CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY IN THE COUNTRIES OF “INDOCHINA” TODAY  
Asia 399 – Asian Social & Culture  

Tuesday and Thursday, 10:00 – 11:20pm (Spring 2016, University of Oregon)  
Chapman 307

Instructor: Hong Bui, PhD Candidate, Cornell University  
Office Hours: Thursday 12:30 – 3:30 – PLC 218  
Email: hb76@cornell.edu or hongbui99@gmail.com

Course Description

This course presents an overview of the modern societies of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. We will examine processes of social development and globalization and their broader impact on “Indochina” societies from historical, economic, demographic, sociological, and anthropological perspectives. The course provides students with a dynamic understanding of the contemporary ‘Indochina’ setting by examining issues of health epidemics, emergent developing markets, conflicting gender roles, tourism, pop culture, beliefs and religions, ethnic warfare, and civil society.

Rather than simply introduce to you WHAT these societies are, the course will equip and encourage you to move past that boundary by raising HOW and WHY queries on core issues, through paying close attention to the social and historical contexts of these societies.

Learning Objectives

This course aims to:

• Challenge and equip you with knowledge of the different Indochina countries, including their cultural, religious, political, social traditions and transformations.
• Be aware of how globalization, modernization, and education have affected their culture and societies and how the peoples of this region are becoming more interdependent.
• Become more sophisticated observers, readers, and writers through examining and analyzing core social issues that define and constrain the area today.
• Prompt your interest for further studies and activities. After the course, you should be able to think critically about social issues and risks that developing countries such as Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia are facing as their societies shift inevitably toward a globalized world.

Course Requirements and Assessment:

Course grades will be based on participation and written work, broken down as follows:

• Class attendance, participate in class discussions and group discussions (35%): Each of you will be responsible to prepare questions (2 classes – at least 3 questions per class), based on weekly assigned readings for in-class group discussion and actively participate in class discussion to dissect those raised questions. You must complete all assigned readings before each class. Your prepared questions should be sent through email to the instructor by 8p.m the night before class meeting, no exceptions. There will be a signed up sheet in which you will sign up to present your questions to the class.
• Concise Paper/Project (35% for written paper). Closer to the final week of the course, you are required to turn in a concise paper of (6 to 7 double-spaced, typewritten pages) that describes/address a specific development issue of your choice in Laos or Cambodia or Vietnam or the region as a whole. Concise paper
is due on **May 17**th. Students need to hand in a brief **1 page description of their concise paper** on **May 10**th. You are expected to use MLA format and provide complete citations. Your paper should be an extended treatment of a topic raised during class meetings and will be assessed based on originality of ideas, coherence of arguments, appropriate use of sources and quality of writing. Your paper must briefly:

1. Describe the human environment/social geography of the selected location – Where? What?
2. Analyze the root cause(s) of the problem you identify – How come? Why should we care?
3. Propose credible, practical solutions to remedy your problem – What can be done?

- **Final Examination (30%)**: At the end of the course, there will be an essay-based examination. You will write two essays from a choice of five essay questions covering major themes of the course lectures and readings. You may use your course notes and readings during the examination.

**Where to get the required readings**: All assigned readings will be posted on Canvas. A few of the readings may be changed during the term. The instructor reserves the right to change some reading assignments, especially in the second half of the course, but will give advance notice and provide access to the new materials.

**What to expect during a typical class section**: Social and historical background context and concepts will be presented in lecture. Then students will raise critical questions based on assigned readings to bring the class to pay close attention specific topics. Students are expect to raise questions, attempt to answer questions and participate in class discussion to make class a fruitful learning experience for all. Class attendance is mandatory. Exceptions are only granted to those with a legitimate excuse from an academic advisor or doctor.

**A word on using electronic devices when class is in session**: Turns off cellphone, no texting, no emailing nor using social media platforms. Laptop/tablet is solely allowed for the purpose of taking note in class. Thank you for compliance.

**Lecture topics and reading assignments**:

**Week 1: March 29th – March 31th - Introduction, historical contexts, ethnography research**

What is Indochina? Why should we care? Anthropological studies approaches.

**Readings**:

Week 2: April 5th – April 7th State, Society and Individual – Nationalism, Identity, Cultural Change and the post-1975 generation

Readings:


Suggested readings:


Alexander Woodside, the struggle to rethink the Vietnamese state in the era of market economics, in Timothy Brook and Hy Van Luong, Culture and Economy: The Shaping of Capitalism in Eastern Asia, Published by University of Michigan Press, 1999, pg 61 -78.


Week 3: April 12th- April 14th Emergent Markets, Tourism, Development issues - What make Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam tick?

Readings:


Suggested readings:


“Investors, managers, brokers, and culture workers: how the “new” Chinese are changing the meaning of Chineseness in Cambodia,” Pal Nyiri, Crosscurrents: East Asian History and Culture Review, Number 4 (Special Issue on the Chinese in Cambodia), September 2012.

China and Vietnam square off in Laos, Southeast Asia Online, August 30th, 2008 http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/JH30Ae02.html


Watch an interview with Mme Ton Nu Thi Ninh on Vietnam's foreign policy, http://www.the-leaders.org/library/20.html


Week 4: April 19th – April 21th – Beliefs and Religions - Buddhism, Ancestor Worship, Caodaism, Christianity.

Readings:

1. Ian Harris, “Chapter 8: Cambodian Buddhism after the Khmer Rouge”, in Cambodian Buddhism History and Practice, University of Hawaii Press, 2008, pg 190-224.

View a short video: Buddhism in Laos: ordaining as a monk, the story of sisouphan and his brother . Vientiane Times. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mLWoQ9Per2w

Suggested readings:


Oscar Salemink, *Enclosing the Highlands: Socialist, Capitalist and Protestant Conversions of Vietnam's Central Highlanders*.

**Week 5: April 26th – April 28th Pop Culture – Music, Films, and Arts**

**Readings:**

2. Amitav Gosh, Dancing in Cambodia and other essays (New Delhi, 2008).

3. **We will watch a documentary called:** I don’t think I’ve forgotten Cambodia Lost RocknRoll. [http://www.amazon.com/Dont-Think-Ive-Forgotten-Cambodias/dp/B00ZBEXB6U](http://www.amazon.com/Dont-Think-Ive-Forgotten-Cambodias/dp/B00ZBEXB6U)

4. **We will watch a short video clip (17 mins) called:** Looking for home, Nguyen Qui Duc, [http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/vietnam/thestory.html](http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/vietnam/thestory.html)

**Week 6: May 3rd – May 5th – Health Epidemics and Environment Issues**

**Readings:**


**Week 7: May 10th – May 12th - Gender issues, Family, Youth – Students turn in 1 page summary of concise paper on May 10.**

**Readings:**

1. Simon Creak, Sport as politics and history: the 25th SEA Games in Laos, *ARTICLE in ANTHROPOLOGY TODAY* 27(1) • JANUARY 2011

3. Hung Cam Thai, *For better or for worse, Vietnamese International Marriages in the New Global Economy* selections, Published by Rutgers University Press, 2008.

**Week 8: May 17th – May 19th** - Ethnic warfare, genocides, regionalism – Students turn in concise paper both in hard copy and electronic paper on May 17th.

**Readings:**


5. Nha Ca, Olga Dor, - introduction - Mourning headband for Hue.

6. We will either watch *The Killing Field* or *Land of Sorrow* (Dat Kho).

**Week 9: May 24th – May 26th** – Education, Civil Society, NGOs, Poverty Reduction

**Readings:**


**Suggested reading**


Chab Dai (Joining hands) - [http://chabdai.org/ethos/](http://chabdai.org/ethos/)

[http://chabdai.org/clc](http://chabdai.org/clc) fight children trafficking

Senhoa: [http://senhoa.org/about/awards-recognition/](http://senhoa.org/about/awards-recognition/), [http://senhoa.org/about/#prettyPhoto](http://senhoa.org/about/#prettyPhoto)


UNDP Human Development Report 2003 “Millennium development goals: A compact among nations to end human poverty”.


**Week 10: June 2rd** - Course Review. Concluding thoughts: What should you know about contemporary societies of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam.

**Final examination.**