

### Module Syllabus

<b>Module Code</b>	SE 2880A
<b>Module Title</b>	Southeast Asia's Cultural Mosaic
<b>Semester</b>	Special Semester: June 23-July 25, 2008
<b>Modular Credit(s)</b>	4
<b>Pre-requisites</b>	Acceptance via the <i>Summer School Southeast Asia in Context</i> special term programme. No previous background in Southeast Asian Studies or Anthropology is required.
<b>Department</b>	Southeast Asian Studies Programme, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore
<b>Lecturer</b>	Dr Pattana Kitiarsa Office: AS3, Level 3, Room 03-10 Telephone: 6516-6588 Email: <a href="mailto:seapk@nus.edu.sg">seapk@nus.edu.sg</a>
<b>Meeting Schedule</b>	Lecture: Daily; 1.30-3.00 p.m.; AS1/02-03
<b>Final Examination</b>	Friday; July 25, 2008; 1.00-3.00 p.m.

#### Module Description:

Southeast Asia is located at crossroads of civilizations and geographical diversities. As an emerging territory, the region's economic, political, and cultural outlooks are complex and highly dynamic. This module explores the cultural worlds of contemporary Southeast Asia from anthropological perspectives. It is specifically designed for undergraduate students majoring in or with strong interest in Southeast Asian Studies. The module covers the following questions: what is culture and how is it constructed and experienced in the contexts of contemporary Southeast Asia? Why cultural change and persistence matter and how can we understand human's cultural practice and experience in diverse contexts throughout the region? What do various aspects of culture mean in contemporary Southeast Asia? Students will be trained to understand and interpret human cultural experience through the anthropological gazes and methods.

#### Aims and Coverage:

Culture is a system of meaning as well as a form of power relations. It is learned, acquired, or internalized through our upbringing and overall social life process. Culture makes us as an individual as well as a member of society. The module emphasizes on two main points: (1) rethink Southeast Asia as a culturally diversified and complex contact zones and (2) reflect and develop some critical thinking concerning some particular cultural issues in the region.

This module aims to add some critical aspects of scholarly gaze and imagination of Southeast Asian cultures, including history, economy, politics, religion, ethnic identity, modernization, gender culture, migration and popular culture. It is organized around the theme that Southeast Asia's diverse cultural worlds are historically, geopolitically and culturally constructed and contested. Anthropology, history, and other social science

disciplines have played their crucial roles in the long processes of ethnographic construction/representation, and contestation of the region.

**Contents:**

The module contents are divided into three parts.

Part I (Week 1) provides students with general historical and theoretical perspectives pertinent to the anthropological making of the region. Reading materials emphasize historical, theoretical and methodological components of anthropology.

Part II (Week 2) deals with discussion on specific aspects of Southeast Asian cultural constructions. Key topics in this section include religion, economy, and ethnicity.

Part III (Week 3) aims to uncover the contemporary cultural world of Southeast Asia with a set of reading materials focusing on development, gender, border-crossing migration, and popular culture.

**Teaching Modes:**

This module is run in a lecture/seminar format. Lecture and classroom participation are major modes of teaching for this module. Class discussion is both encouraged and required. Films and documentaries will be shown during the lecture.

**Assignments and Final Examination:**

1. One-page reflection essay (15%). Students are required to write a short one-page essay (no word/space limit, preferably Times New Roman, Font Size 12) before coming to the class meeting. The essay should show each student's comments on the reading materials. Students are advised to pick up one or more articles from the reading sets and write a coherent essay based on your own elaborated opinion. Starting from the lecture on Day Two, the hard copy of the essay must be handed in at the end of each lecture meeting. The essay is a way to prepare students to participate in class discussion and overall interactive learning process throughout the module.

2. Film assignment/essay on SEA ethnographic film (20%). Each student is expected to choose and work on a film focusing on aspects of Southeast Asian society and culture in the region (e.g., Burma, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam). The essay should reflect each student's critical points of view of how and why the film discusses the cinematic representations of cultural aspects in particular country. The essay's length must not exceed 1,500 words and a hard copy is required.

3. Fieldtrip report (30%). This is a collective assignment for both Summer School modules. Students are advised to choose cultural themes emerging during a series of fieldtrips in Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Cambodia. Each student should keep diary field notes during the trips and use them to form a basis for a coherent essay. Reflection and thematic comments from each student are expected in the report. The report should contain no more than 3,000 words and a hard copy is required.

4. Students are required to sit in a written final examination on July 25, 2008. For this module, there are two given questions and students must choose to answer one. The place and time for the examination will be announced later.

**Evaluation:**

The module evaluation combines both continuing assessment and examination.

Class attendance and participation	10%
One-page reflection essays	15%
Ethnographic film assignment (essay)	20%
Fieldtrip Report	30%
Final examination	25%
Total	100%

**Lecture Schedule and List of Reading Materials**

**Week #1: The Making of Anthropology of Southeast Asia**

**Lecture #1 (Monday, June 23): An Overview: Sociocultural Anthropology and Anthropological Perspectives**

1. Geertz, Clifford. "An Inconstant Profession: The Anthropological Life in Interesting Times". *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 33(2002):1-19.

2. Schneider, Mark A. "Culture-as-Text in the Work of Clifford Geertz". *Theory and Society*. 16, 6(1987):809-839.

3. Keyes, Charles F. "The Observer Observed: Changing Identities of Ethnographers in a Northeastern Thai Village." In *Fieldwork: The Human Experiences*. Robert Lawless, Vinson H. Sutlive, Jr., and Mario D. Zamora, eds. New York: Gordon and Breach, 1983, pp. 169-194.\*

**Lecture #2 (Tuesday, June 24): Ethnographic Authority and Anthropological Contributions to Southeast Asian Studies**

1. King, Victor T. and William D. Wilder. *The Modern Anthropology of South-East Asia*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003 (Chapter 3, 4).

2. Steedly, Mary Margaret. "The State of Culture Theory in the Anthropology of Southeast Asia". *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 28 (1999):431-454.\*

**Lecture #3 (Wednesday, June 25): Indianization, Localization, and Syncretization**

1. Reynolds, Craig J. "Paradigms of the Premodern State". In *Seditious Histories: Contesting Thai and Southeast Asian Pasts*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006, pp.31-52.

2. Kirsch, A. Thomas. "Complexity in the Thai Religious System: An Interpretation". *Journal of Asian Studies*. 36, 2 (February 1977):241-266.\*

**No Lecture on Thursday, June 26: Fieldtrip to Fort Canning and Haw Par Villa** (led by Prof. John Miksic)

**Lecture #4 (Friday, June 27): Colonization and the Birth of New Nations**

1. Geertz, Clifford. "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States". In *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books, 1973, Chapter 10, pp. 255-310.\*

2. Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. Revised Edition. New York: Verso, 1991, Chapter 1, 2, 3, pp. 1-46.

3. Leach, Edmund R. "The Frontiers of Burma". *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 3,1(October 1960):49-68.

**Week #2: Traditions and Modernization**

**Lecture #5 (Monday, June 30) Rice and Subsistence Economy**

1. Keyes, Charles F. "Economic Action and Buddhist Morality in a Thai Village." *The Journal of Asian Studies*. 42, 4(August 1983):851-868.\*

**Lecture #6 (Tuesday, July 1): World Market Economy, the Elite, and the Chinese**

1. Reynolds, Craig J. "Tycoons and Warlords: Modern Thai Social Formations and Chinese Historical Romance". In *Sojourners and Settlers: Histories of Southeast Asia and the Chinese, A Volume in Honour of Jennifer Cushman*. Anthony Reid, ed. London: Allen & Unwin, 1996, pp. 115-47.\*

2. Ong, Aihwa. "The Production of Possession: Spirits and the Multinational Corporation in Malaysia". *American Ethnologist*. 15, 1(February 1988):38-42.

**Lecture #7 (Wednesday, July 2): Buddhism and the Making of Mainland SEA**

1. Tambiah, Stanley J. "Sangha and Polity in Modern Thailand". In *Religion and Legitimation of Power in Thailand Laos, and Burma*. Bardwell Smith, ed. ANIMA Books, Chambersburg, PA, pp. 111-132.\*

2. Pattana Kitiarsa. "Magic Monks and Spirit Mediums in the Politics of Thai Popular Religion". *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*. 6, 2(2005):209-225.\*

**Lecture #8 (Thursday, July 3): Islam and Christianity in the Island SEA**

1. Brenner, Suzanne. "Why Women Rule the Roost: Rethinking Javanese Ideologies of Gender and Self-Control". In *Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Body Politics in Southeast Asia*. Edited by Aihwa Ong and Michael G. Peletz. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, pp. 19-50.\*

2. Ong, Aihwa. "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 G. Peletz. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, pp. 159-194.\*

**Lecture #9 (Friday, July 4): The Politics of Ethnicity**

1. Keyes, Charles F. "Presidential Address: The People of Asia: Science and Politics in Classifications of Ethnic Groups in Thailand, China, and Vietnam". *The Journal of Asian Studies*. 64, 4 (November 2002):1163-1203.\*

### **Week 3: Postmodernization**

#### **Lecture #10 (Monday, July 7): Discourses of Development and Post-development**

1. Heng, Geraldine and Janadas Devan. "State Fatherhood: The Politics of Nationalism, Sexuality, and Race in Singapore". In *Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Body Politics in Southeast Asia*. Edited by Aihwa Ong and Michael G. Peletz. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, pp. 195-215.\*

#### **Lecture #11 (Tuesday, July 8) Gender Cultures: Masculinity, Femininity and Blurred Genres**

1. Blackwood, Evelyn. "Tombois in West Sumatra: Constructing Masculinity and Erotic Desire". *Cultural Anthropology*. 13, 4 (November 1998):491-521.\*

2. Pattana Kitiarsa. "Lives of Hunting Dogs: *Muai* Thai and the Politics of Thai Masculinities." *South East Asia Research*. 13, 1(March 2005):57-90.\*

#### **Lecture #12 (Wednesday, July 9): Cross-border Migration and Transnational Mobility**

1. Constable, Nicole. "At Home But Not At Home: Filipina Narratives of Ambivalent Returns". *Cultural Anthropology*. 14, 2(May 1999):203-228.

2. Parrenas, Rhacel Salazar. "Mothering from a Distance: Emotions, Gender, and Intergenerational Relations in Filipino Transnational Families". *Feminist Studies*. 27, 2 (Summer 2001):361-390.\*

3. Pattana Kitiarsa. "Village Transnationalism: Cross-Border Identities among Thai Migrant Workers in Singapore." *ARI Working Paper Series No. 71* (Online Resource). November 2006. <[http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/wps/wps06\\_071.pdf](http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/wps/wps06_071.pdf)>

#### **Lecture #13 (Thursday, July 10): Popular Culture, Identities, and Globalization**

1. Pattana Kitiarsa. "Muai Thai Cinemas and the Burdens of Thai Men". *South East Asia Research*. 15, 3(November 2007):407-424.

2. Pattana Kitiarsa. "Faiths and Films: Countering the Crisis of Thai Buddhism from Below." *Asian Journal of Social Science*. 34, 2(2006):264-290.

3. Pattana Kitiarsa. "Farang as a Siamese Occidentalism." *ARI Working Paper Series No. 49* (Online Resource). September 2005.\* <[http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/wps/wps05\\_049.pdf](http://www.ari.nus.edu.sg/docs/wps/wps05_049.pdf)>

4. Pattana Kitiarsa. "The Business of Marrying the Orient and Its Vicissitudes: Farang Husbands and Isan Wives on the Global Cultural Stage". Paper presented in the in Southeast Asia Center 20th Anniversary Celebration Conference on "*Religion, Ethnicity, and Modernity: Identity and Social Practice in Asia*," organized by Southeast Asia Center, University of Washington, Seattle, October 5-6, 2007. (co-authored with Suriya Smutkupt).

**Note:** Ethnographic film assignment for SE2880 due on July 10, 2008.

\* indicates a recommended reading, otherwise students can choose to work on any article or set of articles. The minimum requirement is for a student to write a one-page reflection essay on at least one article.