchand Dommaraju</a>   <i>Nanyang Technological University</i></p> <hr/> <p>Understanding Asia's Dramatic Fertility Transitions through the Scholarship of Gavin Jones <a href="#">Bussarawan Teerawichitchainan</a>   <i>National University of Singapore</i></p> <hr/> <p>Gavin W Jones - A Life Devoted to Population and Development <a href="#">Nai Peng Tey</a>   <i>Universiti of Malaya</i></p>
17:25 – 17:45	<b>REMEMBRANCE AND REFLECTIONS</b>  Moderator: <a href="#">Brenda Yeoh</a>   <i>National University of Singapore</i>  <i>Open Reflections</i>
17:45	<b>END OF SESSION</b>

## **Gavin Jones – Demography Detective and the Mystery of the MURs**

**Mike Douglass** | *University of Hawai'i at Manoa*

Upon meeting for the first time on a national urban development strategy project in Jakarta in the early 1980s, Gavin Jones and I were presented with a great mystery: how had decades of slow-growing, involuting cities suddenly turned into a new era of accelerated urbanisation producing mega-urban regions (MURs) of population sizes and geographical reach having no historical precedent? In 2000 we decided to launch a research project aimed at presenting our solution to the mystery. Published in 2008, our study with research teams in six MURs focused on urban agglomerations rather than spatially atomised municipalities; we also went beyond rural-urban dichotomies in defining their size. In the ensuing years, we continued to find that the mystery we had tried to solve remained unattended by key organizations dominating worldwide dissemination of urban data and storylines. Yet we continued to be enthused by the fountain of new approaches to research coming from universities and urban institutes around the world that were building on the type of research we extolled.

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## **Beyond Later and Less Marriage in Asia: Gavin Jones's Contributions to the Scholarship on Marriage**

**Ariane Utomo** | *University of Melbourne*

In this paper, we pay tribute to the late Emeritus Professor Gavin W. Jones and his outstanding contributions to the scholarship of marriage. Known as 'Gavin' or 'Pak Gavin' to his colleagues, we start by highlighting his lasting impact on the demography of marriage, development, and social change in Asia and beyond. Following a broad chronological assessment of his large body of work on marriage, we reflect on Gavin's general approach to research and collaboration in his quest to better understand changing marriage patterns within and across diverse regions of Asia. His approach to studying marriage took us beyond the conventional demographic focus on examining the shifts in age at first marriage. He showed how examining shifting patterns across different, yet interrelated aspects of marriage offered a unique and important window for understanding the broader complexities of economic development, globalisation, and socio-political change in the region. Gavin's large body of work on marriage exemplifies that there is much more to demography beyond counting births, deaths, and migration. We conclude by sharing our personal reflections — as two generations of demographers — on how his work and approach to research continue to influence our research, teaching, collaboration, and engagement with the region. While scholars in demography and Indonesian studies would like to lay claim to *Pak Gavin*, his legacy extends beyond disciplinary and geographical boundaries.

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## **Recent Trends in Divorce in Asia**

**Premchand Dommaraju** | *Nanyang Technological University, Singapore*

Professor Gavin Jones played an instrumental role in advancing the study of divorce in Southeast Asia. He began publishing on divorce in 1980 and continued for the next three decades, with his latest publication in 2021. His book, *Marriage and Divorce in Islamic Southeast Asia*, published in 1994, is a ground-breaking work on the subject, drawing on a wealth of empirical data supplemented by data from qualitative interviews. His thorough analyses showed that the divorce rates among Muslims in Southeast Asia decreased as countries modernized. At ARI, he played a pivotal role in organizing conferences and workshops on marriage and divorce, including a workshop on divorce in Asia in 2010, which I had the good fortune to co-organize with him, followed by a special issue. At the time of his passing, Professor Jones was updating estimates on divorce rates, last presented in 2010. He was committed to making demographic estimates accessible to a broader audience while maintaining their rigour and accuracy. As a tribute to him, we present updated estimates of divorce trends calculated using a novel approach.

As Professor Jones pointed out in his papers, divorce rates differ significantly across Asia's regions. However, accurately estimating these rates can be tricky due to changes in population composition, such as age, sex, and marital status. We use a novel approach to estimate divorce trends to overcome these challenges. We calculate the percentage of marriages that end in divorce by the fifth, tenth, fifteenth, and twentieth year of marriage, using a survival analytical technique applied to interval-censored data. Our analysis draws on data from surveys conducted by DHS, MICS, and CGSS across 13 South, East and Southeast Asian countries. By charting divorce patterns across countries, the findings provide comparative insights into the changing marriage contexts for countries in Asia.

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## **Understanding Asia's Dramatic Fertility Transitions through the Scholarship of Gavin Jones**

**Bussarawan Teerawichitchainan** | *National University of Singapore*

In 1968, at the age of 28, Professor Gavin Jones arrived in Bangkok to serve as a population advisor to Thailand's National Economic Development Board. His role was to assist the Thai government in developing a national population policy and setting up a population unit in the government agency. Like many developing countries at the time, Thailand's total fertility rates were very high—nearly six children per woman. During Professor Jones's academic lifetime, Thailand witnessed a breathtaking demographic transition, with its fertility rates not only reaching the replacement level by 1990 but also continually declining to a very low level (TFR 1.32 in 2022). Professor Jones made significant empirical and theoretical contributions to the scholarship on fertility transitions in Asia. In this essay, I highlight key characteristics and contributions of his work. First, I describe the breadth and wide range of fertility topics and geographical coverage in his research over the span of five decades. Second, I illustrate Professor Jones' signature approach consisting of systematic data analysis and nuanced writing when examining Asia's fertility trends, patterns, and determinants. Next, I examine Professor Jones' theoretical contributions to fertility transition theories through his research on divergent paths of fertility change among Southeast Asian Malay populations. Lastly, I discuss his contributions to the scholarship on Asia's very low fertility, policy dilemmas, and possible interventions.

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## **Gavin W Jones - A Life Devoted to Population and Development**

**Nai Peng Tey** | *Universiti of Malaya*

Professor Gavin W Jones is a distinguished scholar and consultant with a remarkable 58-year career dedicated to population and development in Asia. He was much sought after as a consultant by various organizations, such as the Ford Foundation, the World Bank, the Population Council, the Australian Development Assistance Bureau, the UNFPA, and the UNDP, providing consultancy services to more than ten countries. Gavin has published 30 books, monographs, and over 170 internationally refereed articles and book chapters, covering various demographic topics across Asia-Pacific. He participated actively as a keynote speaker, paper presenter, and discussant at international conferences. Gavin sat on the editorial board of several high-impact journals and was the founding editor of Asian Population Studies. Gavin has trained many demographers who would continue on the work where he left off.

Gavin's research spanned a diverse range of population-related topics, with notable contributions in areas such as fertility and marriage, education, urbanization trends in Asia, access to education, population growth and economic development, labour force and manpower planning, reproductive health, family planning programs, and population ageing. Gavin's extensive work has enhanced our understanding of the population issues in Southeast, South and East Asia. His research and consultancy work has contributed immensely to population policy and program implementation in many Asian countries.

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## **ABOUT THE PRESENTERS**

**Ariane UTOMO** is a social demographer, and Senior Lecturer in Demography and Population Geography at the School of Geography, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, The University of Melbourne. Her research focuses on the intersecting themes around youth, education and the labour force; ageing and migration; and on marriage, family change, and transition to adulthood in Indonesia.

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**Brenda S.A. YEOH FBA** is Raffles Professor of Social Sciences, Department of Geography, National University of Singapore. She is also the Research Leader of the Asian Migration Cluster in the Asia Research Institute. She was recently awarded the prestigious Vautrin Lud Prize (2021) for her outstanding achievements in the field of Geography, and was also elected to the Fellowship of the British Academy as a Corresponding Fellow. Her research interests include the politics of space in colonial and postcolonial cities, and she also has considerable experience working on a wide range of migration research in Asia, including key themes such as cosmopolitanism and highly skilled talent migration; gender, social reproduction and care migration; migration, national identity and citizenship issues; globalising universities and international student mobilities; and cultural politics, family dynamics and international marriage migrants.

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**Bussarawan (Puk) TEERAWICHITCHAINAN** holds joint appointments as Associate Professor and Graduate Studies Chair in the Department of Sociology and Co-Director of the Centre for Family and Population Research at the National University of Singapore. Her current research examines the roles of family, policy, and social structure in explaining the well-being of older persons in the Asia Pacific region, particularly Southeast Asia. This includes an ongoing study funded by the National Institute on Aging-National Institutes of Health on the long-term impacts of war and trauma exposure on health and wellbeing of older Vietnamese survivors in northern Vietnam and another study funded by the Ministry of Education's Tier 2 grant on childless aging in Singapore and Thailand.

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**Mike DOUGLASS** is Emeritus Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa where he was also the Director of the Globalization Research Center. He received his Ph.D. in Urban Planning from UCLA. From 2012-2018 at the National University of Singapore he was Leader of the Asian Urbanisms Cluster in the Asian Research Institute, Professor in Sociology and Professor in the LKY School of Public Policy. He has also been a Research Associate at the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (Nagoya), and Senior Regional Economist for UN Habitat in Indonesia.

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**Nai Peng TEY** retired as an Associate Professor at the Department of Applied Statistics, Faculty of Economics and Administration, Universiti of Malaya (UM), where he taught demography and survey methods, and was a coordinator of the Population Studies Unit at the University. His research focuses on population issues relating to fertility, marriage, reproductive health, gender, and ageing. He now serves as a specialist at UM, an adjunct professor at the Institute of Population and Social Studies, Mahidol University, a Board member of the National Population and Family Development Board (NPFDB), and was the founding member of Gerontology Association Malaysia, and Community Support Network.

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9 March 2023 | Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

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**Premchand DOMMARAJU** is an Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of the MSc in Applied Gerontology programme at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. His research focuses on socio-demographic issues related to marriage, families, and households, and ageing in Southeast and South Asia focusing on the common demographic issues faced by the diverse societies in the two regions.

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**Tim BUNNELL** is Professor in the Department of Geography and Director of the Asia Research Institute (ARI), where he is also leader of the Asian Urbanisms cluster. The primary focus of his research is urbanisation in Southeast Asia, examining both the transformation of cities in that region and urban connections with other parts of the world.

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