



Learning Comparative Gaming Law
Through Experiences:

Boyd Law's Asia Travel Course

By Leah Chan Grinvald, Jennifer Roberts, and Sarah Gonzales



“special administrative regions” and China agreed to allow Macau keep its legal system for 50 years after the handover.⁷

This has meant that most of the Portuguese laws have stayed in place, although China’s Basic Laws are also in effect. Casinos are licensed by the Chinese government per a “concession” basis on a renewal

basis, the last in 2022. In the last round of concessions, the Chinese government took back the ownership of the casinos themselves and licensed them back to the operators. This creates an interesting ownership structure – if in the future the gambling concessions are not renewed to the same operator, there could in fact be a separate operator of the casino and of the non-casino property.



2024 Gonpachi Closing Dinner Japan

At our last stop, Tokyo, the students learned about a nascent casino industry and the plans that are being put in place to bring the first integrated resort to the country. Curiously, the Japanese market has had “gambling” for some time, but in the form of Pachinko parlors and “social casinos.” However, Pachinko is classified as an “amusement game” and not legally considered to be gambling, per se. Under the Abe administration (the former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe), the Japanese government passed Act on the Development of Specified Integrated Tourist Facilities Areas that would allow for three licenses to be awarded to develop integrated resorts as part of a plan to boost the Japanese economy and tourism.⁸ The Japanese Casino Regulatory Commission was established in 2020 to regulate the casinos that will be part of the integrated resorts. At this time, however, there is only one licensed integrated resort, a joint venture between MGM and Orix, a Japanese blue chip company. The integrated resort is a partnership between the local government of Osaka and the joint venture.

This one-of-a-kind study abroad opportunity is just part of a comprehensive gaming law studies program at Boyd that includes classes ranging from gaming technology to the role of resort in-house counsel to tribal gaming. This two-unit course is available as an elective for students in the J.D. and LL.M. in Gaming Law and Regulation programs, and will be offered again in May 2025. ■



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¹ Joseph Yeong Jia Chia, *Gambling in Singapore*, National Library Board, at <https://www.nlb.gov.sg/main/article-detail?cmsuuiid=6860d586-4613-4172-ad48-8a47efcf30b#:~:text=On%2018%20April%202005%2C%20Prime,at%20Marina%20Bayfront%20and%20Sentosa>.

² *Population and Population Structure*, Singapore Department of Statistics, at <https://www.singstat.gov.sg/find-data/search-by-theme/population/population-and-population-structure/latest-data>

³ See *supra* note i.

⁴ Godinho, Jorge (2014) "Casino Gaming in Macau: Evolution, Regulation and Challenges," *UNLV Gaming Law Journal*: Vol. 5: Iss. 1, Article 7. available at: <https://scholars.law.unlv.edu/glj/vol5/iss1/7>

⁵ Overview: Macao, Oxford Reference, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100121581#:~:text=In%201582%2C%20Portugal%20signed%20a,Chinese%20Territory%20under%20Portuguese%20Administration>.

⁶ See *supra* note iv at 4.

⁷ Basic Law of the Macao (Macau) Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, Congressional-Executive Commission on China, at <https://www.cecc.gov/resources/legal-provisions/the-basic-law-of-the-macao-macao-special-administrative-region-of-the-prc>

⁸ List of relevant laws and regulations, Japan Casino Regulatory Commission, at <https://www.jcrc.go.jp/policy/legal/index.html>

This past May, the authors of this article led a group of 14 students to Asia to learn gaming law through a comparative lens. We traveled, as a group, to three different jurisdictions -- Singapore, Macau and Japan -- over the course of two weeks. Each jurisdiction was selected to represent a different level of maturity in the gaming market: Macau as the most established jurisdiction, Singapore as the recent success story, and Japan as the burgeoning market. The learning outcomes of the course were to (1) Understand the array of legal and regulatory issues associated with international gambling markets; and (2) Identify and analyze legal and regulatory issues relating to resort hotel and casino business operations in Asian jurisdictions.

and professionals who work in the industry in these three jurisdictions and learn firsthand from them (along with creating a network for potential future employment!).

Our course started in Singapore, a jurisdiction that fairly recently legalized casino gambling in 2005.¹ Singapore is a city-state of over 5.9 million people.² The students learned that the jurisdiction legalized casino gambling in reaction to the economic downturn of the country under a framework allowing development of two integrated resorts,³ which are now Marina Bay Sands and Resorts World Sentosa. Over the course of two days, we were able to tour both integrated resorts, seeing both the casino business and the non-casino business. During both field trips, we were able to meet with attorneys from the general counsels' office from both integrated resorts, as well as with operational professionals.

Of course, Professor Roberts and Dean Grinvald could have simply lectured to the students about these various markets. And, in fact, Boyd Law School offers a Comparative Gaming Law course where students learn about the legal and regulatory issues associated with different jurisdictions. But, visiting the three different jurisdictions offered the students insights that went beyond the four walls of a classroom – including observing the differences in culture. Culture, as we all know, is a big factor in the various regulatory environments. In addition, the students had the opportunity to meet attorneys, regulators,



2024 Resorts World Compliance Overview



2024 Meeting at Singapore GRA



Group Photo at Wynn Palace

The students also met with the General Counsel's office of the Singapore Casino Regulatory Authority, whose sole responsibility is to regulate the two integrated resorts. One of the most interesting items learned in Singapore was how collaboratively the regulatory authorities work with the integrated resorts. Although the regulators are fairly hands-on, there is an almost symbiotic relationship between the two entities.

Our next stop was Macau, which first legalized commercial gambling in 1849.⁴ The students were able to learn from Professor Jorge Godinho at the University of Macau about the history of gambling in Macau. Macau was a Portuguese colony under a 500 year lease from the Chinese government.⁵ Macau was handed back over to China on December 20, 1999.⁶ However, it has remained one of the