

## Historical and Political Context of Thailand

Orphans and Vulnerable Children in the Global South Program

### 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.

Assessment includes assignments, as well as essays, and written and oral exams, as well as a presentation.

### 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

<b>Engagement</b>	15
This means participation in and out of the classroom, being an active member of the course, and being fully present and engaged in the field. This includes participation in discussions during seminars and in the village, etc. This also means being an active and supportive member of the course, including as a designated leader and active follower/self leadership.	
<b>Writing</b>	40
<b>Seminar Notes:</b> An important component of learning to observe and analyze the issues during this course, including guest speakers and taking notes in class. Pay special attention to writing down any questions you might have so that you can follow up later in your reading and essays.	(5)
<b>Field Study Notes:</b> Take notes on your observations during the field studies. Your notes can be in any format, but need to be clear about what you are writing about, what you are observing, and any questions you might have about the field study. Be sure to write the date on the top of the page of each field study observation.	(15)
<b>Essays:</b> For this course essays are longer reflections and analysis. There are two (2) essays during the course, due on Friday of the second week and the last day of the course. Choose a topic that you studied during those two weeks that you're interested in and take some time to reflect on what you've learned. 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. (1)</li><li>• Why you are interested in this specific issue or topic. (1)</li><li>• A description and analysis of the specific issue and why it is important. (5)</li><li>• Reference to interviews or observations during the course. (2)</li><li>• Other questions that this issue raises for you to explore further. (1)</li></ul>	(20)
<b>Independent Field Research Project (IFRP)</b>	25
Each student will choose an issue <b>related to the course</b> 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> drawing on field studies as well as independent observations. This is not a book report or literature review, but field research. <b>Students must receive instructor approval for their chosen topic/issue.</b>	
<b>Proposal:</b> The IFRP proposal is a written outline and a short presentation to the class explaining the question, how it is related to the course topic, how data will be gathered, and any potential challenges you may anticipate running into. 1 page typed as well as an in-class presentation.	(5)
<b>Progress update:</b> An update during the course on what the student has discovered about their topic so far, what further questions this raises, any challenges and how they have been overcome, as well as further information they will be looking for during the second half of the field study. 1 page written in your notebook as well as an in-class presentation.	(5)
<b>Final Presentation:</b> On the last day of the course each student will give a five minute presentation on their research. Focus on clarity, field observations, interviews/discussions with community members, and analytical depth. 5-10 slides in PDF format. <b>Organization for final presentation</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What did you study/research focus? How is this related to the course topic? (1)</li><li>2. How did you study this, including observations and interviews? (4)</li><li>3. What did you learn? Findings and analysis. (8)</li><li>4. Further questions this raises for you. (1)</li><li>5. Final slide of references / interviews. (1)</li></ol>	(15)
<b>Final Exam</b>	20
The final exam will be a comprehensive review of course topics with an emphasis on what was learned during the field portion of the course. There will be 10 short answer questions. Students may use their notes but not their readers or the internet during the exam.	

## Course Topic and Schedule

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SEMINAR are 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM

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### **Monday: Orientation**

### **Tuesday: Thai Geography and History**

Baker, Chris and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand*, Cambridge University Press, 2014

- Glossary
- Chronology
- Chapter 1: Before Bangkok
- Chapter 9: A political society, 1970s onward

“Territorialization and state power in Thailand,” Vanderveest, Peter, and Nancy Lee Peluso, in *Theory and Society* 24: 385-426, 1995.

### **Wednesday: Mae Kah Canal Geography**

Mae Kha Canal is one of the most important features in Chiang Mai's water system that nourishes local agriculture, irrigation, and transportation which flowing through the city to the Ping River in the South. Unfortunately, since the unregulated growth of urbanization, the canal has suffered with massive amounts of pollution. We will learn how people had started to promote the essential role of Mae Kha Canal by establishing a campaign to bring back the precious abundance of the Ping River.

### **Thursday: Old City and Kiew Chom Muang NGO Field Study**

This field study spends time in the “old city” (inside the moat) and elsewhere learning about the geography and history of Chiang Mai.

### **Friday: Ban Haw Market Field Study AM / Chiang Mai City Arts and Lanna Folk Life Museum Field Study PM**

The morning will be spent at the Friday market at the gates of Chiang Mai's largest mosque, with a diversity of ethnic hill tribes, Burmese, Yunnanese and other vendors. This field study will include studying the market, as well as a market study at Wararot Market (Kat Luang).

The Chiang Mai City Arts and Culture Center / Lanna Folklife Museum are in the center of the Old City in Chiang Mai, focused on the history of Northern Thailand and its cultural heritage.

### **Sunday: Evening Walking Street Market (Optional)**

The Sunday Walking Street was one of the first walking street markets in Thailand. Several streets in the old city are shut down and turned into a large sprawling market with food, handicrafts, art, and more for sale.

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### **Monday: Maejo University: Introduction and Thai Traditional Culture**

Maejo University is Northern Thailand leading agriculture university, focused on sustainability, a “green campus” and other important initiatives.

As a part of MJU's mission is to help conserve and support Thai traditional culture, including dance, music, handicrafts, and other cultural heritage.

### **Tuesday: Maejo University**

Alternative and organic agriculture, fertilizer production, cannabis cultivation

### **Wednesday: Maejo University: Aquaculture/ Ecotourism and Gastronomy**

An important part of MJU's mission is to promote and train students in ecotourism as well as gastronomy, with a focus on Northern Thailand.

### **Thursday: Thai Society and Social Structure**

Saichol Sattayanurak, “Thai identity and nationalism,” 241-252 in *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Thailand* (RHCT), Pavin Chachavalpongpun, Editor, Routledge, 2020.

Glassman, Jim, “Class, race, and uneven development in Thailand,” in *RHCT*, 305-317

## **PROPOSAL PRESENTATION**

**Friday: Buddhism Discussion at Wat Suan Dok Field Study**

This field study will be at Wat Suan Dok, traditionally one of the more important temples in Chiang Mai containing the chedi of the Chiang Mai Royal Family. There will be an extended discussion with one of the monks at the temple about Buddhism in Thailand.

**Mosque Field Study**

This field study will visit and learn from the large Muslim community in Chiang Mai.

**Sunday:** Thai cooking school (Optional)

Thai food and cuisine is world famous and a central part of Thai culture. Learning about the traditions and how to cook Thai food is an important (and fun) way to learn more about Thai culture and life ways.

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**Monday: Historical and Social Context of Thai Politics**

Pavin Chachavalpongpun, "Introduction: a timeless Thailand," in *RHCT*, 3-14

Connors, Michael K., "The two faces of democracy," in *RHCT*, 55-70

**IFRP UPDATE****Tuesday17: Seminar with Dr Wanwilai: Thai Economic Development**

This seminar will focus on the economic structure and development of Thailand.

**Wednesday8: Gender, Identity and Human Rights with Khun Mimi**

Sanders, Douglas, "Sex and gender diversity," in *RHCT*, 340-352

**Thursday - Saturday**

Village study in the rural community of Mae The

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**Monday: Engaging Local Communities within a Global Context**

Kanokwan Manorom, "NGOs and civil society in Thailand," in *RHCT*, 366-378

**Tuesday: Patara Elephant Farm**

Ingrid Suter, "In Defense of Elephant Tourism" August 9, 2020, *The Elephant Collaborative*

The Patara Elephant Farm and Veterinary Clinic is one of the best examples in the world of breeding and conservation of the Asian elephant.

Hilary Cadigan, "The Human Cost of Elephant Tourism" in *The Atlantic*, May 19, 2016

**Wednesday: Cultural workshop at Lanna Wisdom School****Thursday: Independent Field Research Presentation**

Field Journals handed in.

**Friday: Exam and Presentation**

# 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.