

## Historical and Political Context of Thailand

Fall Semester, 2021

Instructor: Kannaporn Akarapisan (Ajaan Pam)

### Course Description

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This course explores the history and politics of Thailand, from its place among the ancient kingdoms in Southeast Asia to contemporary social and political issues. Special emphasis will be on understanding how contemporary Thai society and politics have deep cultural and historical roots.

Thailand is unique among the countries of Southeast Asia in never having been colonized by a foreign power. However, as with many aspects of Thai history and society, digging into what actually happened and how that history shapes current Thailand is complex. This course will look at various social institutions, including Thai families, patron-client relationships, marginalization and the formation of the Thai state to better understand the current context of development, contemporary political struggles, and social change.

Thailand is also not a monolithic country with a single culture and language. While the hegemony of the centralized state is a present reality and “Central Thai” is taught in schools nation-wide, the current geographic space known as Thailand is made of up different ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious groups. These also have deep historical roots, from the ancient Lanna Kingdom in Northern Thailand to upland ethnic minorities that have historically not recognized national boundaries or the concept of nation state.

The goal of this course is to give students studying in Thailand a good foundation to understanding Thai society and culture in its own right, and also help them to better contextualize their other courses.

### Course Objectives

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The objectives for this course are to:

- Understand the historical background and broader social context of contemporary Thai society.
- Relate specific issues in the historical and political legacy of Thailand to contemporary social issues.
- Understand the complexity of regional, ethnic, and marginalized identities and how this shapes Thai society.
- More broadly understand how the process of development and change has shaped Thai society and social institutions.

### Methodology

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The course will integrate course lectures and readings with group discussions and seminars. Experiential field studies will be an important component of the course, both formal and informal. Guest lecturers will be a part of the course to share their experiences and perspective with students. Keeping up with readings, materials presented in class, and assignments is critical for success during this course.

## Grading and Assessment

Course Component Details	Total
<b>Participation</b>	
<b>In class participation:</b> This means being an active participant in classes, contributing meaningfully to the discussions, questions, and ongoing learning.	5
<b>Projects:</b> Throughout the class participating in a meaningful way in projects and assignments in-class.	5
<b>Field Studies:</b> Participating in field studies outside of the classroom, both through asking questions in the field, engaging in activities, and being an active and engaged learner during field studies.	5
<b>Total Participation</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Writing</b>	
<b>Journal/Notes:</b> An important component of learning to observe and analyze the issues during this course is taking notes in class as well as keeping an on-going journal of observations outside the classroom. This means writing daily in your journal, even if only for brief or significant observations.	10
<b>Experiential Learning Workbook:</b> A more structured way of taking notes and learning outside the classroom, ELWs will be assigned to specific field studies and experiential learning opportunities.	15
<b>Essays:</b> For this course essays are longer reflections and analysis. There are four (4) essays during the course, generally one each week. Essays should be 4-5 pages long in your journal, and cover the following points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How this issue or topic links to the overall topic of the course.</li> <li>• Why you are interested in this specific issue or topic.</li> <li>• An analysis of a specific issue observed or learned about during that week — describe this and why it is important.</li> <li>• Reference to a reading either from the course reader or outside sources.</li> <li>• Other questions that this issue raises for you to explore further.</li> </ul>	20
<b>Total writing</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Independent Research Project/Focused Inquiry</b>	
Each student will choose an issue related to the course to study independently. This should be a combination of research, observations, and analysis of a topic that the student is interested in. The <b>emphasis is primarily on field observations</b> broadly defined, drawing on both class related field studies as well as independent observations in Thailand on your own time. This is not a book report or literature review, but a field study.	
<b>Proposal:</b> The IRP proposal will be a written outline and a short presentation to the class explaining a statement of intent, how data will be gathered, the feasibility of studying this during the course, and any potential challenges you may anticipate running into.	10
<b>Progress update:</b> This part of the IRP is a short update during the course (both an outline and a presentation) on what the student has discovered about their topic so far, what further questions this raises, any challenges they have faced and how they have overcome them, as well as further information they will be looking for during the second half of the field study.	10
<b>Final Presentation:</b> On the last day of the course each student will give a presentation on their topic, focusing on the initial question, methods, challenges, and the outcome of their focused inquiry. This should be presented with supporting slides. This will be followed by questions and comments from fellow students and instructors.	20
<b>Rubric for final presentation</b>	
1. Clarity and organization — is the issue clearly explained, linked to the topic and readings of the course, and well organized?	
2. Experiential learning/field studies/observations — does the presentation link to specific examples of observations?	
3. Interviews — does the presentation reflect discussions, interviews, and talks with local people and community members?	
4. Depth — is the issue analyzed and explained well and thoroughly?	
<b>Total Independent Research Project</b>	<b>40</b>

## Course Topics and Schedule

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### Monday - August 30

**Program orientation and cultural basics:** This session will focus on health and safety in Thailand, with a special emphasis on developing cultural awareness and cultural competency. We will also review specific program policies.

### Tuesday - August 31

**Keys to the Thai cultural context:** Building on the first session, this session will examine some key components of Thai culture through understanding key sociolinguistic concepts embedded in Thai culture, as well as how Thai society organizes itself through dense social networks and patron-client relationships.

### Wednesday - September 1

#### Ancient and early modern Thai history

PLEASE NOTE: There are a lot of readings for today. Please be sure to cover all of these readings as you have time, as the issues from today will be referenced throughout the course. Review the BBC article first, then the Chronology, then start in on the other readings. If you do not finish them today, come back to them as you have time.

- “Abbreviations”, “Glossary”, and “Chronology” from Chris Baker, Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand*, 3rd Edition, Cambridge University Press, Third edition (2014)
- “Chapter 1: Before Bangkok” in Chris Baker, Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand*, 3rd Edition, Cambridge University Press, Third edition (2014) pp. 1-24
- “Chapter 2: The old order in transition, 1760s to 1860s” in Chris Baker, Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand*, 3rd Edition, Cambridge University Press, Third edition (2014) pp. 25-45
- “Chapter 4: Sovereignty” in Winichakul, Thongchai, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of A Nation*, University of Hawaii Press (1994) pp. 81-94
- “Chapter 5: Margin” in Winichakul, Thongchai, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of A Nation*, University of Hawaii Press (1994) pp. 95-112
- Thailand profile - timeline by BBC. March, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-15641745>

### Thursday - September 2

#### Thailand in the context of Southeast Asia

- Ratana Tosakul, “The Transitional Anthropology of Thailand” in Thomson E. & Sinha V. (Eds.), *Southeast Asian Anthropologies - National Traditions and Transnational Practices*, National University of Singapore: NUS Press. (2019) pp. 292-313

### Friday - September 3

#### Issues in Thai Society

- Watch and analyze “Pee Nak / พี่นาค” (2019)

— ESSAY #1 DUE by 10 PM EMAILED TO YOUR TA

### Monday - September 6

#### Thai Social Structure

- John F. Embree. “Thailand - A Loosely Structured Social System” pp. 181-193 in *American Anthropologist*, (1950)

— IRP PROPOSAL PRESENTED IN CLASS, OUTLINE EMAILED TO YOUR TA

### Tuesday - September 7

#### National and Ethnic Identity

- Charles F. Keyes, “Towards a New Formulation of the Concept of Ethnic Group”, in *Ethnicity* 3 (1976) pp. 202-13

### Wednesday - September 8

#### Gender and Identity in Thai Society

- USAID, UNDP *Being LGBT in Asia: Thailand Country Report*, pp. 5-51 (2014)

#### **Thursday - September 9**

##### **Religion, Spirituality and Belief Systems**

- Petcharat Lovichakorntikul and John Walsh, “Religious Diversity and Political Change in Thailand” in *Journal of Social and Development Sciences*, Vol. 4, No. 12, Dec 2013, pp. 538-541

#### **Friday - September 10**

##### **Issues in Thai Society**

- Watch and analyze “Phi Mak Phra Khanong / พิมาภค..พระโขนง” (2013)

— ESSAY #1 DUE by 10 PM EMAILED TO YOUR TA

#### **Monday - September 13**

##### **Lanna Culture and Chiang Mai History**

- Taylor M. Easum. “A thorn in Bangkok’s side: Khruba Sriwichai, sacred space and the last stand of the pre-modern Chiang Mai state” in *South East Asia Research*, pp. 211-236, Vol. 21, No. 2 (June 2013)
- Pim Kemasingki, Thitika Tananchai. “What is Lanna? How Lanna became the identity and brand it is today”. *Chiang Mai Citylife*. May, 2017. <https://www.chiangmaicitylife.com/clg/our-city/history/what-is-lanna-how-lanna-became-the-identity-and-brand-it-is-today/>
- Isara Guntang. *Chiang Mai History*, pp. 1-28, English version by Duongchan Apavatjirut Charoenmuang, September, 2006. Published by Urban Development Institute Foundation.

#### **Tuesday - September 14**

##### **Contemporary Thai Politics**

- Nidhi Eoseewong. “The Thai Cultural Constitution”, *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia*. Issue 3: Nations and Other Stories, March (2003)

#### **Wednesday - September 15**

##### **Limits of Discourse around Thai Politics & Thai Social Movements**

- Human Rights Watch, Selections from *To Speak Out is Dangerous: Criminalization of Peaceful Expression in Thailand*, October 2019, pp. 1-8, pp. 12-38
- Caleb Quinley, ‘Zero tolerance’: Protest leaders arrested in Thailand” *Aljazeera*, (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/10/arrests-in-thailand-amid-zero-tolerance-for-dissent>) 10 Aug 2021

#### **Thursday - September 17**

##### **Thai Government and Administrative Organization**

- Thailand Law Forum, *Thai Governmental Structure: Under Thailand’s 1997 Constitution*. ND

— IRP PROGRESS UPDATE DURING CLASS, OUTLINE HANDED IN AT END OF CLASS

#### **Friday - September 18**

##### **Field Study: Friday Market, Chiang Mai Old City Study, Suan Dok Temple**

— ESSAY #3 DUE AT THE END OF THE DAY

#### **Monday - September 20**

##### **Field Study: Chiang Mai Religious Diversity: First Thai Church, At-Taqawa Mosque, Wat Kate Buddhist Temple, Sikh Temple**

#### **Tuesday - September 21**

##### **Ethnic Minorities in Thailand**

- Pinkeaw Laungaramsri. “Contested Citizenship: Cards, Colors, and the Culture of Identification” in *Ethnicity, Borders, and the Grassroots Interface with the State*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand, July 2014, pp. 143-161

#### **Wednesday - September 22**

##### **Field Study: Chiang Mai Local History**

#### **Thursday - September 23**

##### **Reading/Prep Day**

**Friday - September 24**

**Final Presentations**

– ESSAY #4 DUE AT END OF DAY

**Saturday - September 25**

**Field Study: Patara Elephant Farm**

- Hilary Cadigan, “The Human Cost of Elephant Tourism” in *The Atlantic*, May 19, 2016
- Ingrid Suter BEnvMan (Hons) PhD. “In Defense of Elephant Tourism” August 9, 2020, The Elephant Collaborative (<http://elephantcollaborative.org/in-defence-of-elephant-tourism/>)

– EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING WORKBOOK HANDED IN AT END OF DAY

– JOURNAL DUE AT END OF DAY

## Course Policies

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### Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes. If you are ill or otherwise need to miss a class, please inform your instructor or teaching assistant.

### Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in ISDSI courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action.

### Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing an academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

### Grading Standards

Letter grade	Score or percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B	83–86	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C	73–76	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.
D+	67–69	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.
D	60–66	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an Incomplete.