Modern Southeast Asia

History 3590
Spring 2016, 3 Credits
CTIH 351 9:40-10:30 (MWF)

Prof. ShawnaKim Lowey-Ball
231 Irish Humanities Building (CTIH
B)
e-mail: shawnakim.lowey-ball@utah.edu

This course meets the International (IR) Requirement.

Course Description

This course surveys the recent history of the nation-states that comprise Southeast Asia. We begin in the 19th century when the region was dominated by European imperial powers, and we end with modern-day Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, the Philippines, East Timor, and Brunei. In between we will discuss the cultural and economic transformations wrought by colonization (including Japanese, American, and Indonesian colonization, in addition to colonization by major European powers); common experiences during world war; the various ways that Southeast Asians negotiated for independent nationhood; Cold War politics; ethnic tensions in this very diverse region; and the important political and social role of religion in Southeast Asia. We will cover religious, nationalist, royalist, communist, peasant, and labor movements, political transitions to democracy and dictatorship, and rapidly changing relations with the outside world.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, you should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the major events and ideas that have shaped modern Southeast Asia. You will know the basic geography of the region and will be able to construct and defend theses about why regional politics and culture have changed so dramatically over the last two hundred years. You will also be able to offer a comparative cultural analysis about how shared historical experiences variously affected the people of several different Southeast Asian nations.

Teaching, Learning, and Evaluation

This is a mixed lecture and discussion course. Quizzes and exams may draw equally from class discussion, readings, and lecture, so pay attention when we’re “just talking.” Note that you are responsible for readings even if we don’t cover them in detail in class.

You will be graded on a brief map test (worth 10%), a mid-term exam (20%), several short (~2 page) reading response papers (5% each), participation (5%), and a final exam (30%).
Map quiz 1/25: In the first week of class, I will give you a handout with the names of cities, states, rivers, etc. If you learn these, you’ll get an easy 100% on the quiz. 

Reading Responses: Due online on the day specified in the syllabus below, this should be a response to the readings for the week in which you turn it in. This paper may be relatively informal and does not require any outside research (though it should conform to basic rules of grammar and good writing), but it must make it clear to me that you have done the week’s readings and that you have thought about them in some way. Note that I will drop your two lowest reading response paper grades; alternatively, you may skip two reading response papers with no penalty.

Mid-term 3/11: Will feature short IDs and at least one essay question.
Final exam 5/2: Will feature short IDs and at least two essay questions. This exam may also include geographical IDs handed out for the map quiz.

Numerical grades have the following letter equivalent: 
A = 93-100; A- = 90-92; B+ = 87-89; B = 83-86; B- = 80-82; C+ = 77-79; C = 73-76; C- = 70-72; D+ = 67-69; D = 63-66; D- = 60-62. You may ask me to reconsider a grade by meeting with me in person, bringing the graded work in question with you. Reconsidered grades may be raised or lowered as merited.

Cheating or plagiarizing work will result in NO CREDIT with no opportunity for a make-up. Depending on the severity of the transgression, it might also result in failing the course, at my discretion. Please do not cheat, and please don’t use other peoples’ work without citation. It’s immoral. Moreover, choosing not to learn things is a waste of your time in college.

Special Rules

Computers: no. I know that many of us like to take notes on the computer, but most of us are also tempted by the myriad diversions of email, facebook, and repetitive flash games. You may not use a computer in this class. (If you have a special need to use a computer, please have the Center for Disability Services get in touch with me and I will accommodate.)

Tablets: Double no.

Cell phones: Please make sure your phone is off or on silent mode during class. Do not text.

Interrupting me to ask questions: Yes! Southeast Asia is a diverse and complicated region. Please do interrupt my lecture if something is unclear or if you have an interesting and relevant observation.
Syllabus

Texts


Additional readings on the course website and online, as stated in the syllabus below. Note that if you are off campus, you may have to sign into the Marriott library in order to access some online readings.

Lecture and Assignment Schedule

The questions listed below should guide your studying and may form the basis of your reading response papers if you find them helpful, but you are not required to submit formal answers to them.

Week 1 (starting 1/11): Introduction to the class and to Southeast Asia. The religious, ethnic, historical, and physical landscape. Monsoons and the population problem (“not enough people, too many resources”). A first look at the Philippine Islands.

Reading: Owen, Introduction and chapter 11 (for Friday)

Note that while chapters 1-3 are NOT required reading for this class, they may be helpful as historical background and you should feel free to peruse them at your leisure.

Questions: How did “Southeast Asia” itself come to be a category of study? What kinds of environmental and historical factors unite the region? Why do regional population dynamics make it so difficult to control Southeast Asian polities? What are some reasons so many outside powers have sought such control?

Week 2 (1/18 – no class Monday): The Spanish Philippines, the Philippine revolution, American conquest and colonialism, and the Philippine nation.

Assignment: Reading response paper on either or both of readings 2 and 3 (Beveridge and McKinley), due Friday 1/22.

Reading: 1. Owen, chapters 19 and 33
3. Brief excerpt from an interview with President William McKinley, available on the course website.
Questions: Was Catholicism an instrument of colonial control or popular freedom during the Spanish colonization of the Philippines? How knowledgeable, how capable, and how moral were the American administrators who took over in 1896? How have the Philippine Islanders made Spanish and American traditions their own?

Week 3 (1/25): Burma to 1945.

Assignment: Map quiz at the beginning of class Monday, January 25.

Reading: 1. Owen, chapters 5 and 22

Questions: How did the British change the class politics and the ethnic makeup of the Burmese population? What changes did the Japanese make 1942-1945? What kinds of responses (revolutionary, intellectual, etc.) did Burma’s people propose?

Week 4 (2/1): Burma from 1945

Assignment: Reading response on the Michael Adas paper (week 3 reading) due Monday, 2/1.

Reading: 1. Owen, chapters 23 and 37

Questions: What kinds of political ideas did Buddhism, democracy, socialism, and military rule each offer as Burma transitioned to independent statehood? Who lost and who gained with the rise of the country’s military junta? What’s in a name (Myanmar vs. Burma)?

Week 5 (2/8): Colonial Malaya and Malayan Independence

Assignment: Reading response on “Communism, Race, and Politics in Malaysia” due Friday, 2/12.

Reading: 1. Owen, chapters 10 and 21
Questions: Did the British create multi-ethnic Malaysia? Why did ethnic tensions become so fierce? How did Communism overlap with racial politics in colonial Malaya? Was the creation of the Singaporean state a response to ethnic tensions or a response to differing political ideals?

Week 6 (2/15 – no class Monday): Fractures in the Malay edifice: the emergence of Singapore and Brunei; the making of modern Malaysia

Reading: 1. Owen, chapters 29 and 30

Questions: Was the creation of the Singaporean state a response to ethnic tensions or a response to differing political ideals? Compare the cases of Singapore, Brunei, Sabah, and Sarawak in the making of the modern map of Southeast Asian.

Week 7 (2/22): Dutch Indonesia; Indonesia and World War

Assignment: Reading response on either reading 2 or 3, due Friday 2/26.

Reading: 1. Owen, chapters 9, and 20

Questions: What was Javanese life like under Dutch colonialism? How did Indonesian nationalist and communist movements interact during this period?

Week 8 (2/29): The Japanese in Southeast Asia; Indonesian Independence

Assignment: Reading response on reading 2 due Friday, 3/4.

Reading: 1. Owen, chapters 20 and 31
Questions: Why was Japanese occupation initially attractive to many Indonesian nationalists despite being brutal in practice? In what ways was the 1945-49 Indonesian Revolution a major social upheaval, rather than a simple case of decolonization?

Week 9 (3/7): Indonesia to the present day: Suharto; struggles for East Timor and Papua (Irian Jaya, West Irian, etc.); democracy in Indonesia

Assignment: Prepare for the midterm exam.

Reading: 1. Owen, chapter 31

Questions: What was constitutional or democratic about “Constitutional Democracy” and “Guided Democracy” in Indonesia, 1950-1965? Did Suharto’s “New Order” from 1965 to 1998 solve the country’s political, social, and economic problems? What was the role of Islam in Indonesia’s democratic transition? Explain why Suharto’s regime failed to incorporate East Timor despite harsh military rule 1975-1999, but how it gained Papua as a part of the new nation. What was Indonesian imperialism like?

MIDTERM EXAM 3/11

Week 10 (3/14): SPRING BREAK

Week 11 (3/21): Thailand, always independent

Assignment: Reading response paper on “The Quest for Siwilai” due Friday, 3/25.

Reading: 1. Owen, chapters 6, 24, and 32

Questions: How did Siam adopt western language and technology to keep from being colonized? In what ways did the Siamese refuse to compromise their identity in the face of outside pressure? Was the 1932 “coup” in Bangkok a major turning point in Thai history? Has democracy been successful in post-1945 Thailand?
**Week 12 (3/28):** French Indochina, Cambodia vs. Vietnam

**Assignment:** Reading response on reading 2, due 4/1.

**Reading:**
1. Owen, chapters 7, 8

**Questions:** In what ways was French rule in Vietnam similar to French rule in Cambodia, and how was it different? Why did the French support the Cambodian monarchy? How did the Vietnamese see themselves in relation to other residents of French Indochina?

---

**Week 13 (4/4):** Cambodian nationalism, the emergence of an independent Cambodia, the Cambodian republic, and the Cambodian genocide

**Reading:** Owen, chapter 25

**Questions:** Who were the Khmer Issarak? To what extent was Norodom Sihanouk an independent ruler of Cambodia, and to what extent was his post-colonial regime (1954-1970) dependent on foreign aid? Was Pol Pot’s Democratic Kampuchea regime a “highly centralized dictatorship,” or was it a case where “the state never stood on its feet?”

---

**Week 14 (4/11):** Vietnam at war

**Assignment:** Reading response on reading 2, due Friday 4/15.

**Reading:**
1. Owen, chapter 23
2. Selections from Michael H. Hunt, *Vietnam War Reader: A Documentary History from American and Vietnamese Perspectives*. Please read parts 5.6 (pp. 164-169), 5.8 (pp.170-171), and 5.10 (pp. 172-175). Available through the Marriott Library at [http://site.ebrary.com/lib/utah/reader.action?docID=10372233](http://site.ebrary.com/lib/utah/reader.action?docID=10372233). (Note that you can search the text by page number.)

**Questions:** Why did America become involved in the Vietnam War? In what ways was Vietnam a victim of global forces beyond its control? How did the Vietnamese see American involvement and how did they understand the Tet Offensive?
**Week 15 (4/18):** Modern Vietnam

**Assignment:** Reading response on reading 2 due Friday 4/22.

**Reading:**
1. Owen, chapter 34

**Questions:** To what extent did Hanoi’s leadership actively lose the war? How can we explain Vietnam's domestic problems since 1975? What is the historical relationship between Vietnam and China and how is this playing out in the present day?

**Week 16 (4/25):** Issues across Southeast Asia: ethnic minorities, the South China Sea, democracy, economic development, anything relevant from the news

**Reading:** No reading! Study for your final exams.

**Questions:** How do the specifics of Southeast Asian history affect our understanding of the major issues in modern Southeast Asia? To what extent is this a coherent region dealing with similar problems and developments, or are the nations of Southeast Asia so different that their grouping is artificial? From the perspective of recent history, does it make sense to divide “maritime” Southeast Asia from “mainland” Southeast Asia?

**FINAL EXAM MONDAY, MAY 2, 8:00 AM – 10:00 AM.**