

Foundations: Thai Society

(Social Science/Ecology)

Spring Semester, 2010

Instructors: Dr. Christina Fink, Dr. Mark Ritchie, and others

Overview

The Foundations course consists of seminars and field studies and is meant to prepare you for the field-based courses which make up the rest of the program.

The first week of the course will introduce you to Thai history, culture, and politics.

The second week will focus on poverty, development, and the changing role of NGOs and community/people's movements. You will make a site visit to a local community so that you can get a sense of NGO work on the ground.

The third week will be dedicated to helping you develop the methodological skills you need for social and ecological field studies. This week, you will engage in two short field studies with time set aside for preparation and analysis.

The fourth week, you will conduct a longer field study in the vicinity of Chiang Mai and with your team members, prepare and present a poster reflecting your observations and analysis on the final day.

You will need to have done the reading to participate in the discussions. However you are encouraged to read other books on the recommended reading list below and other books in the library.

Course Requirements

- You are expected to attend every class.
- You should participate in class discussions and ask questions.
- You should read the reading assignments and take notes during class and in the field.
- You should listen attentively and stay engaged during all site visits.
- You should apply the knowledge and skills you are learning in all your field studies.

Notes on Assignments

Note Taking: Please take notes in class to help you understand and remember the concepts and issues we are covering. During the field studies, you will be required to write down your observations, questions, and comments so that you can properly analyze the topic you studied when you return to ISDSI.

Field Studies: Please wear your uniform for all activities outside the classroom unless otherwise instructed. Wearing your uniform identifies you as students and will make the people you meet more understanding of what you are doing and more interested in helping you. Field studies will be conducted in small groups, so please make sure you are pulling your weight in the group work. Really engage in the field studies so that you are well prepared for the field courses during the rest of the semester.

Posters and poster presentations: During the final week, you will prepare for and engage in a field study in Chiang Mai. You will have one class period to analyze your results and prepare a poster which clearly represents your group's understanding of the selected topic and your group's conclusions. On the final day, your group will show and explain your poster to the rest of the class.

Grading

Your grade in the Society section of this class will be combined with your grade in the Thai language class. Your grade in this section will represent 20% of your total grade for the Thai Language and Society course.

Class attendance/participation	5 %
Field Studies: degree of engagement	5 %
Poster Preparation and Presentation	10 %

READING

Most of the readings are in the class reader. You will also have a text, *Thailand: Travelers' Wildlife Guide (TTWG)* (Pearson and Beletsky, 2008) that will be used throughout the semester. This is a fantastic text and guide to the birds, fish and other animals you will see during your time in Thailand. There are also chapters on the ecology of Thailand that will be assigned during the course.

WEEK 1: THAI SOCIETY

Monday – January 18: Introduction to Thailand and Mainland Southeast Asia. (A. Christina) What do Thailand and its neighbors share in terms of history, culture, and politics? How does the current Thai-Cambodian border conflict reflect historical legacies, and modern politics, and economic interests?

“The Land and the People” from *Thailand: Buddhist Kingdom as Modern Nation State* (Keyes, 1989)

Tuesday – January 19: Thai Family and Society. (A. Christina) What does “family” mean in Thailand and how are families organized? How are gender and age-specific roles defined in the family and how have family relations been shifting over time?

“Holy Mother, Mother Dear...How to be a Thai Mother” from *Inside Thai Society* (Mulder, 2000)
“Parents, Children and Migration Decisions” from *Thai Women in the Global Labor Force* (Mills, 1999)

Wednesday – January 20: Patron-Client Relations and Circles of Concern (A. Mark)

“Reflections on Presentation in Everyday Life” and “Avoidance and Involvement: Summarizing Ideas about Individual and Society” from *Inside Thai Society* (Mulder, 2000)
“Imagine a life in the minority” *Bangkok Post* (Sanitsuda, 2004)

Thursday – January 21: State, Religion, and Monarchy in Thailand (A. Christina)

“Buddhism, National Identity, and Modernity” and “The Ideology of ‘Democratic Government Headed by the King’” from *Inside Thai Society* (Mulder, 2000)
“Changing Patterns of Leadership, Culture, Power and Democracy” from *Making Democracy* (James Ockey, 2004)

Friday – January 22 to Sunday – January 24: Retreat

(The readings are to be read during the retreat)

“Leadership and Expedition Behavior” from *The NOLS Wilderness Guide* (Harvey, 1999)
“The Rules of Adventure” from *Deep Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why* (Gonzales, 2004)
“Safety Skills” and “Experiential Education” from *Effective Leadership in Adventure Programming* (Priest and Gass, 2005)

WEEK 2: DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Monday – January 25: Sustainability (A. Mark)

“Tracking the Ecological Overshoot of the Human Economy” from *PNAS* (Wakernagel et. al., 2002)
“Achieving Sustainability: Reform or Transformation?” from *Earthscan Reader in Sustainable Cities* (Rees, 1999)

“The Next Hundred Years” from *Sacred Trusts: Essays on Stewardship and Responsibility* (Chouinard, 1993)

Tuesday — January 26: Development and NGOs (A. Mark)

“Global Perspectives: The North/South Imbalance,” from *A Survey of Sustainable Development: Social and Economic Dimensions* (Harris, 2001)

“Towards Civil Society” from *Thailand: Economy and Politics* (Pasuk and Baker, 1996)

Wednesday — January 27: Poverty and Development in Thailand. (A. Christina) Introduction to modern Thai economic development. Watch and discuss *Behind the Smile*.

“Manpower and Womanpower” from *Thailand’s Boom and Bust* (Pasuk and Baker, 1998)

Thursday — January 28: Post-Colonial Burma: Under-development and Political Struggles for Change. (A. Christina) What is the relationship between government and development in Burma? How have people in Burma sought to bring about change? What is the relationship of Burmese migrants to the Thai economy?

“Introduction”, “The Than Shwe Years and Beyond”, and “The Threat of Independent Groups” from *Living Silence in Burma* (Fink, 2009)

Friday — January 29: Development Field Study. The class will travel to the community of Mae Taa south of Chiang Mai, and spend the day learning from villagers who have made the transition from chemical intensive contract farming to agroecological and organic methods.

“The Need for Sustainable Food Production Systems” and “The Agroecosystem Concept” from *Agroecology: Ecological Processes in Sustainable Agriculture* (Gliessman, 2000)

Saturday — January 30: Development Field Study. Students will go with their host families to the “*talat insee*” or “organic market” and meet the villagers again in Chiang Mai city at one of the most vibrant and active organic farmer’s markets in the city.

WEEK 3: FIELD RESEARCH METHODS

Monday — February 1: Introduction to Research Methods. (A. Mark)

“What is education for? Six myths about the foundations of modern education, and six new principles to replace them” from *In Context* (Orr, 1991)

“Culture Learning” from *The Whole World Guide to Culture Learning* (Hess, 1994)

Tuesday — February 2: Sociological Field Study (A. Mark and A. Christina). Compare and contrast two different types of market environments. Practice your skills of observation and analysis.

Wednesday — February 3: Analysis of Field Study (A. Mark). Discuss findings and reflect on your observation skills.

Thursday — February 4: Ecological Seminar and Introduction to Research Methods (P. Aaron)

TTWG. Chapter 2. “Thailand: Geography and Habitats”

Friday — February 5: Ecological Field Study (P. Toto, P. Carrie)

TTWG. Chapter 4. “How to Use this Book: Ecology and Natural History” (Bring the book to class!)

WEEK 4: SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS IN CHIANG MAI

Monday — February 8: Planning for Chiang Mai Sustainability Field Studies. Students will break into groups and select from a list of sustainability indicators a topic to study in-depth this week—doing both reading and field research.

Tuesday – February 9: Sustainability Field Study (Day 1)

Wednesday – February 10: Sustainability Field Study (Day 2)

Thursday – February 11: Analysis of Sustainability Field Study. Group discussion and preparation of posters and poster presentations.

Friday – February 12: Poster Presentations

Additional Recommended Reading

Thailand: Buddhist Kingdom as Modern Nation-State by Charles Keyes. An excellent introduction to Thai society and politics written by an American anthropologist. Written 20 years ago but still applies today.

Buddhism: Ethics and the Path to Peace by Phra Saneh Dhammavaro. An introduction to Buddhist philosophy by a Thai monk who teaches at a Buddhist university in Chiang Mai.

Teachers of Mad Dog Swamp by Khammaan Khonkhai – a Thai novel translated into English about the lives of teachers and villagers in Northeastern Thailand. The teacher solves an environmental mystery but pays a price. A great introduction to Thai culture, the differences between urban bureaucratic and village perspectives and the exploitation of natural resources. (We have many copies of this book.)

Land on Fire: The Environmental Consequences of the Southeast Asian Boom by James Fahn. This book, written by an American journalist with many years of experience in Thailand, covers the key current environmental debates and issues in Thailand including dams, logging, forest conservation and coastal destruction.

Slithering South – Steve van Beek; A wonderful personal account of his 2 month trip by small wooden boat from Northern Thailand to the sea, with stops at villages along the way. Many comments on environmental issues in Thailand as well.

Several other books are excellent, and you should try and read them during the semester:

Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire

Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed by Jared M. Diamond

Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation by Thongchakul Winichakul

The Ecology of Commerce : A Declaration of Sustainability by Paul Hawken

The Omnivore's Dilemma and *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto* by Michael Pollan

Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment, and the Human Prospect by David W. Orr

Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder by Richard Louv