CONTEMPORARY SOUTHEAST ASIA
A Survey of the Demographic, Economic, Social, and Cultural Dimensions of Southeast Asia
Course Website: https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1086755

Course Objectives:
This course is an introductory sociological survey of Southeast Asia—the countries of Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, East Timor, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The course title suggests that our focus is on present day Southeast Asia, however, we begin with a historical perspective and do not reach the twentieth century until the second half of the course. The twenty-first century finally makes an appearance in week 8. Many of the contemporary features of Southeast Asian societies have their roots in the centuries of European imperialism and colonial rule and in the rise, expansion, and demise of empires of earlier eras. The conventional Western-centric orientation of our educational system does not provide most students with sufficient knowledge of the complexities of the Southeast Asia past that has shaped the modern era.

Another reason for my emphasis on a historical approach is the recent publication (2015) of A History of Southeast Asia: Critical Crossroads by Anthony Reid. Reid’s book is much more than a standard history text – it is a sociological treatise that presents political events and eras with detailed attention to their social and economic causes and consequences. It is also a social history that examines the diversity and changes in the lives of the common peoples in Southeast Asia, including economic pursuits, living standards, religious traditions, family life, and gender relations. It is also written in a lucid and engaging style that considers alternative interpretations and debates among scholars.

We will be moving across countries, centuries, and issues (empires, religion, colonialism, ethnicity, gender, and much more) at such a pace that it may seem bewildering. We will have exams, but my objective is to focus more on understanding themes rather than recall of detailed information of people and dates. The one exception is that you will be expected to locate historical civilizations and contemporary countries on the map as well as some major geographical features, for example, the Straits of Melaka. But, in general, our focus will be on thematic questions, such as: For example, how have ocean currents, winds, land formations, and distinctive flora and fauna made Southeast Asia a region with common features? Other questions to be addressed are: why and how did world religions spread to Southeast Asia? how were ethnic and cultural divisions bridged in the past and at present? and are gender relations different in Southeast Asia than in other world regions?

In addition to the breadth of coverage gained from the readings and class discussions, I would like each student to gain an in-depth knowledge on a specific issue by writing a term paper. Given that our course is only 10 weeks (actually, we have 10 and ½ weeks this term), it is imperative that you begin working on your paper within the first few weeks of the class. Each student will be free to choose the focus of their term paper, but I am available to suggest topics and provide guidance.
Readings:

Anthony Reid. 2015. *A History of Southeast Asia: Critical Crossroads*. Wiley-Blackwell. There are also additional readings (mostly optional) available from the course website.

For your term paper, you will find most of what you need in the Southeast Asian collection of the UW Library. The UW Southeast Asia collection is one of the best in the world (thanks to Judith Henchy, Southeast Asia Librarian) with a large number of online tools and references in addition to the collection of print materials in the library. You can get an overview from: http://guides.lib.uw.edu/research/southeastasia

Course Format, Evaluation, and Grading:

The course will have a seminar rather than lecture format. I will usually have a few introductory comments at the start of each class, but my hope is to spend most of our class time in discussion. The aim of our discussion is to learn the “facts,” but also to understand Reid’s (and how other scholars) broader interpretations. The discussion will be guided, in large part, by the questions posted by me and students on the course bulletin board. Students are expected to post at least one question (or a topic for discussion) each week. The best questions are ones that require a comparison of societies, time periods, events, or interpretations, but it is perfectly okay to post a question of clarification, for example, what does Reid mean when he says XYZ? Ten percent of your final grade (one point each week) will be based on posting at least one question per week (no later than 5 pm on Tuesday of each week). I will also post weekly notes and questions on the course website.

There will be a midterm exam on November 2, 2016. The midterm will cover materials through chapter 17 of Reid (and class discussion through October 31). The first exam will also contain map identification questions. The final exam will be cumulative and is scheduled for Wednesday, December 14, 2016, 8:30-10:20, SAV 131.

Students in the course must also write a term paper (about 20 pages), which is due on December 7, 2016 – the last regular day of the course. Students will also be expected to make a preliminary presentation of their paper during the final two weeks of the course. Students should discuss their potential ideas for a term paper (by email or an office visit) with me during the first three weeks of a course. I will be happy to give suggestions on possible topics. A one-page outline of the term paper with at least five possible references must be handed by October 12. Final course grades will be computed as a weighted average of the exams (25% for each), the term paper (40%), and weekly posts to the course website (10%).
Class Topics and Reading Assignments:

Week 1 (September 28): Introduction to Southeast Asia: Geography, Ecology, and Peoples
Read: Reid, Chapter 1
Optional:

Week 2 (October 3 and 5): Early History, Classical Empires, and the Age of Commerce
Read: Reid, Chapters 2, 3 and 4
Optional:

October 5 @ 9:45 Poetry Reading by ko ko thett, Burmese poet, translator and editor.
See http://kokothett.webs.com/

Week 3 (October 10 and 12): Turning Points: World Religions, Gunpowder, and 17th Century Crisis
Read: Reid, Chapters 5, 6 and 7
Optional:

Week 4 (October 17 and 19): Social and Cultural Responses to the Chinese Century and Planation Economies
Read: Reid, Chapters 8, 9, and 10
Optional:
Carl Trocki. Opium: Empire and the Global Political Economy. Chapter 1. The Dream of Empire and Chapter 8 The Most Long Continued International Crime

Week 5 (October 24 and 26): Imperial Consolidation: The Making of States, Poverty, and Modern Tastes

Read: Reid, Chapters 11, 12, 13 and 14

Optional:

Watch: MAX HAVELAAR (a 1973 feature film based on an 1860 novel written by Eduard Douwes Dekker). The original novel was an expose of the corruption of the Dutch colonial regime in Java. According to Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Max Havelaar was the book that killed colonialism

The film is about 170 minutes, and I have divided it into three parts that you can steam to your laptop, tablet, or phone.
Part I https://drive.google.com/a/uw.edu/file/d/0B58rwglCxiRWB1NjOWk4TFJvWDQ/view?usp=sharing
Part II https://drive.google.com/a/uw.edu/file/d/0B58rwglCxiRWbjBGOUN0UEJYWW/ view?usp=sharing
Part III https://drive.google.com/a/uw.edu/file/d/0B58rwglCxiRWSV9oaUNXS0tRRTQ/view?usp=sharing

Week 6 (October 31 and November 2): Nationalism, Revolution, and Independence

Read: Reid, Chapters 15, 16, and 17.

Optional:

**MID TERM EXAM ON NOVEMBER 2, 2016**

**Week 7 (November 7 and 9): Economic Development and Demographic Change**

Read: Reid, Chapter 18.


Optional:

**Week 8 (November 14 and 16): Ethnicity in an Age of Nation-States**

Read: Reid, Chapters 19 and 20


Optional:

Week 9 (March 21 and 23): Women and Family in Southeast Asia

Read: Anthony Reid. 2014. “Urban Respectability and the Maleness of (Southeast) Asian Modernity” Asian Review of World Histories 2:2 (July 2014), 147-167. This journal is published in Korea, but it is available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.12773/arwh.2014.2.2.147

Optional

Weeks 10 and 11 (November 28 and 30 December 5 and 7): Student Presentations

Final Exam is scheduled for Wednesday, December 14, 2016, 8:30-10:20, SAV 131