Police, State and Society in Southeast Asia

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Last year, in front of a nationally prominent Buddhist shrine, provincial police in central Thailand performed a saab chaeng “black magic” rite in hopes of cursing drug traffickers. Organizers told the 20,000 local onlookers and the national media that the curse was performed because extra-judicial killings and the death penalty “were not proving to be adequate deterrents” to drug trafficking.

Course Description

This course is designed to provide an inter-disciplinary approach to Southeast Asia using the topic of the police and social order to examine the interaction between state and society. Since the state is often defined by its capacity for the legitimate use of force within its borders, policing offers an especially powerful window from which students can examine how states work. Southeast Asia serves as a particularly diverse and interesting area focus for such an examination. Police and social order issues are intertwined with the history of the region from the Thai and Filipino police forces “professionalized” by the United States to the Burmese military junta and Suharto’s New Order regime in Indonesia. An understanding of domestic social control is critical to the understanding of Southeast Asia whether looking at the history of colonialism and the development of local constabularies or international campaigns against insurgency, narcotics and terrorism. Not only will students in this course identify patterns of police organization and practice, they will also examine case studies in state order and societal interactions. Examining these case studies in Southeast Asia will promote a greater understanding of global issues of state control, media/state symbiosis, violence, and a myriad of other phenomena illuminated through the lens of “police” as a social phenomenon.

Required texts (all required texts are on reserve at Helen C. White library and available at University Book Store):


Recommended texts


E-Reserves

Most readings beyond the required texts are available on e-reserves. To access them, login to MyUW at http://my.wisc.edu using your NetID and password. Then go to the “Academics” tab or for something equivalent to “Course resources” or “Library Reserves by Department.” The course is listed as "Interdis courses, L&S" then "220 Windows on the World." If you would prefer a course reader, please let me know.
Course website: http://uwmad.courses.wisconsin.edu login using the same id and password for “My UW.” I will put most of the course material here as well. If you can’t access this, please let me know.

Course e-mail list: ls220-wotw-dhh@lists.students.wisc.edu

Requirements/Assignments (100 points total):

Participation: 25 points
Writing Assignment(s): 50 points
  - Students can choose to write either two 2-3-page reaction pieces on any of the books/articles/films (25 points each) or a 10 page paper. If the short reaction piece option is chosen, students must provide a well-structured analytical essay on any one or a combination of the readings. These papers are meant to facilitate class discussion as well so due dates will be assigned the first week of class in order to cover all of the class material. (~ 4 students per meeting)
  - If the longer paper is chosen, students may want to participate in the SEASSI conference on July 23rd where a presentation panel will be organized around the topic of police and social control in Southeast Asia. In this case, paper drafts can be presented at the conference and revised final versions can be turned in for the last week of class.

Media Reaction: 25 points
  - 1 page analysis of relevant media text presented on the last week of class.
  - Over the course of the semester, it might be helpful to routinely read news summaries of area newspapers for police-related articles. One method is to customize news.google.com for keyword “police” and the relevant country or area/topic.

All writing assignments should contain synthesized original thought.

Grades:
A: 90-100
AB: 88-89
B: 80-87
BC: 78-79
C: 70-77
D: 60-69
F: less than 60 points

Week 1: INTRODUCTION TO POLICE AND STATE AND SOUTHEAST ASIA
What role do the police serve in the modern state and how are they intertwined with political/societal processes? What types of police and security institutions exist in Southeast Asia? This week, we begin to examine modern states, how police activities influence society and vice versa.


Related readings:

Week 2: HISTORY, COLONIALISM AND REGIONAL POLICING
The history of colonialism shaped or influenced nearly every country in Southeast Asia. Using Malaysia as a case study in colonial policing, how is this history reflected and expressed today? What were the effects of counter-insurgency and anti-communist campaigns have for the region, particularly in Vietnam and surrounding countries?


June 23  Film: In the Year of the Pig.

Related readings:

Week 3: DRUGS SUPPRESSION, NARCO-TRAFFICKING AND THE FILIPINO POLICE
How do drug suppression efforts serve the modern state? Was there continuity between the “police action” in Vietnam, the drug trade and the “War on Drugs?” How do drug policies shape societies in Southeast Asia?

       Guest Speaker: Professor Alfred McCoy, Department of History, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
       Related films:
Week 4: GLOBAL POLICING AND INTERNATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

International cooperation between police groups is becoming more prevalent and broader in scope. Consequently, how are Western police concepts and tactics enacted in the local context of Southeast Asia? Within these networks of global law enforcement and individual police enactment, what roles do police groups play nationally as preservers of state power, forces of social control and political actors in their own right?

July 5


July 7

Related readings:

Week 5: POLICING IN THAILAND

The long history of the “special relationship” between US and Thai security interests can be linked to an even longer history of internationally-based criminal justice in Thailand stretching back to the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Tips, 1998). Thus, historically, Thailand offers a rich data field for an examination of international police efforts as they merge with and compete with indigenous conceptions of social control. This week will draw primarily from my own ethnographic research with the Thai police.

July 12


July 14

Related readings:

**Week 6: CONSTRUCTION OF CRIMINALITY AND THE INDONESIAN POLICE**

The creation of the “criminal type” is critical to the state building process. By defining criminality, the state has a powerful tool for social control. Case studies in Indonesia are especially relevant the political utility of delineating what activities are considered “criminal” and which activities are not.

July 19  
**Siegel, James.** *A New Criminal Type in Jakarta: Counter-Revolution Today.* Durham, Duke University Press, 1998 (pgs. 1-10; 90-136).  
**Film:** *Death of a Nation: The Timor Conspiracy*  
**Film:** *Manufacturing Consent -- Cambodia and East Timor: A Case Study*

July 21  
**Guest Speaker:** Professor Joshua Barker, University of Toronto  
**Related readings:**  

**Week 7: TERRORISM, COUNTER-TERRORISM, AND THE POLICE STATE**

Terrorists seem to be an ideal enemy of the state. They are nebulous, loosely defined groups that are unattached to any other state. These enemies can be subject to unapologetic rhetoric of dehumanization and criminalization without fear of retribution on the international scale. How has terrorism in Southeast Asia affected the interaction between state and society? What are the global patterns and implications of expanded police powers?

July 26  

July 28  
**Film:** *Martial Law 9-11: Rise of the Police State.* Alex Jones  
**Related readings:**  
Week 8: BURMA, MEDIA AND THE TECHNOLOGIES OF THE STATE
What is the role of local and global media as it relates to policing and society? This week, students will analyze current media materials from Southeast Asian sources to examine the interaction between media and state processes.

August 2
**MEDIA REACTIONS DUE:** Bring in one media article, news clip, etc. and write one-page of analysis to present in class.

August 4
**Media Reaction presentations (continued).**
Related readings:
Fink, Christina. Living Silence: Burma under Military Rule (Politics in Contemporary Asia)

***FINAL PAPER (OPTION) DUE FRIDAY, AUGUST 5th before 5pm.***