

FALL 2012

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

Anthropology 541a
Forestry and Environmental Studies 80054a
History 965a

Instructors:
Peter C. Perdue, History
James Scott, Political Science
K. Sivaramakrishnan,
Anthropology

Political Science 779a

Meetings: Thursdays, 1:30-3:10 pm
10 Sachem Street
Room 105

Discussions: Thursdays, 3:30-5:20 pm
10 Sachem Street
Rooms 212 and 307

This seminar presents a multi-disciplinary perspective on the modern transformation of the countryside of the world. The rise of a capitalist mode of production as the engine of a world economy, the emergence of a contentious international polity of nationstates, 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.

"Peasant studies" is a rubric for the looselybounded, 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 nationstate 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 peasant studies has been the concern to demonstrate the varied ways in which agriculturalists 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 six 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 three of the short response papers should be submitted before October 31. In each discussion section, two participants will be chosen at random to present an appreciation/critique of the readings orally. We understand that you have other demands on your time and in light of this you may excuse yourself from being selected twice (and only twice) during the term by notifying the instructors early in the evening before the class.

The students selected will lead the discussion; this will involve an appreciation and critique of the reading and posing a couple of questions to initiate the discussion. In class, the designated discussion leaders should each expect to speak for 10-12 minutes.

Each student will write a final research paper of no more than 5,000 words. An outline for the essay should be discussed with one of the course instructors before the eighth seminar meeting on October 22nd. The final paper will be due at 5 pm on December 14th – 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: 5% 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.

Books to order

Bell, Michael. *Farming for Us All : Practical Agriculture & the Cultivation of Sustainability*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004. ISBN: 0271023872 (pbk. alk. paper)

Clastres, Pierre, *Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology*. New York: Zone, 1987.

Elvin, Mark. *The Retreat of the Elephants: An Environmental History of China*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004. ISBN: [9780300119930](#)

Hobsbawm, Eric, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. New York: Norton, 1959

Iqbal, Iftexhar, *The Bengal Delta : ecology, state and social change, 1840-1943*. Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2010 [\$68 hbk; \$31 if ordered from India]

Li, Tania, *The will to improve: governmentality, development, and the practice of politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. ISBN 0822340089,0822340275 (pbk) also [Online book](#)

Marks, Robert B. *China: Its Environment and History*. Lanham Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012. [345 p.]

Netz, Reviel. *Barbed wire: an ecology of modernity*, Middletown, CT : Wesleyan University Press, 2004 ISBN 0819567191

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

Schoppa, Keith. *Song Full of Tears: Nine Centuries of Chinese Life around Xiang Lake*: Perseus Publishing, 2002.

Scott, James C., *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale Press, 2008. (excerpts) also online

West, Paige. *From modern production to imagined primitive: the social world of coffee from Papua New Guinea*. Durham, NC : Duke University Press, 2012. ISBN: 0822351501 (pbk) [also Online book](#)

Wolf, Eric, *Peasant Wars of the 20th Century*. New York: Harper, 1973.

Yan Yunxiang. *Private Life under Socialism: Love, Intimacy, and Family Change in a Chinese Village, 1949-1999*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003.

August 30

Week One

Introduction to the Course

Introduction of instructors; student introductions

The Origins of Agriculture and States: Four Domestications: Fire, Plants, Animals and...US

Brief lecture by James Scott

Readings: None

September 6

Week Two

Colonialism and Agriculture, 19-20th centuries

Lecture by Sivaramakrishnan (Shivi)

Readings: Iftekhar Iqbal, *The Bengal Delta: ecology, state and social change, 1840-1943*

September 13

Week Three

China: Neolithic settlement to early states; North China ecology

Lecture by Peter C. Perdue

Readings: Elvin, Mark. *The Retreat of the Elephants: An Environmental History of China*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004

Marks, Robert B. *China: Its Environment and History*. Lanham Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012

September 20

Week Four

Property: Its Definition and Enforcement

Lecture by James Scott

Readings: Netz, Reviel. *Barbed wire: an ecology of modernity*, Middletown, CT. Wesleyan University Press

September 27

Week Five

Lecture by Peter C. Perdue

Nomadic Pastoralism; Water and War in North China [Song Liao]

Readings: Marks; Lattimore [excerpts]; Zhang Ling. "Changing with the Yellow River: An Environmental History of Hebei, 1048–1128." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 69.1 (2009): 1–36.

Oct. 4

Week Six

Rural development

Lecture by Sivaramakrishnan

Readings: Li, Tania, *The will to improve: governmentality, development, and the practice of politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007

Oct. 11

Week Seven

Agrarian Rebellion and Revolution

Lecture by James Scott

Readings: Hobsbawm, Eric, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. New York: Norton, 1959

Wolf, Eric, *Peasant Wars of the 20th Century*. New York: Harper, 1973.

October 18

Week Eight

Lower Yangzi; the hill country of China; tea and exports

Lecture by Peter C. Perdue

Readings: Schoppa, Keith. *Song Full of Tears: Nine Centuries of Chinese Life around Xiang Lake*: Perseus Publishing, 2002

Perdue, Peter C. review article on Joachim Radkau, *Nature and Power*, *Social Science History*, forthcoming.

October 25 Fall Recess

Nov. 1

Week Nine

Commodities and agriculture

Lecture by Sivaramakrishnan

Readings: West. Paige, *From modern production to imagined primitive: : The Social World of Coffee Production in Papua New Guinea*, Duke University Press, 2011

Nov. 8

Week Ten

Non-state spaces: swamps, marshes, mountains, deserts.

Lecture by James Scott

Readings: Scott, James C., *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale Press, 2008. (excerpts)

Clastres, Pierre, *Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology*. New York: Zone, 1987.

Nov. 15

Week Eleven

The End of Rural China?... Urbanization and Village Life

Lecture by Peter Perdue

Readings: Yan Yunxiang, *Private Life under Socialism: Love, Intimacy, and Family Change in a Chinese Village, 1949-1999*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2003.

Leslie T. Chang, *Factory Girls: From Village to City in a Changing China*. New York: Spiegel and Grau, 2008 (excerpts)

Nov. 22 Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 29

Week Twelve

Organic agriculture

Lecture by Sivaramakrishnan

Reading: Bell, Michael, *Farming for Us All: Practical Agriculture & the Cultivation of Sustainability*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004

Dec. 6 Week Thirteen

Wrapup session; Student papers

Reading: Pachirat, Timothy, *Every Twelve Seconds*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.