

COURSE INSTRUCTOR: Amnuay Tapingkae, PhD & Chuleepan Srisoontorn, ThD

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course provides an introduction to the historical and social context of the Mekong sub-region of South East Asia and explores the dynamics between religious, political, and other social foundations and contemporary forces of change. The course begins with a survey of the major religions of the region (chiefly Buddhism and tribal Animism) and their enduring influence on worldview and culture. The course proceeds with a survey of regional history from ancient times (including the Lanna kingdom, of particular significance to Chiang Mai's heritage) through nation building and international relations to the emergence of globalization. Students will be guided to explore the influences of intangible factors on tangible institutions and historical events. The course includes several excursions to nearby sites and guest lectures to ground knowledge of the Mekong Region with an experiential sense of place and perspective.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Become acquainted with the Mekong Region in terms of historical, religious and social contexts.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the following major themes: (2.1) the influence and impact of religious beliefs and practices on the lives of the people; (2.2) major concepts of Buddhist thought, teaching and practices; (2.3) the impact of historical, religious and political influences on modern society, i.e. on nation building and independence.
3. Locate, critically evaluate and utilize various resources in selected institutions and communities in the region.
4. Develop skills for understanding and gathering knowledge from primary and secondary sources such as texts, class discussions, interviews, and site visits.
5. Analyze, interpret and think critically about major concepts in Buddhist and other religious traditions.
6. Articulate a clear understanding and appreciation of their own religious and social backgrounds by being able to view these in a pluralistic context.
7. Apply this knowledge, understanding and insight acquired in this course to their academic advancement as well as in their proposed professions.

COURSE READINGS:

Osborne, Milton 2004 *Southeast Asia: an introductory history (9th edition)* Crows Nest NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin

Osborne, Milton 2000 *The Mekong: turbulent past, uncertain future* Crows Nest NSW, Australia: Allen & Unwin

Spiro, Melford E. 1970 *Buddhism and Society: a great tradition and its Burmese vicissitudes* New York: Harper Paperbacks

Wells, Kenneth *History of the Protestant Church in Thailand* Bangkok: Suriyaban Press

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ADDITIONAL READINGS:

Chandra-ngam, Saeng 1999 *Buddhism and Thai People* Chiang Mai, Thailand: Ming Muang Press

Conze, Edward 1959 *Buddhism: its essence and development* New York: Harper Brothers, Publishers

Keyes, Charles F. 1977 *The Golden Peninsula* New York: Macmillan Publishing

SarDesai, D.R. 1997 *Southeast Asia: Past & Present (4th edition)* Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books

Swearer, Donald K. 1995 *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia* Albany: State University of New York Press

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Students will be required to write a five-page paper on a topic related to the student's interests, based on the assigned readings or texts and to make a presentation in class.
2. Students will write a 12-page report on observations and interpretations from one of the field trips (see field trips below).
3. Students will have a final examination to demonstrate their ability to assimilate information gained in this course and apply it to analysis of a particular case.

FINAL EXAMINATION:

Students will be provided with a case study in some form (a short story, a movie, a film documentary, a vignette, a TV program or some such) and will be asked a series of five to eight questions, the answers for which will require the students to draw upon their reading, discussions and learning in the course. Students' answers will be evaluated on their depth of insight, the breadth of the resources they use, their understanding of the complexities of cultural, historical and religious perspectives involved.

COURSE EVALUATION:

Assignment #1	20%
Assignment #2	20%
Final Examination	40%
Class Participation	10%
Attendance	10%

GRADING SCALE:

95-100 A	85-88 B	75-78 C	65-68 D
92-94 A-	82-84 B-	72-74 C-	62-64 D-
89 -91 B+	79-81 C+	69-71 D+	0-61 F

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COURSE POLICIES:

Attendance is required at all class sessions. Success in the course depends heavily on your attendance, preparation and participation. Students shall practice academic honesty. All academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism is prohibited, including, for example:

- giving or receiving aid during a quiz or examination;
- turning in written work prepared partially or wholly by another;
- presenting another's ideas or work as your own without proper citation;
- failure to cite sources used in a research paper or oral presentation.

If you are uncertain about how to comply with academic integrity standards, including how to avoid plagiarism, please ask. Students are expected to produce written work that is focused, well developed, organized, and relatively free of grammatical, punctuation and spelling errors. Papers that do not meet this standard will be returned to the student for revision within a reasonable time. At a minimum, the paper shall have:

- a clear thesis and maintain a focus;
- paragraphs that are well developed with topic sentences and adequate support;
- smooth transitions and flow of ideas;
- correct grammar and academic style;
- proper documentation of borrowed ideas using MLA (or other recognized) citation format.

Papers should be written with a logical flow, using headings and subheadings to organize your thoughts and the reader's attention. Additional criteria for papers will be discussed in class. All assignments are due on time. Late assignments will be penalized. Permission for extensions must be requested in advance of the due date, and the assignment is still subject to grade reduction. Assignments turned in late without a request for extension will not be graded.

LEARNING METHODS:

Learning activities will include classroom lectures and discussions as well as reading assignments and several field trips. Students should take advantage of all learning opportunities and view them in a holistic, integrated way. Students are also encouraged to apply historical, religious and social perspectives to their own lives and situations.

COURSE OUTLINE:

All dates are approximate. Lecture topics, reading assignments and due dates will be confirmed in class. This syllabus is intended to facilitate the exchange of information between the instructor and student and in no way should be construed as legal document or commitment.

DAY	TOPIC	OBJECTIVE	READINGS
1 Jan 21	Orientation	To acquaint students with the course and the instructor and to learn of expectations and class requirements	Discussion Course readings distributed
2 Jan 23	Overview of Thai History and Society	To summarize the historical and social perspectives of Thailand	SarDesai, ch. 6, 11, 16, 21 Osborne 2004, ch. 13

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DAY	TOPIC	OBJECTIVE	READINGS
3 Jan 26	Cooperation of the countries of the Mekong	To review the history and the role of the Association of Southeast Asian Nation	Osborne 2000, ch. 13-14
4 Jan 28	Survey of the Mekong Region	To learn the unique historical and social perspectives of the Mekong Region	Osborne 2000, Part I; Osborne 2004, ;SarDesai, Part One
5 Jan 30	The Colonial Past	To become aware of foreign intrusion and influence on the countries of the region	Osborne 2004, ch. 5-9 SarDesai, Part Two
Jan 31- Feb 2 Field Trip	Golden Triangle	(1) a visit to the “Golden Triangle” to see the convergence of rivers forming the intersection of Laos, Burma and Thailand; (2) visit to the market at Mae Sai opposite Ta Chi-lek in Burma to observe the reality of international trade at a local level; (3) to visit ethnic minority villages and observe how they are being absorbed into a newer culture; (4) to see examples of cultural impact from outside (e.g. Chinese immigrants, Christian missions, foreign commercial enterprise; Two Day).	
Feb 4-6 Field Trip	Wat Suan Dawk Temple Buddhism	(1) A visit to Wat Suan Dawk and a discussion of Buddhism led by a monk who specializes in “monk chats” with foreigners (All Day).	
Feb 7-8 Field Trip	Sonetonpin Church, Mea Ai Thai Community Life	(1) a walk through Sonetonpin Village to observe markets, shops, homes and especially a Christian church (Two Day).	
6 Feb 9	ASEAN	Association Southeast Asian Nations	

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DAY	TOPIC	OBJECTIVE	READINGS
Feb 10 Field Trip	Hill Tribe Museum Hill Tribe Culture	(1) a visit to the Hill Tribe Museum outside of Chiang Mai that gives an overview of the history and cultures of the various northern Thai hill tribes. (2) a visit to a model hill tribe village with traditional houses on display including household implements and agricultural tools.	
7 Feb 11	Minority and Ethnic Groups in the Mekong Region	To gain a perspective about the plight of minorities, illegal immigrants, slaves, and drug addicts	Osborne 2004, ch. 4
8 Feb 13	Modernization and Globalization of the Mekong Region	To summarize how the countries cope with post-colonial era and attempts to modernize	Osborne 2004, ch. 12-15 SarDesai, Part Four
10 Feb 16	Christianity of SE Asia	To gain a historical overview of the impact of Christian missions	Wells
11 Feb 18	Presentation of papers		
12 Feb 20	Final Examination		

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