

Department of Political Science
Rockefeller College
University at Albany, SUNY

RPOS 557/557R

POLITICS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA
Fall 2020

Professor Meredith Weiss

Class: Th 6:00-8:50pm
HS 106a

Office hours: By appointment (via Zoom or in-person)
Tel: 442 5256 Email: mweiss@albany.edu

Class format: We will meet *in person*, but with appropriate, mandatory *social-distancing and facemasks*. Please be patient with any difficulties in hearing or being heard, when we're all wearing masks (especially students or guest speakers are joining via Zoom).

- If you have a medical condition that prevents you from attending classes in person (i.e., if you are immunocompromised or otherwise in a high-risk category), please let me know and we can discuss accommodations.
- If you are subject to quarantine—and of course, if you are sick!—please do *not* attend in person. In that case, let me know before the start of class, then join via Zoom. If you are ill to the point of not being able to join via Zoom, I will record the class for you to watch when you are able, then you can meet with me individually over Zoom to discuss. (Any such recordings will be *only* for students registered in the class to watch.)
- If the university is obliged to “pivot” online after the start of the semester, we will move the class to Zoom.

Course Description

Southeast Asia—the swath of land and water bounded loosely by China, India, and Australia—includes Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. These nations share important historical, cultural, economic, political, and social ties, and all but Timor-Leste are members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Nonetheless, the region is far from homogenous, encompassing a vast array of ethnic and linguistic groups, most major and many “minor” religions, various sociopolitical and economic institutions and ideologies, and a range of landscapes and climates. Its strategic location put Southeast Asia at the crux of Cold War power struggles; more recently, the Asian economic “miracle” and its dramatic collapse in 1997-98, continuing struggles for regime change and consolidation, and resurgent radicalisms in several states have kept the region in the limelight.

In this class, we will explore the politics and societies of Southeast Asia through the study of significant texts. We will begin with a brief overview of the region as a whole and prevailing theoretical lenses, then move on to a series of book-length studies of the region, including a number of classic works, covering a range of themes. We focus on books rather than articles or selected chapters both to allow you to see the full process of building and supporting a set of theoretically-informed arguments (keeping in mind that some of these texts began as PhD dissertations ...), and to ease the burden on those with little or no prior exposure to Southeast Asia (since each book will offer pretty much all the background you need for that particular reading). By the end of the semester, you will not only know far more about Southeast Asia, but will have read a diverse array of canonical, interdisciplinary works on the region (several of them renowned outside the subfield, as well) and delved into a range of distinct approaches to and methods for studying politics, development, and sociopolitical change.

The reading load is reasonably heavy—generally one full book per week, with additional recommended (optional) readings—but varied, and many of the assigned texts are exceptionally well-written. The class will be run as a discussion-driven seminar, so it is vitally important that everyone complete the reading, come to class, and participate actively every week.

Class Structure and Assignments

The class will be run as a seminar. Participation will be evaluated based on whether you voluntarily pose and respond to questions in each class session, demonstrate that you have read and thought through the assigned reading, and listen respectfully to what your peers say. Given the nature of the course and the fact that we meet only once per week, I will ask you to withdraw from the course if you miss more than one class session. (That does *not* mean you have one “freebie,” since participation is a core requirement! Also, please see the explanation above for how we will accommodate quarantine or illness, given the pandemic. Remote or asynchronous participation, per those guidelines, in case of illness will *not* count against you.)

Every student should come prepared each week to discuss the assigned work(s) in light of a set of framing questions (which we will generally consider in sequence):

1. What is/are the main argument(s) the author(s) seek to make?
 - If the work is an edited volume, including distinct contributions by various authors, what variations do you note in the nature, scope, or thrust of the arguments presented?
2. What evidence do(es) the author(s) marshal to support their argument, gathered and/or assessed via what method(s)?
3. Do the evidence and methods fit the claim: is the evidence sufficient and is the method appropriate? What counterarguments might you raise—and which of these did the author(s) address?
4. How does this work – in terms of argument, nature/content of evidence, and/or approach – compare with others we have read in this class or that you have encountered elsewhere?
5. What extensions might be possible and particularly useful from this work: how might that author(s) develop a research agenda, building on this effort?

Short papers

Each student will prepare short papers (**3-4 pages**, double-spaced, including notes and references) for each of **two weeks**; those students should also prepare a set of questions to present to the class, drawing from or building upon the assigned reading. We will divvy up weeks early in the term, to ensure at least two students write/pose questions per week.

The short papers should offer a “critical summary” and discussion. *Go beyond a descriptive overview*: analyze the work in question in light of the 5 questions listed above, both to evaluate and critique the work, and to link it with other theoretical perspectives, approaches, or cases. Above all: *present and support a clear argument*. Your model should be a published book review (although you need not specify aspects such as appropriate audience). I encourage you to *read at least one supplemental article* for the weeks on which you write—choose from among the recommended readings listed or see me for suggestions of works more in line with your specific interests—to broaden your perspective and serve as a foil. How thoroughly or extensively you incorporate that secondary piece into your paper is up to you, though it should not be your primary focus.

Each student writing a short paper for a given week will present their argument briefly to the class (with or without visual aids), as well as pose the questions they have prepared. If your argument and/or questions draw substantially on works *not* assigned for the class, please plan to elaborate orally and/or circulate materials in advance, to bring everyone else up to speed. (If you have encountered film clips or other materials relevant to your claim, feel free to present those, as well—but let me know in advance if you will need longer than about 15-20 minutes.) Student short-paper presentations will normally be in the final portion of the class session; however, you may introduce your prepared questions earlier, if germane to the discussion at that point.

Final paper

The final paper will give you the opportunity not only for original research, but also to put the theories you are learning to the test. You will select (a) *one theme* of study, most likely from among those identified in the Kuhonta, Slater, & Vu volume (parties and elections, politics of religion, etc.) and (b) any *one or two states* in Southeast Asia. (If you opt to focus on a single state, develop a within-case comparison: e.g., across time periods, subnational units, or population segments.)

Begin with a review of the literature on that theme specifically on your chosen state(s) (and more broadly as needed). *Make and support a clear claim*: for instance, on the nature, quality, and salience of *ethnicity* as a political variable in *Indonesia* versus *Malaysia*; or on *internal security* in *Thailand* under civilian versus military rule. You may choose to keep your focus at a relatively high level, or home in more narrowly on a specific policy or subtopic within that broad domain (i.e., policies related to land distribution specifically versus agrarian political economy generally).

You **MUST** come speak with me about your topic before you get too far into the research, or by **October 22** at the very latest. (You are encouraged to speak with me more than once about your paper, however!) Your completed paper should be approximately **20 pages**, including notes and references. Formatting guidelines: Times New Roman font, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, in-text parenthetical citations + bibliography. *Edit and proofread your work carefully*. Your aim is a paper sufficiently well-argued and polished that you could consider submitting it to an academic journal (though you are not obliged to do so).

Final papers will be due at 6pm on **Monday, November 30**. *No extensions will be granted* except in case of *documented* medical or family emergency.

Paper presentation

On the last day of class (19 November), each of you will give a 15-minute overview of your final paper: focus, argument, approach, and any challenges, counterintuitive developments, or other findings of note that you have encountered thus far. Think of this exercise as a tantamount to presenting your paper at a conference—but with the expectation that your research and writing will still be in progress. Feel free to circulate questions or issues in advance on which you would especially like guidance or feedback. Be prepared, too, to listen closely and ask questions of your classmates, on their research. (Again, good practice for attending talks and conferences ...)

Objectives

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Summarize and compare the key sociopolitical attributes and dynamics across states of Southeast Asia.
- Evaluate several key issues in comparative politics in the context of Southeast Asia.
- Understand and compare different methods for and approaches to the study of politics.
- Assess 1-2 Southeast Asian states rigorously in terms of one core theme or dimension.

Evaluation Criteria

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| • Class participation | 40% |
| • Two short papers | 20% total |
| • Final paper | 35% |
| • Paper presentation | 5% |

For students registered for **RPOS557R**, the breakdown will be:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| • Class participation | 80% |
| • Two short papers (total) | 20% |

Grading scale

- 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, E: 0-59

Special needs

Students with special needs due to physical, learning, or other disabilities will be accommodated. To request such accommodation, first register with the Disability Resource Center (Campus Center 137, <http://www.albany.edu/disability/DRC/>); they will provide you with a letter to me, detailing the provisions requested. To ensure equitable treatment of all students, please submit these letters within the first two weeks of the semester.

Academic integrity

I expect all students to be ethical and honest in completing all work for this class. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the university's guidelines on academic integrity

(http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html); ignorance is NOT an excuse. Violations of this code, such as plagiarism, cheating, copying, or misrepresentation of work as your own, will meet with appropriate penalties and discipline as outlined in UAlbany's regulations, up to and including loss of course credit, suspension, or expulsion from the university. It is the responsibility of every student also to report any observed violations.

Classroom Health and Safety

During the COVID-19 pandemic, UAlbany is following federal, state, and local public health guidelines. These guidelines across all University spaces. All students, faculty members, staff, and visitors are required to adhere to the expectations outlined on the University's COVID-19 website: <https://www.albany.edu/covid-19/planning-fall-2020/health-safety>.

- In class, please be sure that you enter the classroom wearing your face covering and keep it on for the entire class period.
- Observe the physical-distancing markers in the classroom at all times, including when you enter and exit the classroom.
- Follow the posted cleaning protocols upon entering/exiting the classroom.

Course readings

All required texts are available for purchase from your favorite online seller. You may prefer to borrow some from the library, instead—in which case, be sure to leave sufficient time for delivery via interlibrary loan (ILL) if needed. Do *not* feel obliged to purchase all these books if your budget is limited—although some are classics that you may want to own (and the books by Bertrand and Kuhonta, et al. in particular may be useful for future reference). I will post any additional non-full-book readings (i.e., journal articles or selected book chapters) on Blackboard.

- Benedict Anderson, *A Life Beyond Boundaries: A Memoir*, London: Verso, 2016, 9781784784560
- Edward Aspinall, Meredith L. Weiss, Allen Hicken, and Paul D. Hutchcroft, *Money and Machines: Mobilizing for Elections in Southeast Asia*, draft manuscript (will be provided; do *not* circulate)
- Jacques Bertrand, *Political Change in Southeast Asia*, New York: Cambridge, 2013, 9780521710060
- Mary Callahan, *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2005, 9780801472671
- Toby Carroll, Shahar Hameiri, and Lee Jones (ed.), *The Political Economy of Southeast Asia: Politics and Uneven Development under Hyperglobalisation*, 4th ed., New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, 9783030282547
- Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000, 9780691050478
- Benedict J. Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002 (or original 1977 version), 9780742518681

- Diana Kim, *Empires of Vice: The Rise of Opium Prohibition in Asia*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2020, 9780691172408.
- Erik M. Kuhonta, Dan Slater, Tuong Vu, ed. *Southeast Asia in Political Science: Theory, Region, Qualitative Analysis*, Stanford: Stanford UP, 2008, 9780804761529
- Garry Rodan, *Participation without Democracy: Containing Conflict in Southeast Asia*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2018, 9781501720116
- James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1987, 9780300036411
- Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997, 9780824819743

I will be happy to recommend additional readings on any of the topics or countries we cover; the Kuhonta, Slater, and Vu edited volume we read early in the term also offers a wealth of suggestions. I have included a handful of recommended additional readings, but those lists just scratch the surface—whether for your short papers or for other purposes, feel free to ask for more to read!

Schedule

(Readings are due on the date under which they are listed. Books are to be read in their entirety; readings listed as “recommended” are optional.):

27 August: Introduction & Regional Overview

- Donald Emerson, “‘Southeast Asia’: What’s in a Name?” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 15(1): 1-21
- Jacques Bertrand, *Political Change in Southeast Asia* (skim!)
- Read for the sake of background, especially if you are new to Southeast Asia or to the politics of certain countries in the region; we will not discuss in depth

Recommended:

- Mathew Davies, *Ritual and Region: The Invention of ASEAN*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018

3 September: Encountering Area Studies

No discussion leader this week; all should come prepared with questions.

Sign up for summaries/discussion-leading; come with a list of weeks that interest you and topics for next week.

- Benedict Anderson, *A Life Beyond Boundaries*

Recommended:

- Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 1973
- Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World*, New York: Verso, 1998

10 September: Thematic Overview

Each student will prepare 1-2 thoughtful questions each for 2-3 topics.

Start thinking about the countries and theme on which you will focus for your paper.

- Kuhonta, Slater, and Vu (ed.), *Southeast Asia in Political Science*
 - A collaborative, critical, dense review of literature on the region, and of the place of studies of SE Asia in the discipline. While the book may be difficult for those with little prior exposure to SE Asia, the remainder of the course builds on each of the topics presented here (with some reframing/reordering).
 - If you find yourself lost in the details of specific cases, focus on the larger arguments being made about theory and method, and on the types of topics SE Asianists tend to study when they study politics.

Recommended:

- Mark Beeson (ed.), *Contemporary Southeast Asia: Regional Dynamics, National Differences*, 2nd edition, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008

17 September: State-making

- Thongchai, *Siam Mapped*

Recommended:

- James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, New Haven: Yale UP, 2009
- Muthiah Alagappa, "The Bases of Legitimacy," in M. Alagappa (ed.), *Political Legitimacy in Southeast Asia: The Quest for Moral Authority*, Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995, pp. 31-53
- Anthony Reid, *Imperial Alchemy: Nationalism and Political Identity in Southeast Asia*, New York, Cambridge UP, 2010
- Edward Aspinall, *Islam and Nation: Separatist Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia*, Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009

24 September: Regime-making

- Kim, *Empires of Vice*
 - Diana Kim will join over Zoom for part of the class (questions on methods, including archival research, are also fair game)

Recommended:

- Dan Slater, *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia*, New York: Cambridge UP, 2010
- Carl H. Landé, "Parties and Politics in the Philippines," *Asian Survey* 8:9 (1968), pp. 728-47
- Terence Lee, "The Armed Forces and Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Explaining the Role of the Military in 1986 Philippines and 1998 Indonesia," *Comparative Political Studies* 42:5 (2009), 640-99

- William F. Case, “Can the ‘Halfway House’ Stand? Semidemocracy and Elite Theory in Three Southeast Asian Countries,” *Comparative Politics* 28:4 (1996), pp. 437–64

1 October: Political Parties and Elections

- Aspinall, Weiss, Hicken, and Hutchcroft, *Money and Machines*
 - Aspinall, Hicken, and Hutchcroft will join over Zoom for part of the class

Recommended:

- Allen Hicken and Erik M. Kuhonta, ed. *Party System Institutionalization in Asia*, New York: Cambridge UP, 2014 (Southeast Asian cases and comparisons: chapters 1-3, 6, 9-10, 12-14)
- R. H. Taylor, *The Politics of Elections in Southeast Asia*, New York: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge UP, 1996
- Chua Beng Huat (ed.), *Elections as Popular Culture in Asia*, NY: Routledge, 2007
- Yun-han Chu, Larry Diamond, and Andrew Nathan (ed.), *How East Asians View Democracy*, New York: Columbia UP, 2008

8 October: Authoritarianism

- Callahan, *Making Enemies*

Recommended:

- Duncan McCargo, “Network Monarchy and Legitimacy Crises in Thailand,” *Pacific Affairs* 18:4 (Dec. 2004), pp. 499-519
- Cherian George, *Singapore: The Air-conditioned Nation*, Singapore: Landmark Books, 2000, pp. 13-24
- Harold Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia*, Ithaca, NY Cornell UP, 1978
- Meredith Weiss, *Roots of Resilience: Party Machines and Grassroots Politics in Southeast Asia*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2020

15 October: Civil Society

- Rodan, *Participation without Democracy*
 - Garry Rodan will join over Zoom at 8pm to discuss his book

Recommended:

- Muthiah Alagappa, “Civil Society and Democratic Change: Indeterminate Connection, Transforming Relations,” in M. Alagappa (ed.), *Civil Society and Political Change in Asia: Expanding and Contracting Democratic Space*, Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004, pp. 478-506
- Meredith Weiss and Edward Aspinall, *Student Activism in Asia: Between Protest and Powerlessness*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012

- Vincent Boudreau, “State Repression and Democracy Protest in Three Southeast Asian Countries,” in David S. Meyer, Nancy Whittier, and Belinda Robnett (eds.), *Social Movements: Identity, Culture, and the State* (Oxford UP, 2002), pp. 28-46
- Meredith Weiss, *Protest and Possibilities: Civil Society and Coalitions for Political Change in Malaysia*, Stanford: Stanford UP, 2006

22 October: Mass & Agrarian Politics

Deadline to see me about your final-paper topic

- Kerkvliet, *The Huk Rebellion*

Recommended:

- James C. Scott, “The Erosion of Patron-Client Bonds and Social Change in Rural Southeast Asia,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 32: 1 (1972), pp. 5-37
- Andrew Walker, *Thailand’s Political Peasants: Power in the Modern Rural Economy*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012
- Nancy Peluso, *Rich Forests, Poor People: Resource Control and Resistance in Java*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Saturnino Borrás, Jr. and Jennifer C. Franco, “Transnational Agrarian Movements’ Struggles for Land and Citizenship Rights,” IDS Working Paper 323, Brighton: IDS, 2009

29 October: Religion

Deadline to see me about your paper topic

- Hefner, *Civil Islam*

Recommended:

- Jeremy Menchik, *Islam and Democracy in Indonesia: Tolerance without Liberalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2016
- Charles Keyes, “Buddhism and National Integration in Thailand,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 30:3 (1971), pp. 551-67
- Christopher Duncan, *Violence and Vengeance: Religious Conflict and Its Aftermath in Eastern Indonesia*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2013
- Mina Roces, “The Militant Nun as Political Activist and Feminist in Martial Law Philippines,” *Portal* 1:1 (2004)

5 November: Rural Political Economy

- Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*

Recommended:

- Jonathan Rigg, *Rural Development in Southeast Asia: Dispossession, Accumulation and Persistence*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2020

- Michael Adas, “From Avoidance to Confrontation: Peasant Protest in Precolonial and Colonial Southeast Asia,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23:2 (1981), pp. 217-47
- Samuel Popkin, *The Rational Peasant: The Political Economy of Rural Society in Vietnam*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979
- Ardeth Maung Thawngmung, *Behind the Teak Curtain: Authoritarianism, Agricultural Policies, and Political Legitimacy in Rural Burma/Myanmar*, New York: Routledge, 2006
- Clifford Geertz, *Agricultural Involution: The Process of Ecological Change in Indonesia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963

12 November: Development

- Carroll, Hameiri, and Jones, *The Political Economy of Southeast Asia*

Recommended:

- Tuong Vu, *Paths to Development in Asia: South Korea, Vietnam, China, and Indonesia*, New York: Cambridge UP, 2010, 9781107618107
- Richard F. Doner, *The Politics of Uneven Development: Thailand’s Economic Growth in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009
- Teri L. Caraway and Michele Ford, *Labor and Politics in Indonesia*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2020
- Paul Hutchcroft, *Booty Capitalism: The Politics of Banking in the Philippines*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1998
- Paul Krugman, “The Myth of Asia’s Miracle,” *Foreign Affairs* 73:6 (1994), pp. 62-78
- Dilip K. Das, “Asian Crisis: Distilling Critical Lessons,” UNCTAD Discussion Papers, No. 152 (Dec. 2000)

19 November: Paper presentations

30 November: Final papers due (6pm)

Southeast Asia, circa 2009:

http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/southeast_asia_ref_2009.pdf

