UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Area Studies: South and South-East Asia

2526-1-F0102R010

Course title

Cultures and societies of South and Southeast Asia

Topics and course structure

The course will deal with a fundamental aspect in the construction of modern, local and/or national societies in South and Southeast Asia: **the practices of welfare and gift both in their traditional and contemporary forms ranging from solidarity to hierarchical relationships of help, hospitality, and work**. The gift and “giving” will be examined in its symbolic dimension, for example in various religious world views, as well as in its inscription in moral economies.
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1. **First section**: **Erica Bornstein's analysis of gift and philanthropy in India** as an example of the prism that can be used as a general interpretation beyond the Indian case. Each chapter of the book Disquieting gifts is going to be read and discussed in class. The vision of ethnographic films will constitute a basis for further discussion.
2. **Second section** : **general introduction of Southeast Asia as a region** in its historical and geo-political aspect focusing on the Indonesian transition from Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms to sultanates and the modern Indonesian state. Various articles and other documents will be read and discussed in the classroom. This includes a classical reading in anthropology:
   ***Classical reading: Clifford Geertz, The interpretation of Cultures, New York, Basic Books 1973*
   Chapter 4, 5, 6, 10 and 11
3. **Third section: case studies of welfare, youth and the humanitarian enterprises in Indonesia****** .

Specific research will be presented and analysed (see reading list). Regarding post- catastrophe help, some fundamental notions are going to be approached such as trauma, resilience, social and individual reconstruction and rehabilitation, the condition of victimhood, the transition between victimhood and “ordinary” poverty, informal welfare as well as a specific focus on the study of childhood and youth. A special attention is going to be paid to visions of future. Although the ethnographies presented in the course concern Indonesia , the topics include fundamental authors in the anthropological approach.

Language. The course will be held in English and/or Italian depending on the composition of the class. **Erasmus students** are provided with special attention. **Students who are not fluent in English** can nevertheless participate to the course and choose a part of the reading list in Italian.

Objectives

The course aims to promote:
Knowledge:
· Develop basic knowledge and understanding of welfare relationships in Asia, with a special focus on Southeast Asia.
· Identify core notions in the anthropological study of South and Southeast Asia
· Understand and integrate different scales and levels of disciplinary and interdisciplinary analysis.
Ability to apply knowledge
· Use scientifice litterature in the analysis of contemporary Asian and Soouthеast Asian societies
· Apply notions and analytical frameworks in the understandiung of actual conrete situations
· Master the antnthropological critical look and appropriate area methodology.
Autonomous understanding:
• Understand the complexity of societies in Asia and deal with the bias originated from given ideas and prejudices..
• Evaluate personal and collective actions in the light of a situated awareness.
Communication skills:
• Express ideas, knowledge, and arguments clearly.
• Write texts and reports, using different forms of expression.
• Formulate well-founded judgments, integrating information from different and reliable sources.
Learning skills:
• Develop and refine learning methods, identifying and constructing study topics and subjects independently.

Methodologies

50% Lectures. In-classroom discussion of texts, video or otherwise produced fieldwork materials.
50% Interactive learning. Shared readings. Autonomous suggestions coming from the students are welcome. Depending on the availability, a few researchers will be invited to present their researches.

Online and offline teaching materials

The course relies on an active collaboration between the teacher and the students both in reading and discussing shared texts and in evaluating original suggestions coming from the students. According to different inputs coming, among others, from the actualities of Southeast Asia, some materials will be made available online. The students will have the possibility to present in classroom chosen texts from the reading list and/or from the classroom materials. The course website is to be considered as the main reference for exchange and communication on the

course. All the texts in the reading list are available in the University Library.

Programme and references

Reading list

1. Bornstein, E. (2012). *Disquieting gifts: humanitarianism in New Delhi*. Stanford University Press.
2. 2.1) ITALIAN SPEAKERS: Vignato, Silvia. 2020. *Le figlie delle catastrofi. Un'etnografia della crescita nella ricostruzione di Aceh*. Milano, Ledizioni. (for Italian speakers).
   2.2) NON-ITALIAN SPEAKERS
   Vignato, S. (2020). “Ganja in the Mountains, Sabu in the Sea”: The Rural Drug Landscape in Aceh, Indonesia. In Living with Drugs (pp. 109-123). ISTE.
   Vignato, S. (2017). Orphans, victims and families: An ethnography of children in Aceh. Antropologia, 4(2 NS).
   Vignato, S., (2020). Motherly Landscapes: Matrifocality, Marriage, Islam and the Change of Generation in Post-Conflict, Post-Tsunami Aceh, East And west 1, 29-98.
3. The students will choose one of the following texts/group of texts:
   Smith, Catherine, (2018), *Resilience and the Localisation of Trauma in Aceh, Indonesia*, NUS Press.
   Nooteboom, G. (2016). *Forgotten People: Poverty, Risk and Social Security in Indonesia* (p. 324). Brill.
   Vignato, S., ed. (2017). *Dreams of Prosperity: Inequality and Integration in Southeast Asia*, Chiang Mai, Silkworm/EFEO
   Stodulka, T. (2016). *Coming of Age on the Streets of Java.* transcript Verlag.
   4 Classical reading: Clifford Geertz, *The interpretation of Cultures*, New York, Basic Books 1973 Chapter 4, 5, 6, 10 and 11

Non attending students are STRONGLY ADVISED to acquire a sounder picture of the area studies through the study of materials available on the course homepage as well as of an integrative text such as Church, Peter. 2022 (6th ed.) A Short History of Southeast Asia. London, Wiley.

Assessment methods

The exam aims to assess the students’ knowledge of the texts included in the reference list as well as of the general frames explained during the lessons (for students who have attended the course). A good command of the basic elements of the region is expected. The active participation to the course is an element of evaluation. In-classroom presentations will also be an element of evaluation.
The examination consists of an interview (between 10 and 20 minutes) during which the student will expose parts of the textbooks and interact with the examiner on the topics of the course.

Further details:
The exam will be **oral only**.
Oral exam on the course content aimed at assessing the knowledge acquired through critical study of the texts included in the exam program and active participation in the activities proposed during the course (for attending students only). There will be no ongoing assessments.
The choice of an oral interview as the examination method is consistent with the objectives of the course, as it allows, thanks to a communicative dialogue situation, interaction with the student to assess their critical understanding of the course topics and the connection between theory and practice. There will be no ongoing assessments.
Assessment will be based on the Dublin Descriptors: the level bands are as follows

1. Low Level (0-17/30): Unsatisfactory
   Knowledge and Understanding: The student demonstrates limited and fragmentary knowledge of the texts and topics covered, with misunderstandings of the texts proposed.
   Ability to apply knowledge: unable to verify general considerations on the authors/topics examined in the texts; able to summarize the contents of the texts presented only to a very limited extent, unable to contextualize and compare them.
   Autonomy of judgment: lacks critical thinking and autonomy of judgment; depends exclusively on information provided by the instructor or the critical bibliography.
   Communication Skills: oral expression is halting, approximate, and stereotyped; shows poor command of the specific language of the discipline.
   Learning Skills: has limited ability to rework knowledge and relate it to their own experience; shows little awareness of the usefulness of the discipline.
2. Average Level (18-24/30): Sufficient - Good
   Knowledge and Understanding: The student demonstrates a general knowledge of the texts and topics covered, albeit with some gaps, inaccuracies on specific but non-essential aspects, or some misunderstandings in the analysis of the texts.
   Ability to Apply Knowledge: is able, albeit with some difficulty, to verify in the texts the general considerations on the authors/topics examined, when prompted by the teachers; is able to summarize the texts presented in a reasonable manner, interpret them, contextualize them, and compare them correctly.
   Autonomy of Judgment: shows partial autonomy in formulating critical evaluations, often limited to repeating the opinions of others.
   Communication skills: expresses themselves clearly and with sufficient precision, demonstrating a reasonable command of the specific language of the discipline. Is aware of the need to use different linguistic registers depending on the communicative situation.
   Learning skills: demonstrates a reasonable ability to rework knowledge and link it to their own experience; has a partial awareness of the usefulness of the discipline.
3. High Level (25-30/30): Distinguished - Excellent
   Knowledge and Understanding: The student demonstrates in-depth and solid knowledge of the texts and topics covered; understands and analyzes the proposed texts without hesitation.

Office hours

To be decided through email.

Programme validity

Two years

Course tutors and assistants

Sustainable Development Goals

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | GENDER EQUALITY | DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS