THE POLITICS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA: CRISIS, CONFLICT AND REFORM

This course will focus on the transformative process through which the nations of contemporary Southeast Asia have confronted political crises and instability and the various levels of success with which they have attempted to implement comprehensive programs of reform. This course will analyze several different areas of political activity, such as: state-led initiatives (political economy) regarding development and resource distribution; citizen and opposition movements both within and outside formal state institutions which seek to influence, alter, or overturn state action and policy; institution-building and the cultivation of social capital; and regional and transnational flows of capital and labor which act in alliance with or in opposition to national economic institutions. Specific topics will include a comparative analysis of state policy; the relationship between illicit economies (such as narcotics) and ethnic insurgency; the nascent political voice of religion and ethnicity as nationalist or opposition ideologies; the expansion and influence of local NGOs (legal aid, human rights, women’s rights, etc.); political violence and alternative paths to the expression of discontent; and corruption. After a general overview of Southeast Asia as a regional political theater, we will turn our attention to a series of in-depth case studies.

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Your grade will be evaluated using four elements:

First midterm (25%) (due 7 October)
Second midterm (25%) (due 4 November)
Final paper (40%) (due 14 December by 4 pm)
Attendance and demeanor (10%)

The required text for this course is:

Course Reader (available from Copy Central on Bancroft Ave.)
Syllabus

Week One: The partially empty first week

1. [No class]

2. Introducing Southeast Asia
   
   **Reading:** Simon Marks, “Somaly Mam: The Holy Saint (and Sinner) of Sex Trafficking,” *Newsweek* (May 21, 2014), at http://www.newsweek.com/2014/05/30/somaly-mam-holy-saint-and-sinner-sex-trafficking-251642.html [this will be available as a link through the course website]

Week Two: Introducing Southeast Asia

3. The role of ASEAN in Southeast Asian politics

4. Trafficking and other region-wide problems
   
   

Week Three: Malaysia

5. [No class: Labor Day holiday]

6. Unification through division: Malaysia’s peculiar formation

Week Four: Malaysia

7. The politics of Islam in Malaysia: first among not-so-equals

8. The future of democracy in Malaysia

**Reading:**

Week Five: Singapore

9. Singapore’s idiosyncratic democracy

10. Singapore: Paying for civil society?

**Reading:**

Week Six: Singapore

11. The efficient democracy? Myth and reality in Singapore’s model

12. Singapore opens up: the popular culture of democratization

**Reading:**
**Week Seven: Indonesia**

13. Becoming Indonesia: the long road through authoritarian rule

14. The many and the one: Indonesia’s struggle with its own identity

**Reading:** Mun‘im Sirry, “Fatwas and their controversy: The case of the Council of Indonesian Ulama,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 44/1: pp. 100-117 [reader]

Aaron L. Connelly, “Sovereignty and the Sea: President Joko Widodo’s Foreign Policy Challenges,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 37/1 (2015), 1-28 [reader]

**Week Eight: Indonesia**

15. Politics finds its rhythm: the political uses of art in Indonesia

16. Democratic Indonesia: anxiety and uncertainty at the ballot box

**Reading:** Sidney Jones and Solahudin, “ISIS in Indonesia,” *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2015), pp. 154-163 [reader]


**Week Nine: Philippines**

17. Political drama like no other: The Philippines

18. Keeping it in the family: political networks in the Philippines

**Reading:** Mark R. Thompson, “Populism and the Revival of Reform: Competing Political Narratives in the Philippines,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 32/1 (2010), pp. 1-28 [reader]
Week Ten: Philippines

19. The rebellion in the south: origins and prospects for peace

20. The Philippines is elsewhere: remittances and the overseas Filipino communities


Week Eleven: Vietnam

21. The long and difficult road to independence

22. Vietnam reforms and reinvents itself


Week Twelve: Vietnam

23. The strangest things: unexpected developments in Vietnam’s politics

24. [Veterans Day Holiday: No class]

Week Thirteen: Thailand

25. The colors of Thai politics: competing interests in the public arena

26. Revisiting Southeast Asia: How to make it all make sense

   **Reading:** Aim Sinpeng and Erik Martinez Kuhonta, “From the Street to the Ballot Box: The July 2011 Elections and the Rise of Social Movements in Thailand,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 34/3 (2012), pp. 389-415 [reader]

Week Fourteen: Thanksgiving Holiday

27. [No lecture]

28. [No lecture]

   **Reading:** No readings

Week Fifteen: Review

29. Southeast Asia: A Comparative Review

30. Southeast Asia in the world: ASEAN redeems itself?

   **Reading:** No readings