

ANTH 499: Peoples and Cultures of Southeast Asia

Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Geography

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Course Description

This course provides a general overview of society and culture in modern-day mainland Southeast Asia. Traditions and modernization analyzed in light of the contact with the Western cultures. Unity and diversity in mainland Southeast Asian nation states of Burma, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia compared and contrasted with the West, including family and social organization, daily life, gender issues, education, economy, religion, and politics. Three units.

Course Times and Location

Thursday evening, 5:30 – 8:00 pm, Brock Hall, 401

Instructor:

Mr. J. Mark Bowers

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Required Texts:

Dayley, Robert and Neher, Clark; *Southeast Asia in the New International Era*, Westview Press, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-8133-4404-1

Storti, Craig; *Figuring Foreigners Out: A Practical Guide*, Intercultural Press, 1998. ISBN: 1-877864-70-6

Yamada, Teri Shaffer *Virtual Lotus: Modern Fiction of Southeast Asia*, University of Michigan, 2002. ISBN: 0-472-06789-3

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will have:

- A. Identified and analyzed cultural ideals, values, and norms in society and culture of modern-day Southeast Asia;
- B. Compared and contrasted their own cultural make-up with that of Southeast Asia, considering historical-cultural influences on family and social organization, daily life, education, gender issues, economy, religion, and politics;
- C. Explored concepts related to intercultural communication, including: worldview and behavior, individualism and collectivism, universalism and particularism, power distance, locus of control, and contexting; and
- D. Developed an awareness of historical, geographic, and social issues, current events, and poverty and justice issues in modern Southeast Asia.

Class Schedule

Date/Week	Topic/Objectives <i>By the end of this session, participants will have:</i>	Reading Due
Wednesday, August 24th	Session 1: Introduction and Expectations 1. Acquainted themselves with one another; (30) 2. Named their expectations for the course; (20) 3. Obtained an overview of the historical, geographical, and social terrain of Southeast Asia; (40) 4. Explored underlying issues of cultural difference through a simulation; (30) and 5. Discussed a framework for developing an ethnorelative perspective. (10).	Figuring Foreigners Out: Introduction, 1-18 Virtual Lotus: Prologue, ix Southeast Asia in the New International Era, Introduction, 1-20.
Wednesday, August 31st	Session 2: Vietnam: Faith, Self, and Community 1. Engaged with an introductory presentation on contemporary Vietnam; (30) 2. Discussed the uniqueness of Vietnamese religions and compared them to the rest of mainland Southeast Asia; (40) 3. Analysed the short story: <i>You Must Live</i> in light of individualism and collectivism; and (40) 4. Began watching the film: <i>Three Seasons</i> (60)	Virtual Lotus: Khai Hung, <i>You Must Live</i> Figuring Foreigners Out: Building Blocks: Self, 23-31. Interview with <i>Thich Quang Thuc: A Mahayana Buddhist Monk</i> Southeast Asia in the New International Era, Vietnam, 217-227.
Wednesday, September 7th	Session 3: Vietnam: Economy, Conflict, and Culture 1. Continued watching <i>Three Seasons</i> and discussed implications; (60) 2. Engaged with a presentation: The Vietnam War – Why Did it Happen and What are the Effects? (40); and 3. Analysed the short story: <i>Unsettled</i> (20) in light of the American war.	Virtual Lotus: Vo Phien, <i>Unsettled</i> Southeast Asia in the New International Era, 227-242.
Wednesday, September 14th	Session 4: Vietnam: Education and Ethics 1. Discussed educational realities and tensions in Vietnam and the larger region; (40) 2. Examined definitions and generated examples of universalism/particularism; (30) 3. Analysed <i>Asia's Sun</i> and <i>Trinh Cong Son</i> music in light of Vietnamese cultural values; (20) 4. Discussed the short story: <i>Tu Ben The Actor</i> (20).	Virtual Lotus: Nguyen Cong Hoan, <i>Tu Ben The Actor</i> Figuring Foreigners Out: Personal vs. Societal Responsibility, 36-47. Southeast Asia in the New International Era, Thailand, 43-52.

<p>Wednesday, September 21st</p>	<p>Session 5: Thailand: Power and Authority</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engaged with an introductory lecture on contemporary Thailand; (30) 2. Participated in a presentation: The King, Prime Minister, Sangha, or Military—who leads Thailand? (40) 3. Completed a simulation on power distance; (30) 4. Explored power distance through a short story: <i>The Grass Gets Trampled</i>; (20) 	<p>Virtual Lotus: Atsiri Thammachaoti: <i>The Grass Gets Trampled</i></p> <p>Figuring Foreigners Out: Power Distance, 127-133.</p>
<p>Wednesday, September 28th</p>	<p>Session 6: Buddhism: Thailand and Mainland Southeast Asia</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Examined an introduction to Buddhist doctrines and practices in Thailand and the larger region; (30) 2. Considered contemporary political, consumer, and social justice issues in modern Buddhist movements; (15) 3. Watched the documentary <i>Journey into Buddhism</i>; (30) and 4. Discussed and compared Buddhism to the way they practice faith/religion. (30) 	<p>Seeds of Peace, A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society, Sivaraska, Chapter 1, <i>The Religion of Consumerism</i>, Hershock, <i>Chan Buddhism</i>.</p> <p><i>The Long Discourses of Buddha: A Translation of the Digha Nikaya</i>. Pg. 395-405.</p>
<p>Wednesday, October 5th</p>	<p>Session 7: Thailand: Time, Modernization, and Trafficking</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussed the short story: <i>The Family in the Street</i> in conjunction with monochronic/polychronic values; (30) 2. Watched a film on the sex trade: <i>Trading Women</i> (80) and 3. Debriefed the film with discussion. (20) 	<p>Virtual Lotus: Sila Khomchai: <i>The Family in the Street</i></p> <p>Figuring Foreigners Out: Time, 55-59.</p> <p>Southeast Asia in the New International Era, Thailand, 52-62.</p>
<p>Wednesday, October 12th</p>	<p>Session 8: Laos: Control and Conflict</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participated in an introductory lecture on contemporary Laos; (30) 2. Analysed the short story: <i>Death Price</i> in light of locus of control (30) 3. Engaged with a presentation: Interview with a Local Laotian (40) 4. Watched the Film: <i>The Not So Secret War</i> and debriefed; (40) and 5. Discussed ideas for our final integration paper. (10) 	<p>Virtual Lotus: Outhine Bounyavong, <i>Death Price</i></p> <p>Figuring Foreigners Out: Locus of Control, 66-77.</p> <p>Southeast Asia in the New International Era, Laos, 275-281.</p>
<p>Wednesday, October 19th</p>	<p>Session 9: Laos: Spirituality and Diversity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analysed the short story: <i>A Bar at the Edge of a Cemetery</i> (30) 2. Discussed excerpt from <i>The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down</i> in light of locus of control; (30) 3. Watched and discussed the documentary: <i>Threads of Life</i> 	<p>Virtual Lotus: <i>A Bar at the Edge of a Cemetery</i></p> <p>Online excerpt from: <i>The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down</i></p>

	(50) and 4. Participated in a presentation: The Life of a Hilltribe Person. (40)	Southeast Asia in the New International Era, Laos, 281-291.
Wednesday, October 26 th	Fall Break – No Class	
Wednesday, November 2 nd	Session 10: Cambodia: Culture and Communication 1. Engaged with a lecture on Angkorian history and culture; (45) 2. Discussed the short story: <i>Just a Human Being</i> in light of high/low context cultural values; (30) and 3. Began watching the film: <i>The Rice People</i> (50)	Virtual Lotus: <i>Just a Human Being</i> Figuring Foreigners Out: Styles of Communication, 87-100. Southeast Asia in the New International Era, Cambodia, 245-259.
Wednesday, November 9 th	Session 11: Cambodia: Social Issues and Solutions 1. Finished the film: <i>The Rice People</i> and debriefed with discussion; (110) 2. Analyzed modern day Cambodian social issues through short fiction: <i>My Sister</i> and <i>A Khmer Policeman’s Story</i> (30) 3. Discussed development and civil society in modern-day Cambodia and the larger region.	Virtual Lotus: Mey Son Sotheary: <i>My Sister</i> and Yur Karavuth: <i>A Khmer Policeman’s Story</i> Southeast Asia in the New International Era, Cambodia, 259-272. <i>ABD, A Study of NGOs in Cambodia.</i> <i>Brown, Is Donor Driven NGO Growth Hindering Democracy in Cambodia?</i> Microfinance in Cambodia: <i>Communities Coming Together.</i>
Wednesday, November 16 th	Session 12: Burma: Uncertainty and Poverty 1. Examined a general overview of politics, religion, and social issues in Burma; (30) 2. Watched the documentary <i>Burmese Diary</i> and discussed implications. (80) 3. Analysed short story <i>An Unanswerable Question</i> and discussed the <i>poverty trap</i> in a Burmese context; and (20) 4. Examined <i>Clean, Clear Water</i> in light of uncertainty avoidance. (15)	Virtual Lotus: Daw Ohn Khin: <i>An Unanswerable Question</i> and U Win Pe: <i>Clean, Clear Water</i> Southeast Asia in the New International Era, Burma, 189-201. <i>Spiro, Buddhism and Economic Action in Burma.</i>

<p>Wednesday, November 30th</p>	<p>Session 13: Burma: Bureaucracy and Democracy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compared state media webpage to independent voices; (20) 2. Analysed short story <i>Thadun</i> on politics and power; (20) 3. Engaged with a presentation: Who is Aung San Suu Kyi? (40) 4. Completed a cross-cultural self-assessment and participatory evaluation; (30) 5. Handed in final paper and compilation of case worksheets; and 6. Completed formal evaluations of ANTH 499. (20) 	<p>Virtual Lotus: Ne Win Myint: <i>Thadun</i></p> <p>Southeast Asia in the New International Era, Burma, 201-214.</p> <p>Aung San Suu Kyi, <i>Freedom from Fear</i></p> <p>Harvey, <i>Hopes and Fear for a New Political System in Burma.</i></p>
<p>Wednesday, December 7th</p>	<p>Final exam. Integration paper due by 4:00 P.M.</p>	

Working Book Title:

Teaching Southeast Asia: Culture as a Source of Meaning Across Disciplines

Working Chapter Title:

Culture through Story in Southeast Asia: Integrating Modern Short Fiction and Intercultural Studies

- I. Southeast Asia: A Rich Laboratory for Intercultural Studies
- II. Individualism and Collectivism: Mey Son Sotheary's *My Sister* (Cambodia)
- III. Monochronic and Polychronic Time: Silak Khomchai's *The Family in the Street* (Thailand)
- IV. The Importance of Face: Daw Ohn Khin's *An Unanswerable Question* (Burma)
- V. High and Low Context Communication: Vo Phien's *Unsettled* (Vietnam)
- VI. Internal and External Locus of Control: Outhine Bounyavong's *Death Price* (Laos)
- VII. Achieved and Ascribed Authority: U Win Pe's *Clean, Clear Water* (Burma)