



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STUDIES PROGRAM

International Sustainable Development Studies Institute

สถาบันการศึกษาการพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืนนานาชาติ

Political Ecology of Forests: People and Natural Resources

ECODEV (Anthropology/Ecology): 4 Credits

Fall Semester, 2017

Course description

The course explores the relationships between human communities and the forest ecosystems that they depend on. The course takes as its case study the ethnoecological relationship of the upland Karen (Bak'en yaw) ethnic group in the forested mountains of Mae Hong Song province, Northern Thailand. A key focus of this course is how the Karen manage their forests, including long cycle rotational farming systems, how forest management and forest resources are integrated into their cultural practices, and how state and non-local actors impact the ability of the Karen to continue their traditional way of life. The majority of the course takes place in mountain villages and forests of the Karen, living with host families, backpacking into remote villages, and studying the forests, culture and ecology in Mae Hong Son.

Objectives

By the end of the course, students will have an in-depth understanding of the major issues in political ecology and how forests and human communities interact. Students will understand the specific case study of the Karen in Northern Thailand, the cultural and ecological basis for their upland rotational farming systems, and how Karen culture is integrated into upland forest ecology. Students will also learn about the efforts of the Karen to maintain their traditional way of life in the face of pressure to change and abandon their traditions. A key part of the course is understanding how marginalized communities are able to maintain their identity in the face of state pressure to change and assimilate, especially with conflict between local and non-local concepts of sustainable forest management.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completing of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand the key concepts and issues in forest political ecology
- Articulate and understand the cultural adaptations to upland forest ecosystems in Karen culture
- Describe the ecological processes involved in long fallow rotational farming systems
- Understand forest classification and management systems
- Identify major forest species (tree and non-tree) as well as their cultural significance if any
- Be proficient in the tools of ecological and ethnographic field research
- Demonstrate proficiency in field research and remote travel and the tools of field research

Grading and Assessment

Class participation and expedition skills: Class participation in this course means on-time attendance, active involvement in the classroom and during other activities, being responsive and active in peer teaching/learning, exhibiting culturally appropriate dress and behavior, and being an active member of the team, including leadership, active followership, and being able to safely travel and learn in the the environments where the course takes place. Participation requires that students ask questions in class and in the field, be active in seeking answers to their questions, and be actively involved in group discussions with both peers and farmer educators. 10%

Experiential Learning Workbook (ELW): Each student will fill out and complete assignments in the Experiential Learning Workbook, focused on field based studies of sustainable food systems, biological and ecological topics, as well as the broader social and cultural context. 15%

Species presentation: During seminar week students will sign up to lead a 10 minute presentation while in the field on a useful plant or animal integrated into Karen agriculture and/or forest ecology in Northern Thailand. Students will complete independent research on their chosen species, and gather additional information in the field for presentation during the course. Students will be assessed on timeliness, content, and creativity.	5%
Analytical Field Essays (AFE) (3): Three times during the course students will write an AFE in their field notebook about a significant connection between culture, ecology and the political ecology of forests. The AFE should have a thesis statement that connects field experiments to the course, analyze the issue drawing on both course readings and experience in the field, and discuss further questions to consider related to their chosen topic. AFEs need to be clearly labeled as such at the top of EACH page. 4 PAGES	15%
Reflection Essays (3): Three times during the course, students will write an essay reflecting on any challenging or interesting cross-cultural experiences related to their understanding of the course topic. Reflection Essays need to be clearly labeled as such at the top of EACH page. 2 PAGES	10%
Quizzes: Throughout the course, there will be short quizzes on the readings and lectures.	10%
Seminar Week Exam: This exam will consist of short essays analyzing the material covered during the first week of the course, both theoretical as well as applied to the specifics of Northern Thailand.	10%
Mid-Course Exam: This exam will consist of short essays analyzing issues studied during the first part of the field expedition, based on both readings and field experience and studies.	10%
Final Exam: This exam will cover lectures, readings, experiential field studies and other topics covered during the course. This will be an in-class short essay based exam.	15%
TOTAL	100%

Expectations

The Expedition Field Courses (EFCs) at ISDSI are challenging. The first week is primarily seminar based, with the remaining weeks a combination of field-based experiential learning, group discussions, learning from local instructors, as well as travel into and through sometimes remote locations. Students need to master both the readings as well as the field studies to succeed on an EFC. A critical part of doing well on an EFC is managing your time (readings, essays, etc.) and not waiting until the last minute. Direct, field-based experiential learning can be difficult, and taking good notes and clarifying with questions and reviewing reading materials is an important skill.

Grading: Essays and exam answers will be evaluated on their clarity, evidence, and thoroughness. Arguments need to be clearly structured and supported. Since your work is hand written, please write clearly. Late assignments will drop a grade for each day they are late, and anything over four days late will receive a zero. If you need extra time for an assignment please see an instructor **before** the assignment is due.

Field Notes: Field notes are detailed daily records of observations and interpretations of observations. Clearly separate your observations (biological/cultural/etc.) from your interpretations of what you think it all means. Becoming proficient in taking notes in the field is a critical skill, and requires that you take notes regularly throughout the course.

Field Notebook: Students will be given a field notebook for each EFC. All of your field notes, essays and other assignments should be written in this field notebook. Please write in waterproof ink (pencil will smudge and some ink is not waterproof). You can request an additional notebook if you run out of space.

Citations for Essays: Essays should have in-text citations of both readings and other sources. You do not need to specify page numbers, but do need to specify your source. For example, you can cite readings in the format of (Last Name, Year) and reference your Field Notebook with (FN Page #/Date).

Schedule

The schedule for the Expedition Field Course is below. There are three sections to the course:

- Seminar Week
- Field Expedition to Mid-Course Seminar
- Field Expedition to Final Seminar

Seminar is 1 PM to 4 PM unless otherwise announced.

Readings are listed on the day they are due.

SEMINAR WEEK

Monday: Overview of Forest Management Issues: The commons and ethnic minorities

- Introduction to political ecology
- The commons and land rights
- Natural resources and forest ecology in Thailand
- Ethnic groups in Thailand

Chusak Wittayapak. 2008. History and geography of identifications related to resource conflicts and ethnic violence in Northern Thailand. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* (49)1: 111-127.

Delang, C.O., 2002. Deforestation in northern Thailand: the result of Hmong farming practices or Thai development strategies?. *Society & Natural Resources*, 15(6), pp.483-501.

The Northern Development Foundation (NDF). 2014. "9 Steps to Attain Community Based Land and Natural Resource Management".

Forest Restoration Research Unit. 2006. How to Plant a Forest: Principles and Practice of Restoring Tropical Forests. 13-15, 29-30 Biology Department, Science Faculty, Chiang Mai University, Thailand.

Paritta Wangkiat. "Thailand's Forest Authorities Make Northern Karen Hill-Tribesmen the Scapegoats of Deforestation". *Chiang Rai Times*. 3 May, 2014. Accessed at: <http://www.chiangraitimes.com/thailands-forest-authorities-make-northern-karen-hill-tribesmen-the-scapegoats-of-deforestation.html>

Tuesday: Natural resource management and key actors in resource management

- Dark and light green conservation
- Thai laws and regulations
- Ostrom's theories
- Alternative forest management

Isager, Lotte and Ivarsson, Soren. 2002. "Contesting Landscapes in Thailand. Tree Ordination as Counter-territorialization". *Critical Asian Studies* 34:3. Routledge. p. 402-409.

Jason Lubanski. 2012. "Brief Review of Thailand Land Issues, Laws, Regulations, and Policies". Excerpted from "Land is Life: A Policy Advocacy Case Study of the Northern Thailand Land Reform Movement". Capstone Collection.

Leblond JP. Thai Forest Debates and the Unequal Appropriation of Spatial Knowledge Tools. *Conservat Soc* 2014;12:425-36

Ostrom, Elinor. 1999 "Design Principles and Threats to Sustainable Organizations that Manage Commons". Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis 1-16. Indiana University Center for the Study of Institutions, Population, and Environmental Change.

Po Garden, Louis Lebel, and Charunee Chirangworapat. 2008). "The linkages between local and central government in the Thai administrative system". From: "Local Government Reforms as Work in Progress". Chapter 8 from Chusak Wittayapak and Peter Vandergeest, ed. (The Politics of Decentralization: Natural Resource Management in Asia. Bangkok, Thailand: Mekhong Press.

Wednesday: Strategies and challenges for forest resource protection and conservation

- Types of upland agriculture
- Community based management
- Local and global forest management

Abson, D.J., Von Wehrden, H., Baumgärtner, S., Fischer, J., Hanspach, J., Härdtle, W., Heinrichs, H., Klein, A.M., Lang, D.J., Martens, P. and Walmsley, D., 2014. Ecosystem services as a boundary object for sustainability. *Ecological Economics*, 103, pp.29-37.

Meitzner Yoder, Laura S., Carrie A. Sedlack, and Rashauna S. Mead. "Swidden Fallow Length: Reasons for adjusting the swidden cycle at Huay Pu-Ling, northwest Thailand." 1-16

Prasert Trakarnsuphakorn. 1997. "The Wisdom of the Karen in Natural Resource Conservation." Pp. 204-218 in McCaskill, D., and K. Kampe (eds), *Development or Domestication?: Indigenous Peoples of Southeast Asia*. Chiang Mai: silkworm.

Pinkaew Laungaramsri. 2001. "Rai, Rai Lu'an Loy, Rai Mun Wian and the Politics of "Shifting Cultivation" Redefining Nature: Karen Ecological Knowledge and the Challenge to the Modern Conservation Paradigm. 178 -190 Chennai: Earthworm.

Pinkaew Laungaramsri 2001. Excerpt on various Thai conceptions of forest. Pp. 19, 62-71, 103 in *Redefining Nature: Karen Ecological Knowledge and the Challenge to the Modern Conservation Paradigm*. Chennai: Earthworm

Thursday: Public Holiday: No class

Friday: Ecology of Northern Thailand forest communities

Field study of FORRU and long-term forest restoration in Ban Mae Sa Mai village and Ban Pong Kri village

Ciccarese, L., Mattsson, A. and Pettenella, D., 2012. Ecosystem services from forest restoration: thinking ahead. *New Forests*, 43(5-6), pp.543-560.

Grieg-Gran, M., Porrás, I. and Wunder, S., 2005. How can market mechanisms for forest environmental services help the poor? Preliminary lessons from Latin America. *World development*, 33(9), pp. 1511-1527.

Kanowski, J. and Catterall, C.P., 2010. Carbon stocks in above-ground biomass of monoculture plantations, mixed species plantations and environmental restoration plantings in north-east Australia. *Ecological Management & Restoration*, 11(2), pp.119-126.

Surin Onprom. "Supermarket of the Poor". Excerpted from: "People, Forests and Narratives: The Politics of the Community Forestry Movement in Thailand". Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Human Geography) The University of Sydney. March 2012 (Revised August 2012). p. 108-109.

Forest Restoration Research Unit. 2006. *How to Plant a Forest: Principles and Practice of Restoring Tropical Forests*. 33-50. Biology Department, Science Faculty, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Field Schedules

Group A Schedule

Day 1: Monday 10/30: Students travel via Van to Mae Hong Son

Students travel to MHS by and meet the instructor team at Rom Thai Guesthouse in Mae Hong Son Town. Group dinner and exploration of Mae Hong Son town.

Day 2: Tuesday 10/31: Meeting at the Royal Forestry Department of Mae Hong Son Province

The RFD is a key government stakeholder in forest resources but their role has shifted significantly over the last few decades. The RFD staff will present on the forest areas of Mae Hong Son, the rules and laws governing them, and their current projects. Pay attention to the way the RFD talks about forest management for ELW Activity 5.

Meeting with Huay Pu Ling TAO Chief

Travelling 2+ hours outside of the city, students stop to meet with the current “Nayok Obotaw” (HPL Tambon Administrative Organization Chief) and various other staff at the Huay Pu Ling sub-district office. The current Chief, Khun Thongplaew Tawichakornseethong, is from Ban Huay Nong Khao Klang village, and four out of the six villages that we stay in are a part of this sub-district.

Students should ask questions about both the Community Land Titling process (Ban Nong Khao Klang is the only community that has applied from Huay Pu Ling Sub-district to date) and the “Local Regulations for L and NR Management (Kaw Punyat)” model that Huay Pu Ling Sub-district is current drafting.

Arrive at Huay Tong Kaw

Huai Tong Kaw village is passionately involved in the grassroots struggle for public and legal recognition of ethnic upland peoples’ rights to manage their local forest resources. Thus, it is important that students prepare themselves with specific questions about village history, the Community Forestry Bills and the various roles that the local government plays in the villagers’ lives.

ELW: Animal Inquiry

Some students will need to complete this activity with their host families in this village in order to give other students the animal flash cards so they can do the activity with their host family in the next village.

Day 3: Wednesday 11/1: Culture Day: Singing the Tah, Basket Weaving, Blacksmithing & Herbal Medicine

Students learn many of the practical and cultural skills that comprise everyday life in a Karen village. Students will learn ritual songs (the Tah), herbal remedies, basket weaving, and blacksmithing.

Village meeting

Evening meeting and discussion with community members. This is the first of many community meetings, one in each village - they are scheduled as time for students and villagers to interact, ask questions about major course themes, and hear about village background and history. Students should be prepared with thoughtful and appropriate questions and comments.

ELW: Food Calendar (part 1)

Students meet with villagers and create a calendar of food – wild, cultivated, raised, and purchased – that villagers eat throughout the year. Keep in mind food security related to non-timber forest products and any agriculture/land-use systems. Students will be comparing and contrasting the food calendar they complete in this village with another food calendar in a different village.

Day 4: Thursday 11/2: ELW: Forest Succession in Fallow Fields (part 1)

There has long been a debate between locals, natural resource academics, and forest “experts” as to whether agricultural practices on forested lands are destructive or generally not detrimental. In HTK’s rotational fields, students learn from the Karen about their forest resource management and rotational farming systems. Complete the activity by collecting data from three “rai” of various fallow lengths to get a better understanding of what succession looks like and what it means in terms of forest and field health. Later, you will collect further data from another plot.

ELW: Rotational Agriculture Discussion

Meet with local instructors after Field Activity 2 to discuss clearing, burning, planting, and harvesting of the rai crops throughout the year and after the first year. Also, discuss how the village manages land among families and determines when to return to fallow fields.

Gender Meeting

Students should prepare questions in advance for this meeting, writing ideas down for this occasion throughout previous days on this course. Women will meet with the women of Huai Tong Kaw, and the men will meet with men.

Day 5: Friday Family Day 11/3

Spend the majority of the day with your family, concentrating on learning by doing. This is your chance to learn firsthand about different ways of life, and it is up to you to take advantage of it.

Culture Exchange

A fun evening meeting with Huai Tong Kaw villagers. This will not be a formal meeting, but rather a cultural exchange with songs and skits. Start preparing now for different skits, games and songs your group can share with villagers!

Day 6: Saturday 11/4: Hike from Huai Tong Kaw to Huai Hee

A hike ascending up into the mountains and then descending into a river valley before ascending again to Huai Hee village- a relatively tough day. Students teach ecology lessons along the way.

Day 7: Sunday 11/5: Mid-course Exam

To be completed in the morning in a common area with all students together- should not take longer than 1.5 hours

Village Meeting/ELW: Community Resource Management

Apply your understanding of Ostrom's framework for sustainable community resource management, interview villagers about their management and use of the micro-hydroelectric system.

ELW: Animal Inquiry

Some students will need to complete this activity with their host families in this village in order to give other students the animal flash cards so they can do the activity with their host family in the next village.

Day 8: Monday 11/6: Hike Doi Pui

Standing 1,722 meters above sea level, Doi Pui is the highest point in the Mae Hong Son area and has been targeted by the national park for promoting mass tourism. Villagers of Huai Hee have used small-scale, locally guided hikes and wild orchid preservation projects. Their goal is to re-establish their local control and rights to protect their environment from being exploited by park officials.

Forest Succession in Fallow Fields (part 2)

In Huai Hee's rotational fields, students learn from the Karen about their forest resource management and rotational farming systems. You will collect data from a conserved forest that was previously used as a "rai" 20-40 years ago.

Midcourse Seminar on the Summit of Doi Pui**Culture Exchange**

A fun evening cultural exchange of songs and skits with the villagers of Huai Hee.

Day 9: Tuesday 11/7: Hike Huai Hee to Nam Hoo

The morning begins a long ridge ascent and finish with a long downhill. Students teach ecology lessons along the way.

Nam Hoo is a small village that consists of approximately 9 households and has a population of less than 50. Nam Hoo is a Christian village and their traditional beliefs and ceremonies have been changed, adapted, and dropped.

ELW Activity: Forest Transect

The formal transect activity is incorporated into this hike - you will be applying all of the forest knowledge that you have acquired up to this point.

Day 10: Wednesday 11/8: Weaving Day

Students spend the afternoon learning about the process of weaving traditional cloth (collecting the cotton, spinning, natural dyes, setting the loom, and weaving).

Village Meeting

Day 11: Thursday Family Day 11/9

Spend the day with your family, concentrating on learning by doing.

ELW: Animal Inquiry

Some students will need to complete this activity with their host families in this village in order to give other students the animal flash cards so they can do the activity with their host family in the next village. The Animal Inquiry discussion is on Saturday.

Day 12: Friday 11/10: Hike Nam Hoo to Hua Nam Mae Hong Son

Another early start, and another long and strenuous hiking day. Student teach ecology lessons along the way.

Hua Nam Mae Hong Son village is marked by loosely scattered houses situated in the watershed of the Mae Hong Son River. Although the village has patches of upland rice fields as well as wet rice paddies, they have largely conserved the watershed forest that surrounds the community.

ELW: Animal Inquiry

The last group of students will need to complete this activity with their host families tonight. The Animal Inquiry discussion is on Saturday.

Day 13: Saturday Service Day 11/11

Students will help the community in a project requested by the community.

ELW: Animal Inquiry Discussion

This is an opportunity for students and field instructors to discuss the data gathered in Field Activity 6: Animal Inquiry. In the group discussion, explore the role of faunal life in the forest and consider wildlife conservation's place in Thai National parks and amongst indigenous communities.

Village Meeting

Day 14: Sunday 11/12: Hike Hua Nam Mae Hong Son to Pakalo

Early morning start, many river crossings and steep terrain; a technical hike. Student leaders will teach ecology lessons along the way.

The majority of Ban Pakalo's residents currently earn their livelihood as unskilled laborers in town. This village provides students a chance to observe how proximity to urban areas affects the livelihoods of upland people. Students should use this village to analyze why the trend of moving closer to the city is occurring at the rate it is. What incentives do villagers have to live close to Mae Hong Son? How does this affect their culture, religion, and relationship to the forest?

Village Meeting

Day 15: Monday 11/13: Hike Pakalo to Hua Nam Mae Sa Kuet

Students teach an ecology lessons along the way.

Hua Nam Mae Sa Kuet is a village much closer in proximity to the city of Mae Hong Son than the other villages where we stay. Many of the villagers, including Khon Muang and Thai-Yai ethnic group, are day laborers in the city, and some maintain residency both in Mae Sa Kuet and in their home village. The villagers have mostly abandoned tending to rai, instead finding different careers. This village provides students another chance to observe how proximity to urban areas affects the livelihoods of upland people. Students should use this village to analyze why the trend of moving closer to the city is occurring at the rate it is. What incentives do villagers have to live close to Mae Hong Son? How does this affect their culture, religion, and relationship to the forest?

Village Meeting/ELW

Food Calendar (part 2): Students take a deeper look into where villagers get their food from based on their proximity to the city. After completing a second food calendar, prepare to meet as a group to discuss, compare and contrast the different food calendars that you have developed based on information you gathered from the villagers in the two different villages.

This activity will be followed with a group discussion comparing the results found in the two different villages.

Day 16: Tuesday 11/14: Travel by van to Mae Hong Son City

Meeting with Project for Recovery of Life and Culture (PRLC)

PRLC is an NGO that works closely with many of our host communities. Among other things, PRLC helped bring Community Based Tourism (CBT) trainings to several villages, provided support for the Community Forest Bill, coordinated efforts for the Community Land Title application, and currently advocates for national recognition of Subdistrict-level rules for natural resource use.

Meeting with P'Chai-ya (Former TAO Chief of Huay Pu Ling)

Learn more about the history of Huay Pu Ling District from the former TAO.

Wrap-Up Discussion

Day 17: Wednesday 11/15: Return via Van to Chiang Mai

Check out of the guesthouse and depart Mae Hong Son. Students will travel back to Chiang Mai via van. Review your reading for next day's seminar and final exam.

Day 18: Thursday 11/16

Final Exam, 9-11am

Final Seminar, 11am-noon

Group B Schedule

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ELW: Animal Inquiry

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Students teach ecology lessons along the way.

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Huai Hee was the first Karen village to successfully set up Community-Based Tourism (CBT) to promote their relationship with the surrounding ecosystem to outsiders and to supplement their income.

ELW: Animal Inquiry

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Day 10: Wednesday 11/8: Mid-course Exam

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Village Meeting/ELW: Community Resource Management

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Students take a deeper look into where villagers get their food from based on their distance from the city. After completing a second food calendar, prepare to meet as a group to discuss, compare and contrast the different food calendars that you have developed based on information you gathered from the villagers in the two different villages.

This activity will be followed with a group discussion comparing the results found in the two different villages.

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Day 16: Tuesday 11/14: Travel by van to Mae Hong Son City

Meeting with Huay Pu Ling TAO Chief

Travelling 2+ hours outside of the city, students stop to meet with the current “Nayok Obotaw” (HPL Tambon Administrative Organization Chief) and various other staff at the Huay Pu Ling sub-district office. The current Chief, Khun Thongplaew Tawichakornseethong, is from Ban Huay Nong Khao Klang village, and four out of the six villages that we stay in are a part of this sub-district.

Students should ask questions about both the Community Land Titling process (Ban Nong Khao Klang is the only community that has applied from Huay Pu Ling Sub-district to date) and the “Local Regulations for L and NR Management (Kaw Punyat)” model that Huay Pu Ling Sub-district is current drafting.

Meeting with P’Chai-ya (Former TAO Chief of Huay Pu Ling)
Learn more about the history of Huay Pu Ling District from the former TAO.

Wrap-Up Discussion

Day 17: Wednesday 11/15: Return via Van to Chiang Mai

Check out of the guesthouse and depart Mae Hong Son. Students will travel back to Chiang Mai via van. Review your reading for next day’s seminar and final exam.

Day 18: Thursday 11/16

Final Exam, 9-11am
Final Seminar, 11am-noon