Fall 2026

HUMA 2638 Peoples and Cultures in Mainland Southeast Asia

Course Instructor: MA Jianxiong
E-mail: hmjxm@ust.hk
TA: JI Xinrong
E-mail: xjiam@connect.ust.hk

Time & Venue: CYTG002, Tuesday, 12:00-13:50
Tutorial: CYTG002, Tuesday, 14:00-14:50
Office hours: Wednesday & Thursday, 15:00-17:00 Office: Room 3342

Course Objectives

This course aims to provide students with an interdisciplinary understanding of the cultural diversity in mainland Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. We will examine the complex historical development of majority/minority relations and the formulation of cultural identities among different peoples on this borderland. The dynamic relations among religion, ethnicity, tourism and modernity will be discussed in the context of the region's specific political geography.

Intended Learning Outcomes

On completion of this course, students should be able to

- Comprehend dynamic relations of ethnic identities and political geography in mainland Southeast Asia.
- Develop an interdisciplinary perspective on cultural diversity and a macroscopic focus on the course of state formation.
- Develop a critical understanding of concepts of state and identity in our contemporary social life.

Teaching Approach

In this course, we shall emphasize the various cultural influences from India, China and Europe on this crossroad borderland. We shall address how indigenous peoples maintained their dynamic social and cultural strategies in the last several centuries, and the cultural consequences of the transformation to a modern nation-state system that they have been facing. In tutorials, we will examine various case studies through documentary screenings. Student participation in tutorials are emphasized to accelerate their intellectual development.

Assessment

All students are expected to attend lectures and tutorials. Continual assessment accounts for 50% of the marks. Of this 50%, 30% is based on one term paper (10-15 pages) and the other 20% comes from participation (10%) and two review essays (5% each) on documentaries. The final exam accounts for the remaining 50%.

Textbooks and main references

Keyes, Charles F.
1995 *The Golden Peninsula: Culture and Adaptation in Mainland Southeast Asia.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Schedule

Week 1 (September 1). Introduction
Tarling, Nicholas
2001 "Peoples and Identities" in *Southeast Asia: A Modern History*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press. Pp. 1-9.
No tutorial this week.

Week 2 (September 8). Ancient Civilizations
Tarling, Nicholas
2001 "Kingdoms and Super-Kingdoms" in *Southeast Asia: A Modern History*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press. Pp. 10-18.
No tutorial this week.

Week 3 (September 15). Hinduism and Buddhism
Swearer, Donald K.
1981 *Buddhism and Society in Southeast Asia*. Pp. 5-52.

Tutorial (September 15): *Angkor Wat: The Ancient Mystery of Cambodia's Lost Capital, The City of God Kings* (50 Mins)

Week 4 (September 22). Colonialism and Western Powers
Osborne, Milton
2004 "The European Advance and Challenge" in *Southeast Asia: An Introductory History*, Singapore: Allen & Unwin. Pp. 70-92.

Owen, Norman G. edited. (*Extension reading*)
2005 "Myanmar Becomes British Burma", "Siam, from Ayutthaya to Bangkok", "Vietnam, 1700-1885, Disunity, Unity and French Conquest", "Combodia, 1796-1884, Politics in a Tributary Kingdom", in *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia,* Pp. 83-122. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Tutorial (September 22): *They Call It Myanmar: Lifting the Curtain* (DS527.7/T452012 85 Mins)

Week 5 (September 29). Nation-State Building
Kramer, Tom
2005 "Ethnic Conflict and Dilemmas for International Engagement" in Martin Jelsma ed., *Trouble in the Triangle: Opium and Conflict in Burma*. Pp. 33-60.

Owen, Norman G. edited. (*Extension reading*)
2005 "British Burma and Beyond", "Vietnam, 1885-1975: Colonialism, Communism, and Wars", "Siam Becomes Thailand, 1910-1973", "Cambodia, 1884-1975", "Laos to 1975", "Burma Becomes Myanmar", in The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia. Honolulu: University of

Hawai'i Press. Pp. 322-454.

Tutorial (September 29): *Man of the Month: Ho Chi Minh* (DS560.72/H6/Z56, 2013, 25 Mins)
Ho Chi Minh & the History of Vietnam (43 Mins)

Week 6 (October 6). Vietnam War and the Golden Triangle

Chin, Ko-lin.

2009 "Introduction" , "The Golden Triangle and Burma", "The Wa" in *The Golden Triangle: Inside Southeast Asia's Drug Trade*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. Pp.1-46.

Owen, Norman G. edited. (*Extension reading*)

2005 "The Kingdom of Thailand", "Vietnam after 1975: from Collectivism to Market Leninism", "Cambodia since 1975", "Laos since 1975", "Burma Becomes Myanmar", in *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press Pp. 448-454. Pp.468-506.

Tutorial (October 6): *Hearts and Minds 1974* (112 Mins)

Week 7 (October 13). Cultures in Highland Southeast Asia

Scott, James C.

2009 "State Evasion, State Prevention: The Culture and Agriculture of Escape. Introduction" in *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press. Pp. 178-219.

Tutorial (October 13): *Sacrifice* (HQ242.55/A5/S23 2007, 50 Mins)

Due date to submit the first reviewing paper on four documentaries from week 3 to week 6 (length: 4-5 pages, 12 font, double space, A4 page).

Week 8 (October 20). Cultures in Laos and Cambodia

Keyes, Charles

1992 *"Who are the Lue? Revised: Ethnic Identity within the Nations of Laos, Thailand and China"*, Cambridge: Center for International Studies, MIT.

Tutorial (October 20): *Children of the 7 Headed Snakes* (DS554.42/C45, 1999, 52 Mins)

Week 9 (October 27). Overseas Chinese Communities

Leo Suryadinate

1987 "Ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia: Problems and Prospects", in *Journal of International Affairs.* Pp. 135-151.

Leo Suryadinata,

2015 "Ethnic Chinese and the Formation of Southeast Asian Nations", in The

Making of Southeast Asian Nations: State, Ethnicity, Indigenism and Citizenship. Singapore: World Scientific. Pp.71-83.

Tutorial (October. 27): *The Akha tribe in Laos: Between Tradition and Modernity* (42 Mins)

Week 10 (November 3). Nation States and Identities

South, Ashley

2006 "Shifting Identities: Pre-colonial and colonial Burma", and "State and Society, Grievance and Greed, Ethnicity and Insurgency: World War, Independence and Civil War", in *Ethnic Politics in Burma: State of Conflicts*. London: Routledge. Pp. 3-46.

Tutorial (November 3): *Disappearing World: The Meo* (52 Mins)

Week 11 (November 10). Tourism, Politics and Identities

Truong, Thanh-Dam

1990 "Foreign Exchange, Prostitution and Tourism in Thailand", in *Sex, Money and Morality: Prostitution and Tourism in South-east Asia*. London: Zed Books. Pp. 158-191.

Ollier, Leakthina Chua-Pech & Tim Winter

2006 "Cambodia and the Politics of Tradition, Identity and Change" (pp. 1-19), and Timothy Dylan Wood, "Touring Memories of the Khmer Rouge" (pp. 181-192). In *Expressions of Cambodia: The Politics of Tradition, Identity and Change*. London: Routledge.

Tutorial (November 10): *The Strom Makers* (HQ281 S76, 2015, 70 Mins)

Week 12 (November 17). Conclusion: Modernity, Centers and Peripheries

Rigg, Jonathan

2003 "The Experience of Exclusion" in *Southeast Asia: The Human Landscape of Modernization and Development* (Second Edition). London: Routledge. Pp. 139-189.

Tutorial (November 17): *sections for discussion about the documentaries and readings*

Due date to submit the second reviewing paper on five documentaries from week 7 to week 11 (length: 5-6 pages, 12 font, double space, A4 page).

Week 13 (November 24). General Reviewing

Due date to submit term paper is December 5.