

FALL 2011

**AGRARIAN SOCIETIES
CULTURE, POWER, HISTORY, AND DEVELOPMENT**

Anthropology 541a
Forestry and Environmental Studies 80054a
History 965a
Political Science 779a

Instructors:

Michael McGovern, Anthropology
James Scott, Political Science
K. Sivaramakrishnan, Anthropology

Meetings: Thursdays, 1:30–3:10 pm

Discussions: Thursdays, 3:30–5:20 pm

This seminar presents a multi-disciplinary perspective on the ancient and modern transformation of the countryside of the world. The domestication of fire, plants and animals, the rise of the state form, the rise of a capitalist mode of production as the engine of a world economy, the emergence of the contentious international polity of nation-states, and the propagation of rationalizing religions and standardizing education are three distinct yet intersecting processes in the modern transformation of the world since the 1500s. These processes have not been inevitable, or irreversible, or complete. However, they have been compelling, in so far as they have come to frame both our acceptance of and resistance to the modern order in which we find ourselves.

"Agrarian Studies" is a rubric for the loosely-bounded, interdisciplinary exploration of the initial modernization of the European countryside and the subsequent engagement and ongoing incorporation of the countryside of Asia, Africa, and the Americas into this modern order. At its most precocious, it tries to comprehend the intrusive thrusts of nation-state formation, capitalist production, and the rationalization of belief into the most distant agrarian regions of the world. At its most instructive, it insists that people everywhere have confronted those forces with their particular histories and distinctive, local configurations of environment, society, and culture. Everywhere, the encounters of old and new ways of viewing the world and organizing activities have been fitful and frightful, always metamorphic, but never uniform. Animating agrarian studies has been the concern to demonstrate the varied ways in which farmers have shared in the making of the modern world that has in turn transformed their lives.

We intend this to be an introductory seminar. That is, we assume you may be ignorant of much of the basic literature. We also assume that you work hard and learn fast. Although the varying backgrounds of students and faculty require us to be somewhat eclectic, we hope that the seminar will prove foundational in an interdisciplinary sense for subsequent work on agrarian issues in any discipline. We encourage you, in your writing and discussion, to make vigorous efforts to be understood across disciplinary boundaries.

Seminar meetings combine lectures and discussions. We expect regular attendance; please notify us in advance if you are unable to come to a session. We regard participation in discussions to be a gauge of students' completion and comprehension of the assigned readings. We will evaluate your performance in the seminar on the basis of this participation and on the quality and timeliness of the writing assignments.

Each student will choose readings from three meetings and write short responses of roughly 500 words evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the reading in the light of lectures and discussions. At least two of the short response papers should be submitted before October 31.

Each student will lead the discussion in class twice during the semester. This will involve presenting the reading and posing a couple of questions to initiate the discussion. The questions should be posted to the Classes V2 Server the night before the class discussion. In class, the designated discussion leaders should each expect to speak for 10-12 minutes.

Each student will write a final research paper or a research proposal of no more than 5,000 words. An outline for the essay or proposal should be discussed with one of the course instructors before the eighth seminar meeting on October 13th. Each student will have two minutes to state the title and main question of the proposed essay in class on October 13, 2011. The final paper will be due at 5 pm on Thursday, December 15th — a paper version in the Agrarian Studies office (room 204 at 204 Prospect Street) and electronically on the Classes V2 server.

Grades will be determined as follows: 10% for each short response; 10% for each discussion leadership; 50% for the final essay.

All books are available for purchase at The Yale Bookstore and are also on reserve in the Bass Library. All other materials — book chapters, articles, documents — will be available as electronic reserves through the Bass Library and/or on the Resources section of the class site on Classes V2 Server.

September 1

Lecture: Origins of Agriculture (J.S.)

September 8

Lecture: Origins of Agriculture and the State (J.S.)

Reading: Martin Jones. 2007 *Feast: Why Humans Share Food*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

September 15

Lecture: **Colonialism and Agriculture** (K.S.)

Reading: David Ludden 1999, *An Agrarian History of South Asia*, Cambridge U Press

September 22

Lecture: **Colonial and Postcolonial Nature** (M.M)

Reading: James Fairhead and Melissa Leach 1996 *Misreading the African Landscape: Society and Ecology in a Forest-Savanna Mosaic*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

September 29

Lecture: **Rural Development** (K.S.)

David Mosse 2004, *Cultivating Development*, Pluto Press

October 6

Lecture: **Production and Consumption Interlinked** (M.M.)

S. Mintz 1985 *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Penguin Books.

October 13

Lecture: **Commodities and Agriculture** (K.S.)

Catherine Zeigler 2007, *Favored Flowers*, Duke U Press

[shorter lecture, each student very briefly introduces their proposed final essay for the class]

October 20

Lecture: **Resistance and Banditry** (J.S.)

Eric Hobsbawn, 1965. *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movements in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. New York: Norton.

October 27

Lecture: **Ecology, Society and Insurgency** (M.M.)

Paul Richards 1996 *Fighting for the Rainforest* Oxford: James Currey.

November 3

Lecture: **Ideas of Nature** (K.S.)

Michael Bell 2004, *Farming for us All*, Penn State U Press

November 10

Lecture: **Subsistence, Land Tenure, and Revolution** (J.S.)

John Womack. 1968. *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution*. New York: Vintage.

E.P. Thompson. 1971. The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century. *Past and Present* 60: 76-136.

November 17

Lecture: **Apparently Irrational Beliefs** [M.M.]

Harry West 2005 *Kupilikula: Governance and the Invisible Realm in Mozambique*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

December 2

Lecture: **Industrial Agriculture, Industrial Food** (J.S.)

Timothy Pachirat, 2011. *Every Twelve Seconds*. New Haven: Yale University Press

(brief lecture with time for student feed back on readings, other aspects of the course, before we have the final section of the term)