Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the politics of Southeast Asia. The structure of the course is thematic rather than country-specific. Nonetheless, within each theme, I will focus on particular countries, thereby integrating both analysis of broad themes and specific countries. Weeks 2-7 of the course provide a historical and contemporary overview of the region. Here we examine patterns of regime change and continuity, focusing especially on colonialism, nationalism, democracy, authoritarianism, and human rights. We will cover all the major countries in the region, including Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Myanmar/Burma, Vietnam, and Cambodia. These weeks should provide students with a broad grasp of the central political dynamics in Southeast Asia. Beginning with Week 8, we will address the following issues: ethnic and religious politics, political economy, environmental politics, inequality, and international affairs.

This course will enable students to: (1) gain an empirical and analytical understanding of the political dynamics of the region; and (2) think comparatively within the region and across the developing world more generally.

Course Requirements:

1. Lectures: The lectures will provide the analytical framework for the course. They will build on and supplement the readings. Attendance at all lectures is mandatory.
2. Readings: Students are expected to come to the lectures having done the readings beforehand. You will gain more from the lectures having completed the readings.
3. Conferences: Conferences are very important because they provide a venue for discussion and debate of course materials, as well as of contemporary affairs in the region. There are 10 conferences for which attendance is mandatory. However, you are allowed to miss 1 conference for any reason –
4. Film/Documentary Analysis: This exercise requires students to watch a film or documentary of their choice on Southeast Asia and to write a 4-5 page double-spaced paper that uses the film to explore or develop an argument related to Southeast Asian current affairs. Students can write about any film or documentary that focuses on Southeast Asia, including those briefly shown in the course. This exercise will require significant research. It is crucially not meant to be a film review. The goal of the exercise is to use a film or documentary as a springboard for analyzing a particular event or issue in the politics and history of Southeast Asia. For example: if you choose to write about the film, *The Killing Fields*, you should situate the film within Cambodian history and politics and then analyze a specific issue that is covered in the film. While discussing the historical context of the film, you may choose to focus on the role of US intervention; the causes for the genocide; the character of media reporting on Cambodia, etc. The idea is that the film should stimulate you to develop a paper that engages with some of the themes elaborated in the film. This assignment requires you to be creative and analytical, as well as to do significant research. An “A” paper is one that interweaves discussion of the film with analysis of a particular theme in an insightful, creative, and critical way. *A detailed handout for this exercise will be provided in the second week of the course.* I recommend that you begin planning this paper early and discuss it with the professor or the
TA. The due date is: Thursday, November 19. Any papers handed in late will be penalized 10 points per day.

5. Midterm in-class exam: Tuesday, October 27. The exam will be based on identifications and geography. Potential identifications that will end up on the exam will be listed at the beginning of each lecture.

6. Final in-class exam: The exam will be based on identifications and essays. Date to be decided by the university exam timetable.

**Grade Distribution:**

1. Attendance, précis, and quality participation at conferences 10%
2. Film/Documentary Analysis 30%
3. Midterm Exam 30%
4. Final Exam 30%

**Please note:**

The content and evaluation of this course is subject to change in the case of unforeseeable events.

**Statement on Academic Integrity:**

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism, and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information).

**Policy on Missed In-Class Exam:**

If you are unable to take the midterm in-class exam due to illness, you must notify me in person or via email before the exam. You must then provide me with a formal note from a doctor. I will reschedule one make-up exam for all students who missed the exam several days after the formal date. There will be only one makeup exam date.

Anyone who misses the exam without notifying me before the exam will not be allowed to write the make-up. Consequently, their grade on the midterm will be a 0. There are no exceptions to this rule.
**Policy on Laptops in Class:**

You may use your laptops in class for the sole purpose of taking notes. While I understand that surfing the internet and checking email every minute is an irresistible temptation, I urge you to do your best not to succumb during the brief time in which you are in class. Not only will it waste your time in the brief lecture period that we have, but it will also distract your classmates. If I am disturbed by internet surfing, particularly through the sharing of some amusing fact on your laptop with a fellow classmate, I will be obliged to stop lecturing and single you out. Please do not make me do so.

**Contact during the Semester:**

The best way to get in touch with me is right after class or during office hours on Wednesday, 2:30-4:30pm. If you have quick queries, you may email me. However, if your query is lengthy or of a more substantive nature that cannot be addressed briefly via email, then my strong preference is for you to discuss this with me in person during office hours.

This is a large lecture course, which makes it difficult for the professor to know the students and vice versa. The only way around this is for students to make an effort to talk to me after class or during office hours. I encourage you to ask questions during the lecture or after the lecture and to discuss any interests you have about Southeast Asia with me. I am also open to any ideas about readings that you come across that are related to the course, or issues that you would like to discuss during conferences, or any matters that may help improve the course and engage its substance.

If you are involved in organizing lectures or projects on Asia, Southeast Asia, or development, I am happy to hear about them and circulate information about them. I especially encourage you to discuss with your classmates the issues addressed in this course or anything related to Southeast Asia.

**Disabilities:**

If you have any learning disabilities that will affect your progress in this course, please contact me as soon as possible so that proper arrangements can be made.

**Stress:**

I understand that university life can be very stressful. If you find that you are unable to complete the work assigned for this course due to personal difficulties, it is better if you inform me or the teaching assistant as early as possible. There are also
university resources to which I can direct students going through difficult circumstances.

Film Screenings:

I will show several documentaries and films (in full or in part) during the course. The documentaries are intended to provide students with a broader perspective on the history, contemporary affairs, and personalities of the region. The following will be screened, in full or in part:

September 29: “Philippine People Power Revolution” videoclip from YouTube
October 22: “The Killing Fields” [part] on the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia
October 29: TBD
November 19: “The Mud” on environmental destruction in Indonesia

Other Resources:

The course will have a MyCourses component. Students are encouraged to use MyCourses to discuss issues in the course as well as contemporary events that are related to the course topics. Students should feel free to post links to news items on Southeast Asia that are relevant to the course.

To keep up with politics in the region, the following are good resources: The Financial Times, The New York Times, and The Economist. Three useful news websites on Southeast Asia are: www.channelnewsasia.com [web version of Singapore 24-hour broadcast news], www.atimes.com [Asia Times Online], and www.asiasentinel.com

Some useful journals to be aware of that deal with contemporary Southeast Asian politics are: Asian Survey, Contemporary Southeast Asia, Pacific Review, Pacific Affairs, Journal of Contemporary Asia, Critical Asian Studies, Journal of East Asian Studies, and the annual publication of Singapore’s Institute of Southeast Asian Studies: Southeast Asian Affairs.

Reading Materials for the Course:

The reading materials are divided into three parts: (1) Books; (2) Coursepack; and (3) Articles on MyCourses. The books and the coursepack will be placed on reserve in the McGill Library.

The three books listed below have been ordered at Paragraphe Bookstore on 2220 McGill College Avenue. A coursepack will also be available for purchase at the McGill
Bookstore. The coursepack will only include book chapters. Please note that you have to go to two different bookstores for the materials. Finally, all journal articles that are available in McGill’s library database, will be posted on *MyCourses*.


**WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION TO SOUTHEAST ASIA**

Technique, September 8: Introduction to the Class

No readings.

**Thursday, September 10: Introduction to Southeast Asia**


**WEEK 2: COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISM**

**Tuesday, September 15: Colonialism**

Norman Owen et al., *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia* (2005), 52-71, 75-81, 201-221, 243-251.

**Thursday, September 17: Colonialism and Nationalism**


**WEEK 3: DISORDER AND THE COLLAPSE OF POST-WAR DEMOCRACY**

*Conferences begin this week; lectures are now 50 minutes instead of 1 hour and 20 minutes*

**Tuesday, September 22: Overview; Indonesia**

Norman Owen et al., *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia* (2005), 431-447.
Film in class: “The Year of Living Dangerously” [part]

**Thursday, September 24: Philippines, Thailand**

WEEK 4: DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS

Tuesday, September 29: Overview; Philippines

Film in class: Videoclip from YouTube on “Philippine People Power Revolution”

Thursday, October 1: Thailand


WEEK 5: DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS AND HYBRID REGIMES

Tuesday, October 6: Indonesia

Harold Crouch, Political Reform in Indonesia after Soeharto (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010) 15-42.

Thursday, October 8: Malaysia and Singapore

Norman Owen et al., The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia (2005), 414-430.
WEEK 6: AUTHORITARIANISM

Tuesday, October 13: Burma/Myanmar

Norman Owen et al., *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia* (2005), 497-506.

Thursday, October 15: Vietnam

Norman Owen et al., *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia* (2005), 335-349, 468-480.

WEEK 7: HUMAN RIGHTS AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

Tuesday, October 20: Universal Human Rights versus Asian Values


Thursday, October 22: Human Rights and International Justice: Cambodia, East Timor

Joel Brinkley, “Cambodia’s Curse: Struggling to Shed the Khmer Rouge’s Legacy,” *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2009).
*Film in class*: “The Killing Fields” [part]
WEEK 8: MIDTERM EXAM

*No conferences this week*

Tuesday, October 27: MIDTERM IN-CLASS EXAM

Thursday, October 29: Film in class TBD

WEEK 9: ETHNICITY, RELIGION, AND VIOLENCE

Tuesday, November 3: Overseas Chinese


Thursday, November 5: Separatism and Violence


WEEK 10: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Tuesday, November 10: The Asian Economic Miracle

Norman Owen et al., The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia (2005), 379-398.

Thursday, November 12: Financial Crisis


WEEK 11: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Tuesday, November 17: Environment


Erik Martinez Kuhonta, The Institutional Imperative, 177-181.

Thursday, November 19: Case Study of the Lapindo Mud Flow Disaster in Indonesia


Film in class: “The Mud”

WEEK 12: THE POLITICS OF INEQUALITY

Tuesday, November 24: Institutions and Inequality


Tuesday, November 26: Labor and Inequality


WEEK 13: ASEAN

Tuesday, December 1: ASEAN


Thursday, December 3: ASEAN and Concluding Remarks