

ANTH2450/GENA2332
PEOPLES AND CULTURES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA
Thursdays, 10.30am.-12.15pm.
Venue: T.C. Cheng 111

Instructor: Dr. FAMING, Manynooch
Contact: nychma@cuhk.edu.hk
Office Hour: By appointment
TA: Chloe LOO (chloe1xt@link.cuhk.edu.hk)

Tutorials: Thur. 12. 30-1.15 (T.C. Cheng 111).

Course Description

This course introduces students to the social and cultural complexity of Southeast Asia (SEA) region. This can be mapped as mainland and island Southeast Asia. The mainland SEA includes the countries of Burma/Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Malaysia while the island SEA includes Indonesia, The Philippines, Singapore, Brunei, and Timor-Leste. The course conducts in a form of seminar. The class discussions will organized around selected assigned readings and guest speakers from selected individual countries. The seminar will begin with historical background before moving onto case studies. These cover belief systems, family, politics, development and economic change. In addition to providing a broad and comparative exploration of “traditional” Southeast Asia, the course will place special emphasis on nation-building through modernization and development, highlighting the ways different Southeast Asian nations contend with the forces of globalization.

The readings are drawn from a multidisciplinary range of fields covering anthropology, art, economics, geography, history, literature, and political science.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Gain better understandings on Southeast Asia through the individual country case
2. Develop comparative skills in studying peoples and cultures of each country in SEA
3. Apply socio-cultural anthropology perspective to understand a specific group(s) of peoples and cultures in SEA

Course Requirements

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|--------------------------------|-----|
| a. Class Participation | 20% |
| b. Two Field Visit Reflections | 50% |
| c. One Final Essay | 30% |

A. Class Participation 20%

• Participation 10%

Class participation will be counted from attendances, two field visits and contributing to commentary in class discussion. Students are expected to come to class on time or without distracting others. Bring your reading notes and share your thoughts and questions in class. Extra marks for volunteering to answer my questions or respond to other's questions.

• Tutorial Participation 10%

Every student is expected to be an active member in class and in contributing to the group discussions. Students are required to complete readings. On voluntary basis, leading discussion student(s) will be given extra marks for being able to ask/answer questions with the capacity to generate the group discussion and must be drawn from your own understanding of the assigned readings.

B. Two Reflections 25% x 2 (50%) Due: 5pm on Feb. 13, and Mar 20, 2026.

There will be **TWO** compulsory field visits: *Thai-Lao community in Kowloon City* on **Feb. 8** and *Indonesian and Filipinos workers on their day off* on **Mar. 15**. We will conduct a digital ethnography through taking photos. Students will select **FIVE** photos and write a short descriptions (between 100-150 words) for each photos. This photo ethnography report should start with an introduction (between 300-500 words), follow by the your thoughts and understandings about the photos as well as some interview inserts (if available) and provide a final remarks/summary/conclusion (between 300-500 words). Overall word counts should be 1,300, excluding reference list. No collaborations with Generative AI.

Note: If you cannot join one of these two field visit with the class for a health reason, you can conduct a field visit on your own time. The submission deadline remains unchanged. Do email or approach me ASAP if this is the case.

C. Final Essay 30% Due: April 9, 2026, 5pm.

Students will write a final paper (between 2,000 and 2,500 words, excluding references) with a double spaced and 12 fonts size, that draws on careful reading and/or conversations with peoples from SEA. Students may also use class themes and texts to critically analyse and advance discussions on an issue or topic in a specific country or comparing peoples and cultures of two neighbouring countries in SEA.

If you are unsure where to begin or feel more challenged, you may discuss, for example,

“Should SEA be studied as a geographical region or as a cultural zone or as mosaic of cultural groups? Why so?”

Use the readings in the course to help you analyze your impressions and thoughts. No collaborations with Generative AI. Do approach me and our TA for help or suggestions.

D. Notes on Readings

Prior to each weekly topic and individual countries, students are required to read selected articles/book chapters for lecture discussions while vignettes of stories and research reflections for tutorial discussions.

Lindquist, Johan, Erik Harms, and Joshua Barker. 2013. *Figures of Southeast Asian Modernity*. Edited by Johan Lindquist, Erik Harms, and Joshua Barker. (*Main tutorial readings*).

Goh, B.-L. 2011. *Decentring and Diversifying Southeast Asian Studies: Perspectives from the Region*. Singapore: Institute Southeast Asian Studies.

Dutton, G. E. 2015. *Voices of Southeast Asia: essential readings from antiquity to the present*. London: Routledge.

These are now available in *Ebook* form through CUHK Library system. The other listed readings are also available on the Blackboard folders.

E. Notes on submission

Note 1: Both reflections and final essay must submit a soft copy to VeriGuide CUHK.

Note 2: Please name your assignment file **ANTH2450 or GENA2332 Reflection/Final Paper Last name First name**, and your VeriGuide receipt **ANTH2450 or GENA2332 VeriGuide Last name First name**.

Note 3: Save your all written assignments in **Word format**, and scan your signed VeriGuide receipt into PDF format. Save them as two separate files. Upload the VeriGuide receipt to the blackboard folders.

Note 4: There is a late submission penalty, especially the group final essay. One mark deduction per day, passing the due date.

F. Use of AI Tools

Approach 3 – Use only with explicit acknowledgement

Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies should only be used to enhance the readability and language of the paper (i.e., grammar check, sentences, synonym or antonym, translator). No collaboration with Generative AI of any forms is allowed.

These technologies should be employed under human supervision, with you reviewing and editing the output as necessary, since AI-generated content can contain errors, omissions, or biases. You remain responsible and accountable for the final content of your work.

Disclosure of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process is required by including a statement before the references list at the end of the paper upon submission. For example:

Title of new section: Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process.

Statement: During the preparation of this work I used [NAME TOOL / SERVICE] in order to [REASON]. After using this tool/service, I reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the paper.

Course Schedule

Week 1 Jan. 8: Introduction: Course Overview and Brief History of SEA as a Region

O.W. Wolters. 1982. Chapter 1&2 in *History, Culture and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*. Singapore: ISEAS.

Goh, B.-L. 2011. "Disciplines and Area Studies in the Global Age: Southeast Asian Reflections," in *Decentring and Diversifying Southeast Asian Studies: Perspectives from the Region*. Beng-Lan Goh (ed.). Singapore: Institute Southeast Asian Studies, (pp: 19-44)

Other readings:

Acharya, Amitav. 1999. "Imagined Proximities: The making and unmaking of Southeast Asia as a Region," *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (1999): 55-76.

M.C. Ricklefs et al. 2010. Ch. 14: Southeast Asia Today, in *A New History of Southeast Asia*, edited by M.C. Ricklefs, Bruce Lockhart, Albert Lau, Portia Reyes and Maitrii Aung-Thwin. Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. pp: 461-471.

Week 2 Jan. 15: Mainland Southeast Asia Peninsula and Island nations on Reflections

Andrew Turton. 2000. Ch. 1: Introduction to Civility and Savagery, in *Civility and Savagery: Social Identity in Tai States*, edited by Andrew Turton. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, pp:3-32.

Chales F Keyes. 1977. Ch. 2: Development of Theravada Buddhist Civilization in Mainland Southeast Asia, in *The golden peninsula: culture and adaptation in mainland Southeast Asia*, New York: Macmillan.

Grant Evans. 2000. "Tai-Ization: Ethnic Change in Northern Indo-China," in *Civility and Savagery: Social Identity in Tai States*, edited by Andrew Turton. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, pp: 263-290.

Anderson, Benedict. 2013. "Epilogue", in *Figures of Southeast Asian modernity*, edited by Johan Lindquist et al. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press., pp: 240-246.

Gungwu, W. 2011. "Post-imperial Knowledge and Pre-Social Science in Southeast Asia," in B. Goh (Ed.), *Decentring and Diversifying Southeast Asian Studies: Perspectives from the Region*; pp. 60-80.

Week 3 Jan. 22: Thailand, Laos and Cambodia: Culture and Politics

Lecture discussions:

Winichakul, T. (2016). Thailand's Hyper-royalism: Its Past Success and Present Predicament. In T. Winichakul (Author), *Thailand's Hyper-royalism: Its Past Success and Present Predicament* (pp. 1-36). ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.

Andrew Walker. 2010. "Imagining a new Mandala in mainland Southeast Asia,"

<http://www.newmandala.org/imagining-a-new-mandala-in-mainland-southeast-asia/>

Tutorial Discussions:

Jane M. Ferguson et al. 2013. "Thailand" in *Figures of Southeast Asian Modernity*; pp. 107-129.

Jerome Whittington. 2013. "Laos" in *Figures of Southeast Asian Modernity*; pp.91-106

Optional readings:

M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra. 2003. "Some Reflections on the Thai Monarchy," *Southeast Asian Affairs*, (2003), 291-309

Winichakul, T. (2000). The Quest for "Siwilai": A Geographical Discourse of Civilizational Thinking in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Siam. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 59(3), 528-549. doi:10.1017/S0021911800014327

Koanantakool, P. 2011. Crafting Anthropology in Many Sites of Fieldwork. In B. Goh (Ed.), *Decentring and Diversifying Southeast Asian Studies: Perspectives from the Region* (pp. 149-167). ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.

Veerayouth Kachoochat and Kevin Hewison. 2016. "Introduction: Understanding Thailand's Politics," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 371-381.

- Jan Ovensen and Ing-Britt Trankell. 2010. "Ch. 5: Indigenous practitioners: Healers, Spirit Mediums and Magic Monks," in *Cambodians and their Doctors: A Medical Anthropology of Colonial and Post-Colonial Cambodia*, Copenhagen S, Denmark: NIAS Press.
- Milton, Osborne. 1973. "King-making in Cambodia: From Sisowath to Sihanouk," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Sept. 1973), pp. 169-185.
- Milton, Osborne. 2007. "Cambodia: The endgame of politics?" *Journal of Southeast Asian Affairs*, (2007), pp. 117-132.
- Outhine Bounyavong, "Sacrifice", in *Voices of Southeast Asia: essential readings from antiquity to the present*. [Online], pp: 181-188.

Week 4 Jan. 29: Myanmar/Burma: the Struggles of Ethnic Minorities

Lecture discussions:

- Lintner, Bertil. 2003. "Myanmar/Burma", in *Ethnicity in Asia*, edited by Colin Mckerras. London: RoutledgeCurzon, pp: 174-193.
- Ferguson, J. M., 2014. "Rock Your Religion: Shan Buddhist Ritual and Stage-Show Revelry in a Contested Zone at the Thai-Burma Border." In: J. A. Marston, ed. *Ethnicity, Borders, and the Grassroots Interface with the State: Studies on Southeast Asia in honor of Charles F. Keyes*. Chiangmai: Silkworm Books, pp. 45-64.

Tutorial discussions:

- Nicolas Farrelly et al. 2013. "Burma", in *Figures of Southeast Asian Modernity*. Pp: 214-239.
- Jonathan Padwe et al. 2013. "Cambodia" in *Figures of Southeast Asian modernity*, edited by Johan Lindquist et al. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press., pp: 75-90.

Optional readings:

- Lintner, Bertil. 2018. "Trouble ahead, trouble behind for Myanmar," *Asia Times*, 28 Dec. 2018.
https://www.asiatimes.com/2018/12/article/trouble-ahead-trouble-behind-for-myanmar/?_=3508727
- Farrelly, Nicholas. 2018. "Assessing the Rohingya Crisis," *New Mandala*, 13 Jun 2018.
<https://www.newmandala.org/assessing-rohingya-crisis/>
- Khin Zaw Win. 2019. "Twin authoritarianism in Myanmar," *New Mandala*, 13 Sep 2019.
<https://www.newmandala.org/twin-authoritarianisms/>

Week 5 Feb. 5: Vietnam: From Indochina to Nation Building

Lecture Discussions:

- Christopher E. Goscha. 2012. "Ch. 3: Annamese Revolutionaries between Indochina and Vietnam" in *Going Indochinese: Contesting Concepts of Space and Place in French Indochina*, Copenhagen S, Denmark: NIAS Press.

Tutorial discussions:

- Erik Hams et al. 2013. "Vietnam" in *Figures of Southeast Asian modernity*, edited by Johan Lindquist et al. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press., pp: 46-74.

Optional readings:

- Kirsten W. Endres. 2008. "Fate, Memory, and the Postcolonial Construction of the Self: The Life-Narrative of a Vietnamese Spirit Medium," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Summer 2008), pp. 34-65
- Keith W. Taylor. 1998. "Surface Orientation in Vietnam: Beyond Histories of Nation and Region," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (Nov., 1998), pp. 949-978.

W 6: Feb. 8, 2026
Kowloon City, Sung Wong Toi MTR (9am-12.30pm)

Week 7 Feb. 12: Malaysia and Singapore

Lecture discussions:

Ong, Aihwa. 1995. State versus Islam: Malay families, women's bodies and the body politic in Malaysia. In *Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Body Politics in Southeast Asia*, edited by Aihwa Ong and Michael Peletz. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Chua Beng Huat. 2003. "Singapore: Multiracial Harmony as public good", in *Ethnicity in Asia*, edited by Colin Mckerras. London: RoutledgeCurzon, pp: 101-107

Tutorial discussions:

Yeoh Seng Guan et al. 2013. "Malaysia" in *Figures of Southeast Asian modernity*, edited by Johan Lindquist et al. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press., pp: 170-194.

Syed Muhd and Khairudin Aljunied et al. 2013. "Singapore" in *Figures of Southeast Asian modernity*, edited by Johan Lindquist et al. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press., pp. 195-213.

Optional readings:

Aihwa Ong. 2007. "Neoliberalism as a Mobile Technology," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Jan., 2007), pp. 3-8

Furlow, Christopher. 2009. "Malaysian Modernities: Cultural Politics and the Construction of Muslim Technoscientific Identities, *Anthropological Quarterly*, Winter 2009, Vol. 82(1), pp: 197-228.

Goh Beng Lan. 2011. "(Un)learning Human Sciences: the journey of a Malaysian from the 'Looking East' generation" in *Decentring and Diversifying Southeast Asian Studies: Perspectives from the Region*. Singapore: Institute Southeast Asian Studies, pp: 239-258.

Chua Beng Huat. 2011. "Singapore as a Model Planning Innovations, Knowledge Expats", in *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*, edited by Ananya Roy and Aihwa Ong. UK: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 29-54.

Week 8 Feb. 19: CNY Holiday (No Class, No Tutorials)

Week 9 Feb 26: Indonesia: Islamic State in Reality

Lecture Discussions

Geertz, Clifford, 1973. Ch. 6: Ritual and social change: A Javanese example, in *The Interpretation of Cultures* [electronic Resource] : Selected Essays.

Andree Feillard & Lies Marcoes. 1998. "Female circumcision in Indonesia: to "Islamize" in ceremony or secrecy", *Archipel*, no. 56, 1998, p. 337-368.

Tutorial Discussions

Joshua Barker and Johan Lindquist. 2013. "Indonesia" in *Figures of Southeast Asian modernity*, edited by Johan Lindquist et al. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press., pp: 130-169.

Optional readings:

Geertz, Clifford, 1973. Ch. 7: "Internal conversations" in Contemporary Bali, in *The Interpretation of Cultures* [electronic Resource] : Selected Essays.

Blackwood, Evelyn. 2006. "Ch. 21 Tombois in West Sumatra: Constructing Masculinity and Erotic Desire," in *Feminist Anthropology: A Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, Pp. 411-434

Film/Documentary Communism, Suharto, Cold War and people
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLT6G8FD3E4> (Documentary: 40 years of silence: An Indonesia tragedy)

Week 10 Mar. 5: Reading Week: No Class, No Tutorial

Week 11 Mar. 12 The Philippines: Socio-economic bread winner

Lecture discussions: M. Scott Solomon. 2009. "State-led Migration, Democratic, Legitimacy, and Deterritorialization: The Philippines's labor export model", *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, 8.2 (2009) 275-300.

Chang, Kimberly, and Lily Ling. 2000. Globalization and its Intimate Other: Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong. In *Gender and Global Restructuring: Sightings, sites and resistances*. Marianne H. Marchand and Anne Sisson Runyan, eds. London and New York : Routledge.

Tutorial discussions:

Smita Lahiri and Dierdre De La Cruz et al. 2013. "The Philippines" in *Figures of Southeast Asian modernity*, edited by Johan Lindquist et al. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press., pp:19-45

Other readings:

Rodolfo C. Severino. 2011. "Ch. 2: The Colonial Legacy," in *Where in the World is the Philippines?: Debating its National Territory*. Singapore: ISEAS.

Robyn M. Rodriguez. 2002. "Migrant Heroes: Nationalism, Citizenship and the Politics of Filipino Migrant Labor," *Citizenship Studies*, 6:3, 341-356,

Documentary: Lin, Diana., TVB News Public Affairs Production, and Television Broadcasts Limited. *A Reluctant Choice*. Hong Kong: Television Broadcasts, 2003. Print. Pearl Report; [2003-0504].

<p>W 12: Mar. 15, 2026 Field Visit Victoria Park, Causeway Bay and Central (10am-12pm)</p>
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Week 13 Mar. 19: Brunei and Timor Leste

Lecture discussions:

"Prologue: Brunei Versus Borneo" (pp: 1-3) and "Tradition as an Instrument for Managing Society" (pp: 258-260), in *Brunei: From the age of commerce to the 21st century* by Marie-Sybille de Vienne (2015); translated by Emilia Lanier. Singapore: NUS Press in Associate with IRASEC.

Tutorial discussions:

McGregor, Andrew; Skeaff, Laura; Bevan, Marianne. 2012. "Overcoming Secularism? Catholic development geographies in Timor-Leste", *Third World Quarterly*, 01 July 2012, Vol. 33, pp: 1129-1146.

Fanselow, Frank. 2014. "The Anthropology of the state and the state of anthropology in Brunei", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 45(1), pp: 90-112 February 2014.

Week 14 Mar. 26: ASEAN and Conclusion

Amitav Acharya. 2012. "Ch. 7: Constructing "One Southeast Asia" in *The Making of Southeast Asia: International Relations of a Region*, Singapore: ISEAS.

Barr, M. D. 2000). "Lee Kuan Yew and the 'Asian values' debate." *Asian studies review*. [Online] 24 (3), 309-334.

Week 15 Apr. 2 Food Cultures and Cooking Class