



UH 3500: Honors in Thailand

Honors Junior Interdisciplinary Seminar
Winter Break (January 1-14, 2018)

TENTATIVE SYLLABUS

Professor: Dr. Philip Phillips, Associate Dean and Professor of English
Office Hours: 1:00-4:30 PM, M-F / HONR 205A
Phone: (615) 898-2699
E-mail: philip.phillips@mtsu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Despite our global economy, Thailand remains one of the least known and understood Asian countries (especially compared to China, Korea, and Japan) for Americans. This short-term education-abroad program in Thailand will introduce honors students to some of the major cultural, historical, religious, literary, and artistic traditions of Thailand. Course readings and in-country educational experiences will emphasize: the rich history and economic development of Thailand; Thailand's place in the world as seen from both Eastern and Western perspectives; the centrality of Buddhism in Thai society and culture; American and European perceptions of and interactions with Thailand; Thai art and literature, both ancient and modern; current social and political issues in Thailand.

This course will provide students with the opportunity to experience some of the richness of Thailand and to develop an appreciation of its culture through readings and activities that will bring the country to life. In Chiang Mai, we will tour the old city, visit several major temples, and build on our knowledge of Buddhism from local monks by participating in the "Monkchat Program" at Wat Chedi Luang. Having read from Buddhist scriptures beforehand, students will be able to ask informed questions of the Buddhist monks, who, in turn, will have the opportunity to practice their English. Even minimal exposure to Thai art and culture reveals that elephants are significant and pervasive throughout Thailand. We will visit the Elephant Nature Park and learn about the modern-day condition of elephants and the good work underway to rescue and rehabilitate them. While in Chiang Mai, we will engage in a service project with the local Rotary Club to work with the children and families at the Mae Tao Clinic, which is dedicated to providing health services to thousands of Burmese along the Thailand-Myanmar border. Although Thailand was never colonized by a Western country, Bangkok was a destination for many interesting figures, such as the American entrepreneur and collector, Jim Thompson, and the British authors, Joseph Conrad and W. Somerset Maugham. We will visit the second ancient capital of Siam, Ayutthaya, and consider its cultural significance in relationship to Bangkok, the current capital of Thailand. Readings from *The Ramakien* (Thailand's national epic) and Promoj's *Four Reigns* will introduce students to the myths and history of Thailand and provide greater perspective on the Grand Palace, Was Arun, and many other sites. We will also consider Thailand's role in the Second World War and learn about the Bangkok-Rangoon railway and "Bridge on the River Kwai," whose construction by slave labor under the Japanese resulted in the deaths of many British, Dutch, and American POWs. The trip will conclude with an overnight stay on Koh Samet, an island with white-sand beaches, where as "academic" tourists we will consider the Thai beach culture and tourist economy of Thailand (as discussed

in *Sightseeing*) as well as contemporary issues related to the fishing industry (as discussed in *Fishermen Slaves*).

Students will chronicle their daily engagement with the places visited in a travel journal, participate in small-group activities, and write a post-trip reflective essay on their experience. The cities and sites themselves will serve as “texts” that we will study as we immerse ourselves in the literature, art, and culture of Thailand.

COURSE DETAILS

This signature honors education-abroad course will include pre-trip meetings followed by a two-week, full-immersion experience in Thailand. *Total instructional contact hours will easily exceed the minimum hours required for a three-credit-hour course.* Assignments will include readings, participation in all required meetings, quizzes/reflections, group activities, a travel journal, and a post-trip reflective essay.

This seminar fulfills the University Honors College requirement for junior interdisciplinary, upper-division coursework (UH 3500). With permission from the Department of Global Studies, the seminar will substitute for GS 3010: Field Experience and Study Abroad. As such, it will count as credit towards the interdisciplinary minor in Global Studies.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will develop an introductory knowledge and appreciation of Thai culture, history, religion, literature, and art based on assigned readings and engagement with sites in Thailand associated with those readings.
- Students will think and write critically and effectively about the readings, cultural experiences, and geographical places encountered.
- Students will develop skill in critical thinking and writing while following the conventions of an appropriate style manual, such as the *MLA Handbook* or *Chicago Manual of Style*.
- ***Students will use integrative thinking and reflection to demonstrate the ability to appreciate the interconnectedness of literary themes and conventions through the ages as well as to make connections across cultures, past and present, through education abroad and service learning experience. (MT Engage)***

REQUIRED PRIMARY TEXTS (Please read *Four Reigns* over the summer)

Boulle, Pierre. *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. Trans. Xan Fielding. London: Vintage Books, 2002. **ISBN 978-0-099-44502-9.**

Conrad, Joseph. *The Shadow-Line*. Ed. Jeremy Hawthorne. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. **ISBN 978-0-19-955556-7.**

Maugham, W. Somerset. *The Gentleman in the Parlour*. London: Vintage Books, 2001. **ISBN 978-0-099-28677.**

Pramoj, M.R. Kukrit. *Four Reigns*. Trans. Tulachandra. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Press, 1998. **ISBN 978-974-7100-66-2.**

ADDITIONAL READINGS (selections, provided as handouts)

- Aldous, Susan and Pornchai Sereemongkonpol. *Ladyboys: The Secret World of Thailand's Third Gender*. Bangkok: Maverick House, 2008.
- Lapcharoensap, Rattawut. *Sightseeing*. New York: Grove Press, 2009.
- Lopez, Donald S., ed. *Buddhist Scriptures*. New York: Penguin, 2004.
- Mendoza, Martha, et al. *Fishermen Slaves: Human Trafficking and the Seafood We Eat*. AP Editions. Miami: Mango Media, 2016.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1979.
- The Ramakien*, the national epic of Thailand.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Participation/Group Activities	20%
Reading Quizzes/Reflections	20%
Travel Journal	30%
Post-trip Reflective Essay	30%

- The grading scale is as follows: A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, and F.
- Students must submit all required assignments to earn a passing grade in this course.

Students will earn letter grades on all formal assignments, which include participation/group activities, reading quizzes/reflections, travel journals, and a post-trip reflective essay. Students are expected to participate actively in all required class activities and to be on time to every meeting.

The professor will discuss the formal requirements of all assignments during the first pre-trip class meeting.

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to attend all required class meetings and participate in all planned activities. If special circumstances prevent you from attending a class or an activity, please communicate early with the instructor to discuss the possibility of making up the work.

DEADLINES

Late assignments will receive a letter-grade reduction per day late. Students should communicate with the professor about special circumstances that might affect meeting deadlines.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Middle Tennessee State University takes a strong stance against academic misconduct. Academic Misconduct includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, and fabrication.

Academic Misconduct: Plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, or facilitating any such act. For purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:

(1) *Plagiarism:* The adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, statements, images, or works of another person as one's own without proper acknowledgement.

(2) *Cheating:* Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours.

(3) *Fabrication:* Unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

To be clear: going online and using information without proper citations, copying parts of other student's work, creating information for the purposes of making your paper seem more official, or anything involving taking someone else's work without proper attribution is academic misconduct. If you work together with other students on an assignment when it is not allowed, it is academic misconduct. If you have a question about an assignment, please come see me for clarification. All cases of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Affairs for violating the academic honesty requirements in the student handbook. They may also result in failure for the course. Remember – ignorance is NOT a defense.

Tentative Schedule

PRE-TRIP

- TBA Passport Day, University Honors College
- TBA MTSU Office of Education Abroad Pre-Departure Orientation
- TBA Honors Pre-Departure Meetings

THAILAND

- Days 1-2: Travel from Nashville to Chiang Mai (Amora Hotel)
- Day 3: **Chiang Mai**: Visit Old City and various temples in and around Chiang Mai; participate in “Monkchat Program” sponsored by Mahamakut Buddhist University, Lanna Campus, at What Chedi Luang; RELATED READINGS: *Buddhist Scriptures* (selections)
- Day 4: Day Trip to **Doi Pui**; visit Doi Suthep Temple and Blue Hmong Village; evening (optional): Muay Thai boxing class or The cooking class.
- Day 5: Full day trip to the **Elephant Nature Park** [focus on elephants in Thai history/culture and modern-day rescue efforts to protect elephants]
- Day 6: Participate in service project with **Chiang Mai International Rotary Club** (Burma Children Medical Fund and/or Mae Tao Clinic)
- Day 7: Fly to **Bangkok** (iResidence Silom Hotel); visit Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) and Chatuchak Weekend Market [focus on contemporary Thai art and culture]
- Day 8: Canal Boat Tour, Wat Arun, Grand Palace, and National Museum [focus on Thai history/contemporary culture]; RELATED READINGS: *Four Reigns* and *The Ramakien* (selections)
- Day 9: Full day trip to **Kanchanaburi** (Thailand-Burma Railway Center, Kanchanaburi War Cemetery, Death Railway) [focus on American, British, Dutch POW experiences under the Japanese in Thailand in WWII]; RELATED READING: *The Bridge on the River Kwai*
- Day 10: Visit Floating Market; tour Jim Thompson House and Museum; have “High Tea” at Oriental Hotel [focus on the silk trade in Thailand and Bangkok in British literature]; RELATED READINGS: *Orientalism*, *The Shadow-Line*, and *The Gentleman in the Parlour*
- Day 11: Day trip to **Ayutthaya** (UNESCO World Heritage Site); boat cruise around Ayutthaya [focus on Thai history/art/culture and Buddhism]; RELATED READING: *Four Reigns* and *The Ramakien* (selections)

Day 12: Bangkok to **Koh Samet** (with ferry to the island) [focus on contemporary Thai culture and literature]; RELATED READINGS: *Sightseeing* and/or *Fishermen Slaves*

Days 13: Travel from Koh Samet to **Bangkok** airport; depart for home

Day 14: Arrive in Nashville

POST-TRIP

TBA Submit completed travel journals and reflective essay

LAST UPDATED: April 26, 2017