Course Description:

This is a graduate seminar in the politics of Southeast Asia. The focus of this course will be on thematic issues in Southeast Asian politics, including the formation of nations and states, democracy, authoritarianism, political parties, political economy, religion, gender, and peasant resistance. Readings have been chosen based on their analytical arguments rather than in terms of country coverage, although there are also a few weeks when there will be a focused analysis of select countries. The emphasis in this course pivots on understanding theoretical and conceptual issues that are anchored in Southeast Asian politics but that are generally pertinent to comparative politics in the developing world.

This course seeks to enable students to: (1) gain an empirical and conceptual understanding of the political dynamics of the region; (2) think comparatively within the region and across the developing world more generally; (3) address and debate theoretical questions in political science through Southeast Asian materials.

I have chosen to structure the course thematically so that students will be able to study the region comparatively and also make connections with the broader field of comparative politics. However, the drawback of organizing an area studies course thematically is that students who may not be that familiar with the region may lack a sense of the region’s political context or the political development of particular countries. The way around this is two-fold. First, most of the books I have assigned have empirical chapters focused on case studies buttressing the theoretical argument. I urge you to read these case studies closely in order to gain a deeper understanding of the countries in the region. As a student of a world region, it is ultimately important to understand both the analytical arguments and the empirical facts. Second, supplement the assigned readings with books that are focused on the politics or political development of a country. These books are generally more descriptive than analytical, but they are essential for understanding Southeast Asian politics. These kinds of texts are listed on pp.4-5 in the syllabus. I recommend that students consult these texts when they want to learn directly about a country’s political development. They will also be very useful for the research paper.
Course Requirements:

1. This is a reading-intensive seminar. Students are expected to come to class having done the readings beforehand. The readings per week are substantial, but not excessive for the graduate level. Students should approach the readings with the following questions in mind: (a) what is the main argument? (b) what is the evidence for the argument? (c) how convincing or problematic is the argument?

2. Discussion is crucial to the success of the seminar. I expect all participants to come to the seminar ready to discuss the works in depth. You will get the most out of this seminar by actively participating and interrogating the readings.

3. Three short, analytical papers of 4-5pp. in length.
   - The purpose of these analytical papers is to ensure that students actively engage the readings and seminar discussions. They should be avenues for students to test out their own ideas and to sharpen their analytical skills.
   - These papers should provide a critical analysis of the week’s readings. When doing the readings for the week, you should think of contrasts and similarities between the readings, issues you find problematic, or questions you think can be deepened further. Your paper should then develop one main thesis based on your analysis of the readings. It should in effect be a response to an issue that you find interesting, provocative, or compelling. It is not necessary to analyze all the readings in the paper. What is more important is that you focus on one overarching central argument that builds on and critiques several readings.
   - You are allowed to choose the week for which you will write your paper. However, the papers must be written within the timetable listed below. This is to ensure that you do not procrastinate and write all your papers at the end of the course and also to ensure that you cover different parts of the course.
     - Paper 1: Week 2, 3, 4, or 5
     - Paper 2: Week 6, 7, or 8
     - Paper 3: Week 9, 10, 11, 12, or 13
   - Papers must be submitted via email to me by 5pm on Sunday before the Monday seminar. I will read the papers before the seminar and ask students to discuss their papers and elaborate on their ideas. Please be prepared to discuss your paper in class.

4. One final paper of approximately 8,000-10,000 words (25-30 pages).
   - The final paper is a research assignment. Students may write about any topic in Southeast Asian politics, regardless of whether it has been discussed in the course of the seminar. The research paper is an opportunity to go into more depth in a specific country or issue of interest. It is also an opportunity to sharpen one’s writing for potential publication in an academic journal. Students are highly encouraged to begin the process of writing for publication at an early stage in their career. It is best to meet with me early in the semester to discuss a specific topic for the paper. A two-paragraph abstract, detailing the argument, hypothesis, and likely evidence, along with a preliminary reference list of about 10-12 sources, should be handed in on Monday 3/6 by 5pm via email. The final paper is due on Tuesday 5/2 by 5pm via email.
Grade Distribution:

1. Class participation 20%
2. Three short papers 40%
3. Final paper 40%

Statement on Academic Integrity:

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism, and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

Resources:

The course will have a MyCourses component. I will attach relevant websites that have useful information on Southeast Asia. You may also want to use MyCourses to pursue discussions with your classmates on topics relevant to the course.

Current events in Southeast Asia are well covered by The Financial Times, International Herald Tribune, The Economist, and two good news websites: www.AsiaTimesonline.com and www.channelnewsasia.com

For a year-by-year analysis and recapitulation of events in the region, you should consult Asian Survey (which publishes an issue every year focused on the past year’s events), or Southeast Asian Affairs, a yearly publication of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore.


Contact during the Semester:

I care very much about Southeast Asian politics and want students to be excited about studying this region. To that effect, I encourage you to discuss with me any questions or interests you have in the region. I am more than happy to help guide your research or practical interests in Southeast Asia. Since this is a seminar, feel free to email me for any minor or logistical questions. But if you need a lengthier discussion, I prefer that you talk to me in person during office hours rather than through email.
Books to Purchase:

The following 8 books have been ordered at Paragraphe Bookstore. All of the books are also on reserve in the McGill Library. All other readings will be posted on MyCourses.


Recommended for historical background:

Some excellent books for a general introduction to the politics and history of a specific country:

Burma:

Cambodia:

Indonesia:


Malaysia:


Philippines:

**Singapore:**

**Thailand:**

**Vietnam:**
WEEKLY SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 (1/9): Introduction to Southeast Asia

[Read before first day of class]


Recommended:

WEEK 2 (1/16): The Formation of Nations

John Furnivall, Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India (1948), 303-312.

Recommended:

WEEK 3 (1/23): The Formation of States

Mary P. Callahan, Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma (2003), 1-20.

Recommended:
Erik Martinez Kuhonta, “Studying States in Southeast Asia,” in Erik Martinez Kuhonta,
Dan Slater, and Tuong Vu, eds., Southeast Asia in Political Science: Theory, Region, and Qualitative Analysis (2008), 30-54.

Tuong Vu, Paths to Development in Asia: South Korea, Vietnam, China, and Indonesia (2010)


WEEK 4 (1/30): State Capacity


Recommended:


WEEK 5 (2/6): Borders and States


Willem van Schendel, “Spaces of Engagement: How Borderlands, Illegal Flows, and


**Recommended:**


**WEEK 6 (2/13): Political Regimes – Democratic Transitions: Philippines**


**Recommended:**


**WEEK 7 (2/20): Political Regimes – Democratic Transitions: Indonesia and Thailand**


Recommended:

3/6: NO CLASS. However, please submit via email by 5pm your abstract for your research paper.

WEEK 8 (3/13): Dominant Party Systems: Singapore and Malaysia


Recommended:
Chan Heng Chee, The Dynamics of One Party Dominance: The PAP at the Grassroots (1976).
Harold Crouch, The Army and Politics in Indonesia (1988, 2nd ed.).

WEEK 9 (3/20): Political Economy – Growth and Inequality

Richard Stubbs, “War and Economic Development: Export-Oriented Industrialization in

**Recommended:**


**Film Screening: “Eye of the Day”**


**Recommended:**
[This is a huge literature. Below is a selective list.]

**WEEK 11 (4/3): Religion and Politics**


*Recommended:*  

**WEEK 12 (4/10): Peasant Resistance and Everyday Politics**

Read all except chapters 3 and 4.  

*Recommended:*  

**WEEK 13 (4/18 – TUESDAY, Make-up Class): Methodology, Area Studies, and Theory**


Other articles TBD.

**Recommended:**
Erik Martinez Kuhonta, Dan Slater, and Tuong Vu, eds., *Southeast Asia in Political Science: Theory, Region, and Qualitative Analysis* (2008).

[*Students preparing for the Ph.D. Comprehensive Exam in Southeast Asian Politics are very strongly encouraged to read through the literature reviews in this book*]