Anthropology 541a
History 765a
Political Science 779a
F&ES 80054A

Instructors: Amity Doolittle
Robert Harms
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Mondays, 1:30-5:20
Room A002
77 Prospect Street

Fall 2007

Agrarian Societies
Culture, Power, History, and Development
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 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.

"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 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 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 (3 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 Labyrinth. In addition, we have placed a collection of all assigned articles on file at the office of the Program on Agrarian Studies Office (room C220 at 89 Trumbull Street). Students may choose to have a copy of this file made for their purchase and use.
Course Syllabus

September 10  Week 1  Scott

Introduction

No Reading

September 17  Week 2  Doolittle

Shifting Cultivation


Anon. 1951. Colony of North Borneo: Report of the committee on shifting Cultivation. Sabah Archives KPP/TN1. *(Reading Packet)*

Anon. 1913. Shifting cultivation (ladang). Notes on forestry department and shifting cultivation in North Borneo. *(Reading Packet)*

Lecture:  Shifting Cultivation: Forest-Eaters, Primitive Environmentalists

September 24  Week 3  Harms

Chayanov – Household Peasant Economy


Lecture:  The Economic Basis of Peasant Societies
October 1  
Week 4  
Shannon-DiPietro

American Agriculture

Readings:  


Lecture:  
The Cultivators of the Earth and the Soil that Feeds Us

October 8  
Week 5  
Doolittle

Property Rights

Readings:  


Lecture:  
Property Rights: Social Relations Surrounding Access to and Ownership of Resources
October 15   Week 6   Scott

**Rebellion/Revolution**

**Readings:**  

**Lecture:**  
*The Sociology of Revolution: North and South Vietnam, Northern and Southern Mexico*

October 22   Week 7   Harms

**Social Change and the Longue Durée**

**Readings:**  

**Lecture:**  
*Social Change and the Longue Durée*

October 29   Week 8   Scott

**Crops**

**Readings:**  

**Lecture:**  
*Potatoes and Tomatoes*
November 5          Week 9         Harms

Colonial Agriculture


Lecture: Agriculture and Colonialism

November 12          Week 10         Viertel

The Sustainable Food Movement


Explore Websites for Slow Food USA and Slow Food International http://www.slowfoodusa.org
http://www.slowfood.com/

Lecture: From Soil Organic Matter to Eco-Gastronomy

November 26 Week 11 Doolittle, Harms, Scott

Conservation Heroes/Oral Histories


Visit: http://www.mountainvoices.org/ to explore oral histories

Lecture:

December 3 Week 12 Doolittle, Harms, Scott

Global Environmentalism/Development


Lecture: Parochialism Dressed up as Universalism