



# Undergraduate Research Symposium May 17, 2013 Mary Gates Hall

## Online Proceedings

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### SESSION 2C

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#### EDUCATION AND SOCIETAL INEQUALITIES

*Session Moderator: Judith A Howard, Sociology*

**228 MGH**

*3:45 PM to 5:15 PM*

\* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

##### **Education Reform in a Results-Oriented Society**

*Anthea Piong, Senior, Philosophy, English*

*Mentor: Carole J. Lee, Philosophy*

From a young age, every child in Singapore is taught that the surest way to succeed in life is to have academic success. Education is seen as a way to secure your bread and butter as it leads to a well-paying job, which then allows you to afford a comfortable lifestyle. Of course, few would argue against education being one of the most important things in a person's development. But when the stakes for being the smartest in your class are so high, the education system inevitably becomes a rat race for the highest numbers and the best scores. There is an "overbearing focus on grades and paper qualifications are elevated to unholy heights and worshipped," and this pressure gives birth to a generation of Singaporeans who are risk-averse, lack the motivation to think critically, and don't have the drive to innovate. The Singaporean education system is touted as a meritocratic one that allows students the freedom to climb the social ladder provided that they are hard-working enough to achieve the grades to advance. A meritocratic system seems fair as grades and paper qualifications don't lie, but this encourages a tunnel-vision approach to education, ignoring the many aspects of education which cannot be measured by numbers. Is meritocracy at fault, then, for creating a generation of humanistic robots? I will examine and critique the current educational system in place by highlighting its faults and advantages, as well as by drawing contrasts with the systems in other countries. I hope to propose a way to reform Singapore's education system for the better, to one that is more holistic, aiming to produce a generation of creative and motivated thinkers, which will help Singapore progress even further into the 21st Century.