

Anthropology 541a  
History 765a  
Political Science 779a  
F&ES 730a

Instructors: Michael R. Dove  
Paul Freedman  
Robert W. Harms  
James C. Scott

Mondays, 1:30-5:20  
8 Prospect Place, Room 119

**FALL 2003**

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

This seminar presents a multidisciplinary 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 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, nor irreversible, nor 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 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 peasant studies has been the concern to demonstrate the varied ways in which peasants 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.

Beginning in the third week, designated students will be asked to take formal responsibility for organizing the discussion of the readings. Such responsibility will be shared as equitably as possible. As

far as writing assignments are concerned, there are two. First, students are required to submit short (three- page) essays on **THREE** weekly themes/readings of their choice. They may want to link these essays to themes for which they have some responsibility in organizing the discussion. A second paper is due at the end of the course. This may be either a research paper on a topic related to the course concerns or a theoretical discussion or synthesis of some of the analytical readings we have covered. In either case, it should be negotiated with one of the instructors.

All assigned readings for the seminar are on reserve at the Social Science or Cross Campus Libraries. Copies of all assigned books are available for purchase at Book Haven. In addition, we have placed a collection of all assigned articles on file at the office of the Program on Agrarian Studies Office (room 201 at 89 Trumbull Street). Students may choose to have a copy of this file made for their purchase and use.



October 6

Week 5

Paul Freedman, Robert Harms

**Agrarian Change and the *Longue Durée***

Readings: Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie. 1974. *The Peasants of Languedoc*, translated by John Day. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. **(Book Haven)**

Robert Brenner. 1985. "Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe,"

AND

Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie. 1985. "A Reply to Robert Brenner," in *The Brenner Debate: Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe*, edited by T.H. Aston and C.H.E. Philpin. Cambridge University Press, pp. 10-63, 101-6. **(Reading Packet)**

October 13

Week 6

Michael Dove, Robert Harms, James Scott

**Colonialism, Labor, Cash-Cropping, and Resistance**

Readings: Allen Isaacman. 1996. *Cotton is the Mother of Poverty: Peasants, Work, and Rural Struggle in Colonial Mozambique, 1938-1961*. Portsmouth, NH: Heineman. **(Book Haven)**

Michael R. Dove. 1997. Political ecology of pepper in the 'Hikyat Banjar': The historiography of commodity production in a Bornean kingdom. In *Paper Landscapes: Explorations in the Environmental History of Indonesia*, edited by P. Boomgaard, et al. Leiden: Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal, Land-en Volkenkunde, pp. 341-77. **(Reading Packet)**

**Ecology Resources, Climate, and Landscape**

October 20

Week 7

Robert Harms, James Scott

**Resources, Community, and Migration**

Readings: Robert Harms. 1987. *Games Against Nature: An Eco-Cultural History of the Nunu of Equatorial Africa*. Cambridge University Press. **(Book Haven)**

Hermann Rebel. 2001. "Dark events and lynching scenes in the collective memory: A dispossession narrative about Austria's descent into the Holocaust." In *Agrarian Studies: Synthetic Work at the Cutting Edge*, edited by James C. Scott and Nina Bhatt. New Haven: Yale University Press. Pp. 44-65. **(Reading Packet)**

October 27

Week 8

Robert Harms, Michael Dove

**Climate and Landscape: Punctuated *Longue Durée***

Readings: Mike Davis. 2001. *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World*. Verso Press. Selected chapters to be announced. **(Book Haven)**

James Fairhead and Melissa Leach. 1996. *Misreading the African Landscape: Society and Ecology in a Forest-Savanna Mosaic*. Cambridge University Press. **(Book Haven)**

November 3

Week 9

James Scott

### **Plants, Food, Taste, Diet, Health**

Readings: Michael Pollan. 2001. *The Botany of Desire: A Plant's Eye View of the World*. Random House. **(Book Haven)**

Jan Douwe van der Ploeg. 1993. "Potatoes and Knowledge." In *Anthropological Critique of Development*, edited by Mark Hobart. London: Routledge. Pp. 177-234. **(Reading Packet)**

Jeffrey Steingarten. 1998. *The Man Who Ate Everything*. New York: Vintage Books. "Ripeness is All," pp. 74-88; "Vegging Out," pp. 134-43; "Salad the Silent Killer," "Salt," "Murder My Sweet," and "A Fat of No Consequence," pp. 177-234. **(Reading Packet)**

John L. Hess and Karen Hess. 2000. *The Taste of America*. Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press. "Manicured Chickens," "The Green Revolution," pp. 283-328. **(Reading Packet)**

November 10

Week 10

Michael Dove

### **Depicting the Rural Poor in the American South**

Readings: James Agee and Walker Evans. 1966/1939. *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Three Tenant Families*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. "Forward," pp.xli-xliv; "Preamble," pp. 7-16; "Money," pp.115-21; "Shelter," pp.123-220; and "On the Porch," pp.221-53. **(Book Haven)**

Dale Maharidge and Michael Williamson. 1989. *And Their Children After Them: The Legacy of Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, James Agee, Walker Evans, and the Rise and Fall of Cotton in the South*. New York: Pantheon Books. "Maggie Louise," pp.i-v; Preface xv-xxiv; "King Cotton," 3-16; and "1936-1940," pp. 17-72. **(Reading Packet)**

November 17

Week 11

James Scott

### **Industrial Agriculture and Local Knowledge**

Readings: Deborah Fitzgerald. 2003. *Every Farm a Factory: The Industrial Ideal in American Agriculture*. Yale University Press. **(Book Haven)**

James Scott. 1998. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Ch. 8 "Taming Nature" and ch. 9 "Thin Simplifications/Practical Knowledge," pp. 262-341. **(Reading Packet)**

James Hightower. 1978. *Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times*. The original Hightower report, unexpurgated, of the Agribusiness Accountability Project on the Failure of the American Land Grant College Complexes Commission for Agribusiness

Responsibility. Cambridge: Schenkman. Pp. 1-142. **(Reading Packet)**

December 1

Week 12

Michael Dove, James Scott

**Development Discourse**

Readings: James Ferguson. 1994. *The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Minneapolis:University of Minnesota Press. Preface, pp. 1-80; 135-66; 194-226; 251-88. **(Book Haven)**