

Environment and politics in Southeast Asia

Geography 44/Environmental Studies 44, Fall 2006, MWF 1:45-2:50 (12), Room 008, Steele (x-hour is Thursday, 1-1:50 pm)

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Over the past several decades, the people and ecosystems of Southeast Asia have confronted a host of political, economic and cultural processes commonly grouped together under the heading "development". As witnessed by recent media reports detailing massive deforestation in Indonesia and dam controversies in Thailand and Laos, these development processes have resulted in drastic transformations in the landscapes, forests, and river systems of the region. These processes have likewise produced dramatic alterations in the livelihoods of the people who depend on and interact with the region's ecological systems.

Using an approach grounded in political ecology, this course will explore a diversity of human-environment relationships in Southeast Asia. We will use case studies representing a variety of geographical scales (e.g., local, urban, national, transnational), ecological settings (e.g., mountain, coastal, agro-ecosystem) and societal contexts (Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, Malaysia and Indonesia) to address several cross-cutting themes. These include: the institutional contexts (e.g., state, community, NGO) for resource development and management; the ecological underpinnings of livelihoods; conflicts over resources (e.g., water, forests); urbanization; hydropolitics and the politics of large dams; ecotourism; and questions of identity and resource conflicts.

Course Requirements:

This course will revolve around readings and discussion of materials. Lectures and small-group discussions during course meetings will supplement the scheduled readings. Remaining up-to-date with readings is absolutely crucial to the integrity and value of the course as a whole. As a general guide to the region's diversity of historical, political and ecological contexts, we will use the following texts:

Required reading:

Hirsch, Philip and Carol Warren, editors, 1998, *The Politics of the Environment in Southeast Asia*, London and New York: Routledge.

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt, 2005. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connections*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

The first book offers a broad cross-section of readings regarding environmental politics and environmental change in Southeast Asia, while the book by Tsing provides more in-depth coverage of the dynamics of "development" within Indonesian Borneo. *Friction* is also a book that will challenge students theoretically, methodologically and ethically by bringing into question the conventional ways in which social science research is carried out. Most readings/articles will be maintained in the Course Reserve system, or on occasion placed on our course Blackboard site.

Key Dates: Exams and Assignments

11 October 2006	In-class examination	15 %
18 October	Ind. Research Project description DUE	
30 October	Take home examination emailed out	
3 November	Take home examination DUE in class	10 %
20 November	Political ecology project <u>report</u> DUE	15 %
29 November	Research paper DUE	20 %
3 December	Final exam @ 3:00 pm	20 %
Every day	Class participation including role playing cases (25 Oct, 6 Nov) + group presentation (20, 27 Nov)	20 %

There will be three examinations during the course. The first "midterm" exam will consist of short answer questions (and/or fill-in-the-blanks), definitions and short essays. The second "midterm" exam will be a take home and consist mainly of short answer/short essay questions. See dates indicated above for exams, and please plan your studying appropriately. There will be one major individual writing assignment:

- (1) A research paper (8-10 pages, double-spaced, \geq 12-point font, 1" margins; due: **29 Nov 2006**) based on a theme of interest in Southeast Asia.

NOTE: A brief (one paragraph) description of your research topic and a short list of references (at least five) must be turned in by **18 October 2006**.

Political Ecology Projects

One of the most important aspects of your college experience is learning how to function within a group setting. As part of the collaborative learning process, each student will participate as a member of a team charged with examining the political ecology of different Southeast Asian societies and environments. First, each team (consisting of 4-7 members depending on the size of the class) will meet regularly during in-class breakout sessions for focused discussion of the assigned readings. Second, each team is required to select a topic for collaborative research, design a research process, and carry out the proposed research. The end product will be a report on the political ecology of a specific country, region, ecosystem or process in Southeast Asia, which will be presented to the class. Each team will meet with the professor during a scheduled x-hour in October or November. We will discuss this project in more detail during the first week of class. We will also discuss the way in which individual papers can be combined with the group projects. Assessment of the projects will be based on peer-reviews of individual performance as part of the project.

Role Playing Cases

On at least two separate occasions during the course, we will engage in role playing exercises that help bring in to view the different perspectives of environmental actors (e.g., state officials, intergovernmental organizations, radical NGOs, local people's organizations) engaged in ecological conflicts in Southeast Asia. The first concerns controversies surrounding the construction of large dams on the Mekong River; the second looks at the benefits and costs of ecotourism in Southeast Asia. Each

political ecology “team” (see previous paragraph) will represent one of the actors involved in these contentious issues.

Discussions

Scattered throughout the course are a series of “discussion days”. We will use these days to engage in more in-depth, seminar-style discussions regarding previous days’ readings. Each political ecology “group” will be expected to submit 1-2 questions at least one hour prior to the course period for at least ONE of these discussion sessions. We will use these questions as a starting point for our discussion.

Course Website on Blackboard

A course website will be maintained through Black Board. To reach the Blackboard site, go to (<https://www.dartmouth.edu/~blackboard/>). The extent to which we will use this resource will be determined by the interests and aims of the class participants. We will use the resources offered by the Internet frequently, both in class and as part of class assignments. Some familiarity with navigating the World Wide Web is assumed.

Disabilities and special circumstances

In general, please feel free to discuss with me questions relating to disabilities (including the so-called “hidden” ones such as chronic illness and learning disabilities) at the earliest possible moment. I will make every effort to ensure a supportive learning environment. I realize that some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. Should you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please come speak with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Honor Principle

As do all courses at Dartmouth, this course requires that you familiarize yourself with the guidelines of the Academic Honor Principle concerning independent work, proper citation of other’s work and general codes of learning. Please consult the Green Pages of the Dartmouth Student Handbook for additional details about the Honor Principle. The full text is available on-line at www.dartmouth.edu/~upperde/acad-regs.shtml.

COURSE SCHEDULE

20 Sept: Introduction to course

22, 25 Sept: The “making” of Southeast Asia: social construction and general characteristics

Hirsch, Philip and Carol Warren, Introduction: through the environmental looking glass: the politics of resources and resistance in Southeast Asia (Chapter 1). In *The Politics of Environment*, eds. P. Hirsch and C. Warren, London: Routledge.

Anderson, Benedict. 1998. Introduction: the spectre of comparisons. In *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World*, pp. 1-26. London: Verso. (course reserves)

DISCUSSION of “regions”: 25 September

25, 27, 28: Political ecology

Robbins, Paul. 2004. The hatchet and the seed. Chapter One in *Political Ecology: a Critical Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, pp. 1-16. (course reserves)

Neumann, Roderick. 2005. Roots and branches. Chapter Two in *Making Political Ecology*. London: Hodder Arnold, pp. 15-43. (Blackboard)

Bryant, Raymond and Sinéad Bailey. 1997. Chapter Two in *Third World Political Ecology*. London: Routledge, pp. 27-47. (course reserves)

Vayda, Andrew and Bradley Walters. 1999. Against political ecology. *Human Ecology* 27(1):167-179. (course reserves)

DISCUSSION of political ecology: 28 September (X-HOUR)

29 Sept: The ecology of rice and water

Geertz, Clifford. 1963. Two types of ecosystems. In *Agricultural Involution*, pp. 12-37. Berkeley: University of California Press. (course reserves)

Hanks, Lucien. 1972. The ecosystems of rice in nature. Chapter Three in *Rice and Man: Agricultural Ecology in Southeast Asia*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, pp. 23-43. (course reserves)

Discussion of research team projects

2 Oct: NO CLASS

4, 6, 9 Oct: The political ecology of deforestation in Southeast Asia

Lebel, Louis et al. 2004. Nobody knows best: alternative perspectives on forest management and governance in Southeast Asia. *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 4:111-127. (course reserves)

Bryant, Raymond. 1998. The poilitics of forestry in Burma. In Hirsch and Warren, pp. 127-121.

Leigh, Michael. 1998. Political economy of logging in Saawak, Malaysia. In Hirsch and Warren, pp. 93-106.

Le Billon, Philippe. 2002. Logging in muddy waters: the politics of forest exploitation in Cambodia. *Critical Asian Studies* 34(4):563-586. (course reserves)

DISCUSSION of deforestation: 9 October

11 OCTOBER: Mini-Examination on first third of course (Introduction through deforestation, 20 Sept-9 Oct)

11, 12 Oct: Industrialization, pollution and environmental health

Lucas, Anton. 1998. River pollution and political action in Indonesia. In Hirsch and Warren, pp. 181-209.

Forsyth, Tim. 1998. The politics of environmental health: industrialization and suspected poisoning in Thailand. In Hirsch and Warren, pp. 210-228.

Sneddon, C. 2002. Water conflicts and river basins: the contradictions of comanagement and scale in Northeast Thailand. *Society and Natural Resources* 15:725-741. (course reserves)

CASE STUDY: Thailand's Phoenix pulp mill and Project Green: 12 October (X-HOUR)

13 Oct: NO CLASS (Homecoming)

16 Oct: Urbanization

Goh, D. P. S. 2001. The politics of the environment in Singapore? Lessons from a 'strange' case. *Asian Journal of Social Science* 29(1):9-34.

Ribeiro, Gustavo and Angunthip Srisuwan. 2005. Urban environmental discourses, environmental management and public participation: the case of the Mae Kha canal in Chiang Mai, Thailand. *Environment and Urbanization* 17(1):171-182.

18 Oct: The politics of large dams—rivers, fish & people

World Commission on Dams. 2000. *Dams and Development: A new Framework for Decision Making. A Report of the World Commission on Dams* (Executive Summary, 11 pp.). Available at: <http://www.dams.org/docs/report/wcdexec.pdf> (course reserves)

McCully, Patrick. 2001. The power and the water. Chapter One in *Silenced Rivers: The Ecology and Politics of Large Dams*. London: Zed Books, pp. 1-28. (course reserves)

Hirsch, Philip. 1998. Dams, resources and the politics of environment in mainland Southeast Asia. In Hirsch and Warren, pp. 55-70.

DUE: Research paper description (one paragraph + 5 references)

20, 23 Oct: The politics of large dams—rivers, fish and people in the Mekong Basin

Sneddon, Chris and Coleen Fox. 2006. Rethinking transboundary waters: a critical hydropolitics of the Mekong basin. *Political Geography* 25(2):181-202. (course reserves)

Hirsch, Philip and Andrew Wyatt. 2004. Negotiating local livelihoods: scales of conflict in the Se San River basin. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 45(1):51-68. (course reserves)

Usher, Ann Danaiya. 1996. The race for power in Laos: the Nordic connections. In *Environmental Change in South-East Asia: People, Politics and Sustainable Development*, eds. M. J. G. Parnwell and R. Bryant, pp. 123-144. London: Routledge. (course reserves)

Hales, D. (2005). Nam Theun Dam: the World Bank's watershed decision. *World Watch* 18(3):27-28. (course reserves)

Bush, Simon. 2004. Scales and sales: changing social and spatial fish trading networks in the Siiphandone fishery, Lao PDR. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 25(1):32-50. (course reserves)

Sneddon, C. Forthcoming. "Nature's" materiality and the circuitous paths of accumulation: dispossession of riverine fisheries in Cambodia. *Antipode*. (course reserves)

DISCUSSION of fish and dams: 23 October

25 Oct: ROLE PLAY 1: Dam the Mekong?

27, 30 Oct: Alternative development or development alternatives?

Adams, William. 2001. The dilemma of sustainability. Chapter One in *Green Development: Environment and Sustainability in the South* [2nd edition]. London: Routledge, pp. 1-21. (available through NetLibrary, <http://www.netLibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=95220>)

Isager, Lotte and Søren Ivarsson. 2002. Contesting landscapes in Thailand: tree ordination as counter-territorialization. *Critical Asian Studies* 34(3):395-417. (course reserves)

Sanitsuda Ekachai. 1991. Excerpts from *Behind the Smile: Voices of Thailand*. Bangkok: Thai Development Support Committee. (Blackboard)

Yap, Emmanuel. 1998. Local initiatives in southern Negros. In Hirsch and Warren, pp. 281-302.

30 OCTOBER: Take Home Exam questions emailed out

1, 3 Nov: Ecotourism and tourism development

Cochrane, Janet. 1996. The sustainability of ecotourism in Indonesia: fact and fiction. In *Environmental Change in South-East Asia: People, Politics and Sustainable*



Development, eds. M. J. G. Parnwell and R. Bryant, pp. 237-259. London: Routledge. (Blackboard)

Chayant Pholpoke. 1998. In Hirsch and Warren, pp. The Chiang Mai cable-car project: local controversy over cultural and eco-tourism.

Behar, Michael. 2005. The selling of the last savage. *Outside Magazine Online*, February 2005. Available at: <http://outside.away.com/outside/destinations/200502/first-contact_1.html>.



3 NOVEMBER: Take Home Exam questions on second third of course due (Industrialization through water, 11-25 Oct)

6 Nov: ROLE PLAY 2: Ecotourism?

8 Nov: Case study of Indonesian forest politics, part 1

Tsing, *Friction*, Preface, Introduction, Part I ("Prosperity", Chapters 1-2)

10 Nov: Case study of Indonesian forest politics, part 2

Tsing, *Friction*, Part II ("Knowledge", Chapters 3-5)

13 Nov: Case study of Indonesian forest politics, part 3

Tsing, *Friction*, Part III ("Freedom", Chapters 6-7)

DISCUSSION of *Friction*: 13 Nov

15, 16 (X-HOUR), 17 Nov: Conservation, identity and resource politics

Clarke, Gerard. 2001. From ethnocide to ethnodevelopment? Ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples in Southeast Asia. *Third World Quarterly* 22(3):413-436. (course reserves)

Lohmann, Larry. 1999. Forest cleansing: racial oppression in scientific nature conservation. Corner House Briefing 13, January 1999. Available at: <http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk/item.shtml?x=51969>.

Sneddon, C. 2006. Conservation initiatives and "transnationalization" in the Mekong River Basin. In *Globalization & New Geographies of Conservation*. Ed. K. Zimmerer, pp. 191-211. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (course reserves)

Case study of conservation in the Mekong: 16 Nov (X-HOUR)

DISCUSSION of conservation, identity and resource politics: 17 Nov

20 Nov (M): Research Team Presentations

DUE: Group Project Reports (in class or blitz)

22, 24 Nov: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving break)

27 Nov: Research Team Presentations

29 Nov: Course wrap-up: environment, politics and Southeast Asia

Hirsch, P. and C. Warren. 1998. Epilogue. In Hirsch and Warren, pp. 303-306.

DUE: Individual Research Papers

3 DECEMBER: Final Exam (some cumulative with focus on final third) at 3 pm in room TBD.

Assessment of Class Participation

Class participation accounts for 20% of the course grade. Every participant in the class is expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned material. The success of the course demands that each participant be ready to articulate and defend her/his ideas, as well as to listen to and work with the ideas of the other participants. As alluded to earlier, your participation in discussion, carrying out of the political ecology projects and engagement in the role playing exercises will go a long way to making the course engaging and successful. Class participation will be graded according to the following specifications:

(1) A student who receives an "A" for participation in discussion typically comes to every class with questions and/or comments about the readings already in mind. S/he raises these issues for other members to discuss and listens to contrary opinions. S/he engages other students in discussion of their ideas as well as her/his own. S/he is under no obligation to change her opinions to fit the consensus of the class, but she respects the ideas of others and discusses the issues before the class with a mind to discovering areas of agreement and disagreement. In short, an "A" student participates in an exchange of ideas. (2) A student who receives a "B" for participation in discussion typically has completed all the reading assignments on time, but does not always come to class with questions in mind. Rather, s/he waits passively for others to raise interesting issues. Other "B" discussants are courteous and articulate but they do not always engage other students in discussion of their ideas. In short, a "B" student may occasionally participate in an exchange of ideas but sometimes frustrates that exchange either through silence or an unwillingness to direct comments to the other participants. (3) A student who receives a "C" for discussion typically attends every meeting of the seminar and listens attentively, but refuses to be drawn into discussion.