

PS2245
Southeast Asian Politics
Semester 1
AY 2020/2021

SYLLABUS

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What does being 'Chinese', 'Malay', 'Burman', and 'Rohingya' have to do with British colonial rule?

How have military authoritarianisms differed from party authoritarianisms in Southeast Asia?

Is Rodrigo Duterte a challenger to “Cacique democracy” in the Philippines or is he the new “Supreme Cacique”?

Why did the military junta initiate democratic transition in Myanmar? Under what conditions will Myanmar’s democratic transition succeed or fail?

Why are the identities ‘Chinese’, ‘Catholic’ and ‘Communist’ terms of stigma in Indonesian politics?

Are democratic transitions in Southeast Asia products of 'bottom up' mobilisation or 'top down' elite manoeuvres?

The aim of this introductory module is to understand and explain political outcomes in the region we know as Southeast Asia. We will draw on comparative historical sociology to appreciate how the past has shaped the present, as well as to ‘see’ politics in a comparative vein. Paired comparisons will help us clarify some of the salient puzzles in the study of Southeast Asian politics – from why some colonial states transitioned into nation states while others fragmented (Indonesia vs. Indochina)? Why do party authoritarian regimes endure longer than military authoritarian regimes (Vietnam and Malaysia over Myanmar and Indonesia)? Why some countries have experienced successful anti-authoritarian mobilization while others have not (Philippines and Indonesia versus Vietnam)? Why and how has the presence of specific social groups (e.g. an independent business class; communal elites) shaped the fate of democratization in some Southeast Asian states and not others?

Recommended texts for an overview of country histories and Southeast Asian politics.

#1 Jacques Bertrand (2013) *Political Change in Southeast Asia*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). (*Compact country specific studies of politics in Southeast Asia*)

#2 Dan Slater, (2010) *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). (*Country overviews on the experience of democratisation and authoritarianism*)

Lecture Topics at a Glance

Lecture 1. Studying 'Southeast Asia' with Comparative Historical Sociology

Lecture 2. Colonialism: Constructing Identities and Interests in Southeast Asia.

Lecture 3. Varieties of Anti-Colonial Protest: Reform Movements, Socialism, Communism, and Nationalism in Southeast Asia.

Lecture 4. Varieties of Decolonization Trajectories: *Revolution* (Vietnam, Indonesia, Burma/Myanmar) and 'Neo-Colonial' *Accommodation* (Malaya, Philippines)

Lecture 5. Convergent Trajectories: Fragile Democratic Experiments and the turn to Authoritarianism in *Cold War* Southeast Asia.

Lecture 6. Military Authoritarianisms: Indonesia and Burma/Myanmar

Lecture 7. Party Authoritarianisms: Vietnam and Malaysia

Lecture 8. Intermezzo: *Explaining* Outcomes in Southeast Asian Politics

Lecture 9. Democratisation from Above or Below? *Reformasi* (Indonesia) and *People Power* (Philippines) Compared.

Lecture 10: The Fate of Democratic Transitions: Indonesia

Lecture 11: The Fate of Democratic Transitions: Lessons for Myanmar from Indonesia?

Lecture 12: Populism and the Rise of Strongmen, again (Duterte, Prabowo, Hun Sen).

Lecture 13. Revision.

Some useful websites to track contemporary Southeast Asian politics:

New Mandala <https://www.newmandala.org/>

East Asia Forum <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/>

Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia <https://kyotoreview.org/>

LECTURES

Lecture 1. Studying 'Southeast Asia' with Comparative Historical Analysis

We begin this course by asking what *is* 'Southeast Asia'? Is it a historically stable and natural region or in fact a modern construct produced by a range of political and intellectual practices? How has Southeast Asia – the region/representation – been studied over the decades? What is comparative historical sociology? How can it relate the past to the present to explain political outcomes?

Essential

Donald Emmerson, (1984) "'Southeast Asia': What's in a Name?" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*.

Ritter, Daniel. P. (2014). Comparative Historical Analysis. "Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research." (See, "PS2245 Articles" Folder on LumiNus).

Lecture 2. Colonialism: Constructing Identities and Interests in Southeast Asia

We examine the consequences of Euro-American colonialism in the making of modern Southeast Asia, specifically contemporary ethnic identities. After interrogating the concepts of "race" and "ethnicity," we will trace the construction of these contemporary identities. Specifically, we will survey the prevailing literature that points out how these categories – like 'Malay', 'Chinese', 'Indian', 'Burman', and, yes, 'Rohingya' – emerged and hardened with the economic policies, classificatory practices, and disciplinary visions of racialized colonial states of past. This lecture is crucial for the module. These colonial inheritances (identities, boundaries, state structures etc.) will recurrently crop up in our subsequent lectures as they shaped the varying trajectories of nationalism, separatism, as well as democratization and authoritarian rollbacks in Southeast Asia.

Essential

Charles Hirschmann, (1986) "The Making of Race in Colonial Malaya: Political Economy and Racial Ideology" *Sociological Forum*, 1(2): 330-361.

John T. Sidel (2008) "Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy Revisited: Colonial State and Chinese Immigrant in the Making of Modern Southeast Asia" *Comparative Politics* 40 (2): 127-147

Optional

Robert Taylor, "Perceptions of Ethnicity in the Politics of Burma," *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, 10, 1 (1982): 7-20.

James Rush (1991) "Placing the Chinese in Java on the Eve of the Twentieth Century" *Indonesia* July 1991, 13-24.

Charles Hirschman. "The Meaning and Measurement of Ethnicity in Malaysia: An Analysis of Census Classifications," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 46, 3 (1987): 555-582.

Lecture 3. Varieties of Anti-Colonial Protest: Reform Movements, Socialism, Communism, and Nationalism in Southeast Asia.

This lecture will clarify the feverish terrain of early 20th century anti-colonial thought in Southeast Asia. We will examine three variants, in particular: reformist movements (especially Islamic reformism), and the twin Marxist-Leninist currents of socialism and communism sweeping through Europe and the colonies in the early 20th century. Why bother studying these ideologies? Because these worldviews set up the fault-lines of domestic politics where battles between the Left and Right would serve as a dominant leitmotif until the late 20th century, with a deadly legacies that linger even until today (notably, in Indonesia, see Lecture 10). We end by studying the *one* vehicle of anti-colonial protest that actually triumphed (in most parts of the decolonized world) – nationalism. Here we will draw, in particular, on the scholar Benedict Anderson's influential theory of nationalism as "imagined communities" and examine the rise, variations, and impact of Southeast Asian nationalisms.

Essential

Clive Christie, (2001) *Ideology and Revolution in Southeast Asia 1900-1980* (Curzon Press). Chapters 2 and 3 (skim read).

Simpser, Alberto, Dan Slater, and Jason Wittenberg. (2018). "Dead but not Gone: Contemporary Legacies of Communism, Imperialism and Authoritarianism." *Annual Review of Political Science* 21:419-39.

Benedict Anderson (1983) *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Verso), chapter 7 ("The Last Wave") [E-book]

Optional

Merle Ricklefs (2007) "Conclusions: Religion, Politics and Conflicted Societies" in *Polarizing Javanese Society*. [To understand the historical backdrop to Islam in contemporary Indonesia].

John T. Sidel, (2012) "The Fate of Nationalism in the New States: Southeast Asia in Comparative Historical Perspective," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54(1): 114-144.

Lecture 4. Varieties of Decolonization Trajectories: *Revolution* (Vietnam, Indonesia, Burma/Myanmar) and ‘Neo-Colonial’ *Accommodation* (Malaya, Philippines)

We ask why and how some anti-colonial movements broke with colonial masters during decolonisation (Indonesia, Vietnam) while others struck accommodations (Malaya, Philippines)? More importantly, we will probe (in this and subsequent lectures) how this decisive juncture shaped political structures in the post-war period in these countries.

Essential

Natasha Hamilton-Hart, (2012) *Hard Interests, Soft Illusions: Southeast Asia and American Power*, (Cornell University Press). Chapter 3, “The Politics and Economics of Interest.”

Yong Mun Cheong (1992) “The Political Structures of the Independent States” in *the Cambridge History of Southeast Asia* (a long chapter; skim read and go in-depth for specific countries like Indonesia, Burma, Malaya etc.)

Optional

Benedict Anderson (1988) “Cacique Democracy in the Philippines: Origins and Dreams” *New Left Review*, May-June.

Lecture 5. Convergent Trajectories: Fragile Democratic Experiments and the turn to Authoritarian in *Cold War* Southeast Asia.

We examine the brief “second wave” of electoral parliamentary democracies in Indonesia, Burma (now Myanmar), Malaya, and Philippines and examine why and how these gave way to authoritarianisms with the “second reverse wave”. We ask what caused this reversal– failures to deliver upon the anticipated promises of national liberation or the Machiavellian interventions of superpowers in the context of the Cold War?

Essential

Anthony Reid (2016) Chapter 17 “The Military, Monarchy and Marx: The Authoritarian Turn” in *A History of Southeast Asia: Critical Crossroads*

Audrey and George T. Kahin (1995) “Introduction” in *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debacle in Indonesia*, pp.3-19.

Lecture 6. Military Authoritarianisms: Indonesia and Burma/Myanmar

In this lecture we examine the sources of authoritarian durability in military-led regimes. The most notable such regimes – and also the most enduring – were General Suharto’s New Order (1965-1998) and the junta in Burma/Myanmar (1962-2011). What explained the durability of these military authoritarian regimes in Southeast Asia? Why did the isolated junta in impoverished Myanmar outlast the wealthier New Order regime in Indonesia?

Essential

Mary Callahan, (2009) Myanmar’s Perpetual Junta: Solving the Riddle of the Tatmadaw’s Long Reign *New Left Review*, 60 Nov–Dec ,pp. 27-63.

John T. Sidel, (1998) “Macet Total: Logics of Circulation and Accumulation in the Demise of Indonesia’s New Order, *Indonesia* (66): 158-195.

Dan Slater (2010) *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge Uni press), Chapter 6 (“Protection and Provision in Authoritarian Leviathans”) (e-book).

Optional

Morgenbesser, Lee (2020). “The Menu of Autocratic Innovation.” *Democratization*.

John Pemberton (1994) *On the Subject of “Java”*, Chapter 4 (“Origins Revisited: A Circuitous Return to the Present,” 148-189).

RECESS WEEK

Lecture 7. Party Authoritarianisms: Vietnam and Malaysia

Authoritarianisms in Southeast Asia have appeared in various military, monarchical, and party stripes. Perhaps the most enduring of these are the party authoritarianisms in the region. What explains the durability of these party authoritarianisms? What are variations among them? We compare the party authoritarianisms in capitalist Malaysia and socialist Vietnam.

Essential

Benedict J. Tria Kerkvliet (2010) "Governance, Development, and the Responsive–Repressive State in Vietnam", *Forum for Development Studies*, 37:1, 33-59.

Welsh, Bridget. (2018). "Savour" Politics and Malaysia's 2018 Electoral Democratic Breakthrough: Rethinking Explanatory Narratives and Implications. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 3/2018: 85-108.

Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan Way. "Elections Without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism." *Journal of Democracy* 13(2): 51-65.

Optional

Edmund Terence Gomez (2016) "Resisting the Fall: The Single Dominant Party, Policies and Elections in Malaysia" *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 46(4)

Nguyen, Hai Hong (2016), Resilience of the Communist Party of Vietnam's Authoritarian Regime since *Doi Moi*, in *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 35, 2, 31–55.

William Case (2009) "Electoral Authoritarianism in Malaysia: Trajectory shift," *Pacific Review* 22(3): 311-333.

Dan Slater (2010) *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge Uni press), Chapter 6 ("Protection and Provision in Authoritarian Leviathans") read pp.145-163.

Lecture 8. Intermezzo: Explaining Political Change

We pause in our empirical studies of authoritarianism and democratization to appraise the topic in more self-consciously theoretical terms. We will examine an array of variables that enable comparative analysis geared to explain political outcomes (like democratic transition and authoritarian roll-backs). In this lecture, we will examine one variable in particular. Longstanding arguments hold that the bourgeoisie – the capitalist class that owns the means of production – is a driver of political change, and specifically democratic change. We ask how this stacks up in relation to Southeast Asia's experience. We will use this as an example of how one might identify and use a variable to study political change.

Essential

Dan Slater (2010) “To Extract and To Organize” (Chapter 1) in *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge Uni press), (e-book).

Lecture 9. Democratisation from Above or Below? *Reformasi* (Indonesia) and *People Power* (Philippines) Compared

What explains episodes of democratic transitions in Southeast Asia? We examine agential and structural explanations underpinning democratic transitions by considering in-depth the ‘People Power’ (1986) movement in the Philippines that toppled Ferdinand Marcos’ dictatorship and *Reformasi* (1998) that ended Indonesia’s New Order regime. To what extent were these transitions products of shifting elite alignments, spontaneous mass mobilization, or indeed rooted in the character of these authoritarian regimes?

Essential

Eva-Lotta Hedman, “Contesting State and Civil Society: Southeast Asian Trajectories,” *Modern Asian Studies* 35, no. 4 (2001): 922.

Mietzner, Marcus (2009) *Doctrine and Power: Legacies of Indonesian Military Politics*. 37-67. In *Military Politics, Islam, and the State in Indonesia* (ISEAS: Singapore). [PDF]

Optional

Mietzner, Marcus (2009) “Islam and the State: Legacies of Civilian Conflict” pp 68-94 [PDF] in *Military Politics, Islam, and the Indonesian State in Indonesia*. ISEAS Press: Singapore.

Meredith Wiess (2006) “Civil Society” in Erik Kuhonta, Dan Slater, Tuong Vu ed. *Southeast Asia in Political Science*.

Lecture 10: The Fate of Democratic Transitions: Democratic Decline in Indonesia.

Post-Suharto Indonesia was hailed as a rare example of a consolidating democracy in Southeast Asia. But this story has gone sour in recent years with the rise of illiberalism, religious intolerance, and the erosion of autonomous institutions and democratic accountability. Why did this happen, how, and is there a way out?

Essential

#1 Slater, Dan. (2014) “Unbuilding Blocs,” *Critical Asian Studies* 46(2): 287-315.

#2 Aspinall, Edward. (2010). “Indonesia: The Irony of Success.” *Journal of Democracy*, 21(2), 20–34

#3 Hadiz, Vedi. (2020) "Indonesia's Missing Left and the Islamization of Dissent," *Third World Quarterly*

Optional

Wilson, Ian. (2006) "Continuity and Change: The Changing Contours of Organized Violence in Post-New Order Indonesia." *Critical Asian Studies* 38(2):265-297.

Davidson, Jamie. 2018. *Indonesia: Twenty Years of Democracy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Thomas P. Power (2018) Jokowi's Authoritarian Turn and Indonesia's Democratic Decline, *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 54:3, 307-338,

Burhanuddin Muhtadi (2015) Jokowi's First Year: A Weak President Caught between Reform and Oligarchic Politics, *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 51:3, 349-368.

Lecture 11: The Fate of Democratic Transition: Lessons for Myanmar from Indonesia?

We will wrap up our studies of democratisation by delving into a case unfolding today: democratic transition in Myanmar. We will examine the pace, timing, and causes for this political transition and ask what trajectory this process might take. For the latter, we draw on comparative insights from post-Suharto Indonesia.

Essential

Lee Jones (2014) "The Political Economy of Myanmar's Transition" *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 44(1):144-170.

Mary Callahan "The Generals Loosen Their Grip" *Journal of Democracy* 23(4):120-131.

Zoltan Barany (2018) Burma: Suu Kyi's Missteps *Journal of Democracy* 29 (1).

Optional

Aung Myoe Maung (2014) "The Soldier and the State: The Tatmadaw and Political Liberalization in Myanmar since 2011" *Southeast Asia Research* 22(2): 233-249.

Jamie S. Davidson, (2009) "Dilemmas of Democratic Consolidation in Indonesia" *The Pacific Review* 22(3): 293-310.

Morten Pedersen (2011) "The Politics of Burma's 'Democratic' Transition: Prospects for Change and Options for Democrats" *Critical Asian Studies* 43(1): 49-68.

Lecture 12. The Spectre of Strongmen, Again.

In this penultimate lecture we probe the current rise of populism in Southeast Asian politics (as elsewhere). We will try and explain why authoritarian ‘strongmen’ appear to be making a comeback in the region— from the violent authoritarianism of Duterte in the Philippines to the perennial challenges of Prabowo Subianto in Indonesia, to the swift consolidation of power by Hun Sen in Cambodia.

Essential

Mark Thompson (2016) “Bloodied Democracy: Duterte and the Death of Liberal Reformism in the Philippines.” *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* Vol. 35, No. 3 (2016): pp. 39–68.

Edward Aspinall. 2015. “Oligarchic Populism: Prabowo Subianto’s Challenge to Indonesian Democracy,” *Indonesia* 99 (April 2015).

Morgenbesser, Lee. 2019. “Cambodia’s Transition to Hegemonic Authoritarianism,” *Journal of Democracy* 30(1): 158-171.

Lecture 13: Recap and Revision

We will revisit the arc of the module and reflect on a) whether we have grasped and come to appreciate the larger forces shaping Southeast Asian politics and b) acquired a comparative historical “lens” to view politics, with a critical appreciation of its limits and pay-offs.
