

HH3090 Special Topics in History II: Southeast Asian Environmental History

Nanyang Technological University

Semester 2, AY2023/24

Draft – December 11, 2023

1 Course Details

Academic units: 3

Meeting time: Tuesdays, 9:30am–12:20pm

Venue: LHS-TR+51 (LHS-02-05, at level 2 of the Hive)

Instructor: Dr Lin (please call me Dr Lin. I am not a professor.)

Email: [TBA](#)

Office hours: by appointment

2 Course Description

We study the history of the environment of Southeast Asia. We will study how “nature” and “the environment” or rather, and more accurately, how *cognate concepts* in Southeast Asian societies are understood in the regions throughout history. We will study how these cognate concepts are perceived through the philosophy and worldview of the region and how environmental processes have intertwined with socio-economic, cultural, and political processes. Some of the major themes include forest, agriculture, climate, colonialism, war, industrialism, and environmentalism. By the end of the course, we would have gained a deeper appreciation for the climate and terrain of the two regions, how humans have maintained livelihoods there, and how the environment has played a role in human history.

3 Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to

1. Appreciate the role of the environment in history;
2. Understand how nature and the environment are understood in Southeast Asia, in contrast to Western understanding;
3. Understand environmental characteristics of the region;
4. Articulate the major environmental processes and events in the history of the region;
5. Understand how the environment and human society have interacted in the history of Southeast Asia.

In addition, this course provides you with opportunities to develop your critical reading skills, conduct independent learning, analyse historical data, and articulate your findings to an audience.

4 Assessment

Component	Course LO Tested	Weighting	Due
1. In-Class Participation	1, 2, 3, 4	10%	NA
Reading Responses	1, 2, 3	12%	Every Monday 2359
2. Individual Presentation (15 minutes)	1, 2, 3	23%	Scheduled accordingly
3. Annotated bibliography	1, 2, 3, 4	15%	TBA
4. Research Paper	1, 2, 3, 4	40%	TBA
		100%	

4.1 In-Class Participation (10%)

In-class participation is an important component of the course. Since you would have read the readings and responded to them, discussing the readings and topics will not be difficult. Your in-class participation grades will be determined by your attendance, punctuality, and your contribution to classroom discussion. If you have to miss a class for any reason, you are to notify me in advance by email. Please note that unexcused and repeated absences will negatively affect your grade.

4.2 Eight Weekly Reading Response (12%, 1.5% each)

Work Flow for a typical teaching week

1. Read the readings
2. Submit your reading response in NTULearn, **by the day before (Tuesday) at 2359**. The reading response consists of 2 parts:
 - a. Share your views *on each reading* in *at least* two to three sentences. You are welcome to write more
 - b. Share *at least* one question which you would like the class to discuss. You are welcome to pose more questions.
3. Class: 9:30am–10:20am – lecture by the instructor
4. Class: 10:30am–11:20am – A group presentation
5. Class: 11:30am–12:20am – primary source analysis and discussion based on the reading, reading responses, lecture, and group presentations.

More details regarding reading responses:

- a. Each week's reading response will be worth 1.5 marks. To relieve your stress and facilitate my grading, you will be awarded either 1.5 marks if your response meet the requirement above or zero marks if you do not submit at all or if your responses fall short of the requirements.
- b. Late submissions will not be considered for the sake of fairness.
- c. There will be more than eight opportunities for you to submit eight responses.
- d. If I do not raise your questions in class for discussion, do not panic. It is not a reflection on the "correctness" of your questions. Refer to point a above.

4.3 Presentation (23%)

Each student will pick a topic ahead of time from the "Presentation Topics & Recommended Readings" section of the syllabus and conduct further research. This component gives you the opportunity to research a topic and helps expand the topics covered in this course.

You are expected to introduce and analyse the recommended reading by conducting research on the topic, including reading reviews of it if it is extracts of a book, and compare it to the required readings.

You will present your findings in a **15-minute presentation**. Slides are compulsory. There will be a combined Q&A session after all presentations.

The recommended readings available for presentation are not exhaustive. Feel free to seek out readings. Please do not be disappointed when your desired reading is not available by presentation.

4.4 Annotated Bibliography (15%) **Due date TBA**

Each student should hand in one piece of annotated bibliography in preparation for the final research paper. This should be submitted in a word document to Turnitin by 2359pm on March 7 (Week 8 after Recess Week).

The annotated bibliography contains a mix of secondary and primary sources.

- i. A **250-word abstract** of the project.
- ii. A list of **4 secondary sources** that you have read thus far (approximately 50 words per source). Please include 1-2 sentences on each source outlining its scope and why it is useful for your research paper.
- iii. A list of **2 primary sources with analysis** (300-400 words per source).
 - a) Contextualize: Provide an analysis of the author and audience of the text. What background does the author come from? Who does the text address? What is the viewpoint or agenda of the author?
 - b) Connect: Analyze the primary sources in light of your research question.
 - c) I would recommend against significant quotes from the source, as this will not allow you enough space to analyze it.

4.5 Research Paper (40%) **Due date TBA**

Each student is expected to hand in one piece of written work. This is a research essay that contains 2,500 to 3,500 words (excluding footnotes and bibliography). This should be submitted in a word document to Turnitin by 2359 on Tuesday, May 2.

The paper must

1. Use primary sources
2. Engage with theories we have covered during the course.
3. Engage with secondary sources (articles, books, including those encountered in class).

Please refer to the **rubric**.

5 Plagiarism Policy

All assignments should be original work, consistent with the university's anti-plagiarism rules. Papers will be evaluated on rigour and depth of research, clarity and concision of writing, proper footnoting, and list of works cited using Chicago referencing style.

6 Policy on Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

The use of any form of generative Artificial Intelligence such as ChatGPT for any course assessment is strictly not allowed.

Generative AI has its place in certain parts of our life. I am asking that you do not use it while we develop a critical understanding of and empathy for the course topics together.

7 Late Policy

For each day for which an assignment is late, **15%** will be deducted from the overall marks. For example, an assignment that is late by a day will be graded out of 85%, while one that is late by two days will be graded out of 70%. In the event of extenuating circumstances, please refer to the university's leave policy for undergraduates.

8 Concerning the Use of Medical Certificates

Medical Certificates (MCs) are not "get out of jail free" cards. The presentation of a medical certificate does not automatically excuse an absence or late work. Depending on circumstances, I will usually ask you to complete additional work to make up for your absence or late work.

9 Course Schedule and Readings

Readings that are intended for presentations are marked with an asterisk (*).

Week 1 – Course Overview: What is environmental history and what is environmental history of Southeast Asia?

Worster, Donald. 1988. “Doing Environmental History.” In *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History*, edited by Donald Worster, 289–307. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Boomgaard, Peter. 2016. “Environmental Histories of Southeast Asia.” In *Routledge Handbook of the Environment in Southeast Asia*, edited by Philip Hirsch. Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9781315474892.ch3.

Donald Worster discusses definition of environmental history
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJfwVXWP6X4&t=6s&ab_channel=KTHEnvironmentalHumanitiesLaboratory

Supplementary:

Voss, James F., and Jennifer Wiley. 2006. “Expertise in History.” In *The Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance*, edited by K. Anders Ericsson, Neil Charness, Paul J. Feltovich, and Robert R. Hoffman, 569–584. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Glover, Ian, and Peter S. Bellwood, eds. 2004. *Southeast Asia: From Prehistory to History*. London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon.
 Library Outpost reserves: DS523.S727

Week 2 – Characteristics of Southeast Asian Environment

Kathirithamby-Wells, Jeya. 1995. “Socio-Political Structures and the Southeast Asian Ecosystem: An Historical Perspective up to the Mid-Nineteenth Century.” In *Asian Perceptions of Nature: A Critical Approach*, edited by Ole Bruun and Arne Kalland. Richmond, Surrey: Routledge.

Andaya, Barbara Watson. 2017. “Seas, Oceans and Cosmologies in Southeast Asia.” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 48 (3): 349–371.

Supplementary

Sather, Clifford. 2006. “Sea Nomads and Rainforest Hunter-Gatherers: Foraging Adaptations in the Indo-Malaysian Archipelago.” In *The Austronesians: Historical and Comparative Perspective*, edited by Peter Bellwood, James J. Fox, and Darrell Tryon, 245–285. Canberra: ANU E Press.

Århem, Kaj. 2016. "Southeast Asian Animism: A Dialogue with Amerindian Perspectivism." In *Animism in Southeast Asia*, edited by Kaj Århem and Guido Sprenger. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Week 3 – Colonial Perspectives on Southeast Asia Environment

Savage, Victor R. 2021. *Lion City Narratives*. Singapore: World Scientific.
<https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/abs/10.1142/12068>.

Selection

Cantley, Nathaniel. 1883. *Report on the Forests of the Straits Settlements*. Singapore: Singapore and Straits Printing Office.
 Section on Singapore: pages 75–86 of 325

Supplementary

Kathirithamby-Wells, Jeyamalar. 2009. "Peninsular Malaysia in the Context of Natural History and Colonial Science." *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 11: 337–374.

Lees, Lynn Hollen. 2017. *Planting Empire, Cultivating Subjects: British Malaya, 1786–1941*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/planting-empire-cultivating-subjects/445DFDD5032A5EBE776613FB6487C5A3>.

Williamson, Fiona. 2018. "Malaya's greatest menace? Slow-onset disaster and the muddy politics of British Malaya, c.1900–50." *International Review of Environmental History* 4 (2): 45–68.

Week 4 Climate & Environmental Determinism

Victor Lieberman and Brendan Buckley, "The Impact of Climate on Southeast Asia circa 950–1820," *Modern Asian Studies* 46:5, (2012), pp. 1049–1096.

Week 5 Singapore & Urban Environmental History

Corlett, Richard T. 1992. "The Ecological Transformation of Singapore, 1819–1990." *Journal of Biogeography* 19 (4): 411–420. doi: 10.2307/2845569.

Rajaratnam, S. 1972. *Singapore: Global City*. Singapore: Singapore Ministry of Culture. <http://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/speeches/record-details/fd2918de-3270-11e4-859c-0050568939ad>.

Grundy-Warr, Carl, and Victor R. Savage. 2016. "Singapore: Sustaining A Global City-State and the Challenges of Environmental Governance in the Twenty-First Century." In *Routledge Handbook of the Environment in Southeast Asia*, edited by Philip Hirsch, 448–469. Routledge.

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315474892.ch27>.
doi: 10.4324/9781315474892.ch27.

Supplementary

A video featuring David Tan, a genetics researcher in Singapore who collects bird carcasses on the side.

<https://www.facebook.com/todayonline/videos/2459027940983468/>

Schott, Dieter. 2004. "Urban Environmental History: What Lessons are There to be Learnt?" *Boreal Environment Research* 9: 519–528.

Neo, Harvey, and Victor R. Savage. 2002. "Shades of Green, Fields of Gold: Representations, discourse and the politics of golf in Singapore." *Landscape Research* 27 (4): 397–411. doi: 10.1080/0142639022000023952.

Barnard, Timothy P. 2016. *Nature's Colony: Empire, Nation and Environment in the Singapore Botanic Gardens*. Singapore: NUS Press.

Neo, Harvey. 2007. "Challenging the Developmental State: Nature Conservation in Singapore." *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 48 (2): 186–199. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8373.2007.00340.x.

Week 6 – Forests

Reid, Anthony. 1995. "Humans and Forests in Pre-colonial Southeast Asia." *Environment and History* 1 (1): 93-110. doi: 10.3197/096734095779522717.

Peluso, Nancy Lee. 1994. *Rich forests, poor people: resource control and resistance in Java*. Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 27-43; 161-200.

Week 7 – Agriculture

Henley, David. 2011. "Swidden Farming as an Agent of Environmental Change: Ecological Myth and Historical Reality in Indonesia." *Environment and History* 17 (4): 525-554. doi: 10.3197/096734011X13150366551535.

Dove, Michael. 2015. "The View of Swidden Agriculture, by Early Naturalists Linnaeus and Wallace." In *Shifting Cultivation and Environmental Change: Indigenous People, Agriculture and Forest Conservation*, edited by Malcolm Cairns, 3-25. Abingdon, Oxon: Earthscan.

Week 8 – Plantations

Robins, Jonathan. 2020. "Shallow roots: The early oil palm industry in Southeast Asia, 1848-1940." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 51 (4): 538-560. doi: 10.1017/S0022463420000697.

Aso, Michitake. 2019. "Rubber and the making of Vietnam: an ecological history, 1897-1975." In. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
<https://doi.org/10.5149/northcarolina/9781469637150.001.0001>.
 Ch 4 and 5.

Week 9 – The Green Revolution

Hansen, Gary E. 1972. "Indonesia's Green Revolution: The Abandonment of a Non-Market Strategy toward Change." *Asian Survey* 12 (11): 932-946. doi: 10.2307/2643114. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2643114>.

Welker, Marina. 2012. "The Green Revolution's ghost: Unruly subjects of participatory development in rural Indonesia." *American Ethnologist* 39 (2): 389-406. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23250829>.

Prakash, Kumar, Lorek Timothy, C. Olsson Tore, Sackley Nicole, Schmalzer Sigrid, and Laveaga Gabriela Soto. 2017. "Roundtable: New Narratives of the Green Revolution." *Agricultural History* 91 (3): 397-422. doi: 10.3098/ah.2017.091.3.397. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3098/ah.2017.091.3.397>.

Davidson, Jamie S. 2018. "Then and Now: Campaigns to Achieve Rice Self-Sufficiency in Indonesia." *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 174 (2/3): 188-215. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26455391>.

Week 9 – Animals and Wildlife

Minarchek, Matthew. "Plantations, Peddlers, and Nature Protection: The Transnational Origins of Indonesia's Orangutan Crisis, 1910-1930." *TRaNS: Trans -Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 6 (1): 101-129. doi: 10.1017/trn.2017.18.

Parreñas, Juno Salazar. 2018. *Decolonizing Extinction: The Work of Care in Orangutan Rehabilitation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Ch 6 and 7.

Supplementary

Powell, Miles Alexander. 2016. "People in Peril, Environments at Risk: Coolies, Tigers, and Colonial Singapore's Ecology of Poverty." *Environment and History* 22 (3): 455-482. doi: 10.3197/096734016X14661540219393. <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/whp/eh/2016/00000022/00000003/art00007>

Week 10 – Water and Irrigation

Biggs, David A. 2010. *Quagmire: Nation-Building and Nature in the Mekong Delta*. Seattle: University of Washington Press. Ch 1 & 2.

Eyler, Brian. 2019. *Last Days of the Mighty Mekong*. London, UK: Zed Books. Ch 7

Week 11 – Indigenous Perspectives

Zakaria, Faizah. 2023. *The Camphor Tree and the Elephant: Religion and Ecological Change in Maritime Southeast Asia*. Seattle: University of Washington Press. Selection.

Week 12 – Volcanic Eruptions

Verbeek, R. D. M. 1884. “The Krakatoa Eruption.” *Nature* 30 (757): 10-15. doi: 10.1038/030010a0. <https://doi.org/10.1038/030010a0>.

Wood, Gillen D'Arcy. 2015. *Tambora: The Eruption that Changed the World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Selection.

Week 13 – Review