

Southeast Asian Culture and Society

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This is a graduate seminar dedicated to the exploration of classic and contemporary ethnographic texts about Southeast Asian societies. Designed for graduate students whose area focus is Southeast Asia, or whose theoretical concerns merit a close reading of key texts on the syllabus, the course will engage with canonical work, such as the writings of Clifford Geertz, Edmund Leach, James C. Scott, Benedict Anderson, Anna Tsing, and others, as well as with emerging voices in Southeast Asian studies such as Erik Harms and Andrew Johnson. The course is particularly well suited to students in Anthropology and Asian Studies interested in writing ethnographically about the region, and in gaining a sense for the particularities of Southeast Asia through intimate ethnographic narratives. Students will engage not only with the theoretical insights advanced by core texts, but also with the relationship between ethnographic research and the production of “theory”, and with questions of tone, voice and style in ethnographic writing. Finally, the course provides students with the opportunity to write their own theoretical and/or ethnographic texts, and will include writing workshops for course participants.

The course will follow a seminar format of in-class discussions in conjunction with assigned readings. Readings should be completed *before* the unit in which they are listed. It's crucial to keep up on readings, since they form the basis of the core concepts of this course, and since you will be asked to take part in and lead in-class discussions on the readings each week.