

Department of Comparative Literature

COLT 379-Section 22038R
 Nationalism and Postcolonialism in
 Contemporary Southeast Asian Cinema
 Fall 2019
 THH 106
 2 PM-3:20 PM

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 and by appointment

Course Description

One of the aims of this course, *Nationalism and Postcolonialism in Contemporary Southeast Asian Cinema*, is to introduce students to the lesser known “national cinema” of such nations as Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam, which will enable us to test the relevance and accuracy of the concept of “national cinema” given the challenges created by international co-production and transnational and diasporic filmmaking practices. These cinemas’ multiple inscription in a global economy, a regional context --these nations are members of the Association of Southeast Asian nations (ASEAN)--and a local culture, further complicates our understanding of their emergence as a “national” cultural expression. The films selected both assert and undermine their cultural and national affiliation by making manifest the countervailing, dispersive forces of class, gender, sexual preferences, ethnicity, religion, and so on, rendering also more difficult our adherence to the homogenizing discourse of national cinema. We will discuss and analyze these complex articulations, without neglecting the material and historical conditions that allowed the development of such a cinema: colonialism, decolonization, independence, and postcoloniality. We will focus on the aesthetic dimension of filmmaking, foreign influences such as the French New Wave, Hollywood and Bollywood as well as East Asian cinemas. Topics covered also include: mapping the postcolonial city; the trauma and memory of the Khmer rouge genocide; the influence of the state in the promotion of an autochthonous cinema; the role of censorship; the privileged place accorded to art film and independent cinema by film critics; the taste-brokering function of international film festivals and their importance in canon formation and the constitution of a national cinema; the neglected significance of commercial popular cinema, video filmmaking, etc... The exposure to a much wider range of Southeast Asian film texts—documentary, art film, commercial cinema, videos, experimental film—the relevant readings, and your sustained analysis of these texts will help us redefine the contours of Southeast Asian cinema and contribute to a better understanding of emerging film traditions that are an integral part of global film culture.

Bibliography

- Baumgärtel, Tilman, Ed. *Southeast Asian Independent Cinema*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012.
- Ciecko, Anne Tereska. *Contemporary Asian Cinema*. Oxford: Berg, 2006. [CAC]
- Dissanayake, Wimal, Ed. *Colonialism and Nationalism in Asian Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. [CNAC]
- Funston, John, Ed. *Government and Politics in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2001. [GPSA]
- Gimenez, Jean-Pierre & Margirier, Gaëtan, Eds. *Southeast Asian Cinema/ Le Cinéma d'Asie du Sud-Est*. Lyon: Asiexpo Edition, 2012. [SAC]
- Hanan, David. *Film in South East Asia: Views from the Region*. Hanoi: SEAPAVAA, The Vietnam Film Institute, and The National Screen and Sound Archive of Australia, 2001. [FSEA]
- Ingawanij, May Adadol & McKay, Benjamin, Eds. *Glimpses of Freedom: Independent Cinema in Southeast Asia*. Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Publications/ Cornell University, 2012. [GF]
- Lacaba, Jose F., Ed. *The Films of ASEAN*. Quezon City: ASEAN-COCI, 2000. [FASEAN]
- Lim, David C. & Yamamoto, Hiroyuki, Eds. *Film in Contemporary Southeast Asia: Cultural Interpretation and Social Intervention*. London: Routledge, 2012. [FCSA]
- Quandt, James, Ed. *Apichatpong Weerasethakul*. Vienna: Synema, 2009. [AW]

Readings

Course Reader accessible on Blackboard

Screenings

All films will be screened outside the classroom, prior to class discussion. They will be made available in advance or held on reserve at Leavey Library.

Course Requirements

Because the course will be run as a seminar, students are expected to contribute frequently and imaginatively to the classroom discussion. Students are expected to keep up with the assigned readings. You will write 5 short response-papers to films on the program. 2 of these response-papers could be on more recent movies screened in town or made by directors that you find compelling and worthy of being included in our study of Southeast Asian cinema. There will be an in-class mid-term examination that will incorporate short answers/definitions and short essays on movies, directors, or topics that have been addressed in the readings and discussed in class. You are also expected to give a formal presentation, 10-15 minute-long, about a particular issue, a director, a film technique, etc...In lieu of a final exam, you will be asked to submit a final paper of 12-15 pages, on a topic of your choice (but after having conferred with me), due **Thursday, December 12, by 2 PM**.

Grading

Participation	10 %
Oral Presentation	10%
5 response papers (1-2 pages)	25% (5X 5%)
Midterm exam	25%
Final Paper (12-15 pages)	30%

Late & Unfinished Work – Students must complete all assignments in order to earn a grade in the course. Any material turned in late will be reduced one letter grade per calendar day late. Each presentation must be given on the day assigned.

Special Assistance - Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure that the letter is delivered as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday and can be reached at (213) 740-0776.

Academic Conduct-Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” <https://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus/part-b>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, and harassment are prohibited by the university. You are encouraged to report all incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity/Title IX Office <http://equity.usc.edu> and/or to the Department of Public Safety <http://dps.usc.edu>. This is important for the health and safety of the whole USC community. Faculty and staff must report any information regarding an incident to the Title IX Coordinator who will provide outreach and information to the affected party. The sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu> fully describes reporting options. Relationship and Sexual Violence Services <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp> provides 24/7 confidential support.

Support Systems

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute <http://ali.usc.edu>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs <http://dsp.usc.edu> provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information <http://emergency.usc.edu> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

CLASS SCHEDULE (tentative)

Week 1

August 27

INTRODUCTION

August 29

Thailand

Beyond Theories of Postcolonial Third Cinema and National allegories

Screen: *Bang Rajan: The Legend of the Village Warriors* (Dir. Thanit Jitnukul, 2000, 118 min)

Read:

Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?"

Wimal Dissanayake, "Nationhood, History, and Cinema: Reflections on the Asian Scene." In Dissanayake, Wimal, Ed. *Colonialism and Nationalism in Asian Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. ix-xxiv.

Dissanayake, Wimal. "Southeast Asian Cinema and the Public Sphere—Toward New Recognition"

Lim, David, C. L., "Introduction: Southeast Asian Film as Site of Cultural Interpretation and Social Intervention." In Lim, David C. & Yamamoto, Hiroyuki, Eds. *Film in Contemporary Southeast Asia: Cultural Interpretation and Social Intervention*. London: Routledge, 2012. Pp. 1-22.

Rithdee, Kong. "Thai Cinema: A Definition." Pps. 496-497.

Week 2

September 3

Thailand

Performing Sexuality

Screen: *The Iron Ladies* (Dir. Yongyoot Thongkongtoon, 2000 104 min)

Read:

Anchalee Chaiworaporn, "Thai Cinema since 1970" in *Film in Southeast Asia*. 141-162

John Funston, "Thailand / Reform Politics" from *Government and Politics in Southeast Asia*. 328-371.

Peter Jackson, "Offending Images: Gender and Sexual Minorities, and State Control of the Media in Thailand," in Russell H.K. Heng, Ed. *Media Fortunes, Changing Times: ASEAN States in Transition*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002. Pp. 202-230.

Graeme Storer, "Performing Sexual Identity: Naming and Resisting 'Gayness' in Modern Thailand." *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific* 2 (May 1999): 1-17.

September 5

Independent Thai Cinema

Screen: *Blissfully Yours* (Dir. Apichatpong Weerasethakul, 2002; 126 min)

Tropical Malady (Dir. Dir. Apichatpong Weerasethakul, 2004 118 min)

Read: Purnama, Ari, "Syndromes of Indirect Communication: A Functional Analysis of the Static Long-Take Technique in Apichatpong Weerasethakul's Feature Films."
Anderson, Benedict. "The Strange Story of A Strange Beast: Receptions in Thailand of Apichatpong Weerasethakul's Tropical Malady." In In James Quandt, Ed. *Apichatpong Weerasethakul*. Vienna: Synema, 2009. 158-177.

Week 3

September 10

Screen: *Uncle Boonmee Who Can't Recall his Past Lives* (Dir. Apichatpong Weerasethakul 2010; 113 min)

Read: Suter, Jacquelyn, "Apichatpong: Staging the Photo Session." *Asian Cinema* (2013) Vol. 24 No.1/ 51-67.

Apichatpong Weerasethakul/ Cannes 2010

September 12

Contemporary Thai Horror

Nang Nak (Dir. Nonzee Nimibutr, 1999; 100 min)

Furhmann, Arnika. "Nang Nak—Whost Wife: Desire, Embodiment, and Buddhist Melancholia in a Contemporary Thai Ghost Film." *Discourse* 31.3 (Fall 2009): 220-247.

Week 4

September 17

The Philippines

Queer Cinema

Screen: *Macho Dancer* (Dir. Lino Brocka, 1988; 136 min.)

Read:

Nick Deocampo, "Homosexuality as Dissent/ Cinema as Subversion: Articulating Gay Consciousness in the Philippines" from Gever, Martha & Greyson, John, & Parmar, Pratibha, Eds. *Queer Looks: Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Film and Video*. London: Routledge, 1993. [pp. 395-402]

John A. Lent, "Lino Brocka as Filmmaker, Dissident, and Constitutional Commissioner" from *Asian Cinema* Vol 8 No. 1 (1996): 71-82

Augustin Sotto, "Philippines / A Brief History of Philippine Cinema." from *Film in Southeast Asia*

Rolando B. Tolentino, "National Bodies and Sexualities" from *Philippine Studies* 48.1 (2000): 53-79.

September 19

Contemporary Philippine Cinema

Screen *Kinatay* (Dir. Brillante Mendoza, 2009; Online:

<http://movieonlinetop.blogspot.com/2014/04/kinatay-2009.html>

Ebert, Roger. "Cannes #4: What Were They Thinking Of?" (May 16, 2009).

<http://www.rogerebert.com/rogers-journal/cannes-4-what-were-they-thinking-of>

Vera, Noel. "Philippine Cinema: A Definition of Sorts." SAC. 363-369.

Tolentino, Rolando B. "Contemporary Philippine Cinema (1999-2011) and the Shawarma Fad." SAC 402-409.

Week 5**September 24****Singapore****Mapping Singapore**Screen:*Mee Pok Man* (Dir. Eric Khoo, 1995. 105 min)*12 Stories* (Dir. Eric Khoo, 1997)Read:

Esha Niyogi De, "The City between the Global State: Architecture and the People in Singapore's Gendered Imaginations" from *Trans-Status Subjects: Gender in the Globalization of South and Southeast Asia*. 189-210.

Robbie B. H. Goh, "Chronotopia: Colonial Memories, Landmark Sites, and Civic Cultures in the Postcolonial Asian City." In *Contours of Culture: Space and Social Difference in Singapore*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong UP, 2005. 13-52.

Anthony R. Guneratne, "The Urban and the Urbane: Modernization, Modernism and the Rebirth of Singaporean Cinema" from *Theorizing the Southeast Asian City as Text*. 159-190.

September 26**Singapore****Sexuality and Nationalism**Screen:*Yao jie huang hou [Bugis Street]* (Dir. Yon Fan, 1994, 101 min)Readings:

Nancy Duncan, "Renegotiating Gender and Sexuality in Public and Private Spaces" from *Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*. Routledge, 1996: 127-145. [BOOK MISSING IN USC LIBRARY]

Geraldine Heng and Janadas Devan, "State Fatherhood: The Politics of Nationalism, Sexuality, and Race in Singapore" from *Nationalisms and Sexualities*. Andrew Parker. Routledge, 1999. (pp. 343-364)

Jon Quah, "Singapore: Meritocratic City-State" from *Government and Politics in Southeast Asia*

Udhde, Jan and Yvonne Ng Uhde. "Singapore: Developments, Challenges, and Projections." CAC. 71-82.

Week 6**October 1****Indonesia****Mapping Jakarta**Screening:*Eliana Eliana* [also known as *Pesawat pertama*] Dir. Riri Riza, 2002 105 min.)Readings:

Misbach Yusa Biran, "The History of Indonesian Cinema at a Glance" from *Film in Southeast Asia*

Joanne Sharpe, "Eliana Eliana: Independent Cinema, Indonesian Cinema." Inside Indonesia 72 (October-December 2002)

James N. Rosenau and Diane Wildsmith, "Jakarta as a Site of Fragmegrative Tensions" from Postcolonial Urbanism: Southeast Asian Cities and Global Processes.

October 3

Screen: Arisan! [The Gathering] (Dir. Nia Dinata 2003 129 min)

Ca Bau-kan [A Courtesan] (Dir. Nia Dinata 2002 120 min)

Read: Interview with Nia Dinata: "I want the people of Indonesia to see a different point of view, whether they agree with it or not"

Sen, Krishna. "Indonesia: Screening a Nation in the Post-New Order." In Ciecko, Ed. Contemporary Asian Cinema. 96-107. [Ca Bau-kan [A Courtesan] (2002) 120 min. by Nia Dinata]

Week 7

October 8

Indonesia

Urban Space and Cinema

Screen:

Kuldesak (Dirs. Nan Triveni Achnas, Mira Lesmana, Rizal Mantovani, and Riri Riza, 1998 110 min)

Read:

Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Economy" from Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization (CR)

Karl Heider, "National Cinema, National Culture: The Indonesian Case" in Colonialism and Nationalism in Asian Cinema.

Katinka van Heeren, "Revolution of Hope: Independent films are young, free and radical" from Inside Indonesia 70 (April-June 2002).

October 10

Malaysia

Mapping Kuala Lumpur

Screen:

Snipers (Dir. James Lee, 2001)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHai0cFFLPA>

The Big Durian (Dir. Amir Muhammad, 2003; 73 min) [First Malaysian movie to screen at Sundance] [on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uT-kSfYuvEw>]

Read:

Goh Beng Lan, "Rethinking Modernity: State, Ethnicity, and Class in the Forging of a Modern Urban Malaysia" from Local Cultures and the 'New Asia': The State, Culture, and Capitalism in Southeast Asia (CR)

John Krich, "Free Spirits of Asian Cinema: Malaysia" from Far Eastern Economic Review (CR)

Baharudin Latif, "Malaysia / A Brief History of Malaysian Film" from Film in South East Asia. 163-193.

Van der heide, William. "Malaysia: Melodramatic Drive, Rural Discord, Urban Heartaches." In Ciecko, Ed. Contemporary Asian Cinema. 83-95.

Week 8

October 15

Dreamed Communities

Screen: *Mukhsin* (Dir. Yasmin Ahmad 2006 xxx min)

Sepet (Dir. Yasmin Ahmad 2004 xxx min).

Read: "Interview with Yasmin Ahmad: "I want you to forget about the race of the protagonists half an hour into the film." In Tilman Baumgärtel, Ed. *Southeast Asian Independent Cinema*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012: 245-252.

Sepet (2004 xxx min). Yasmin Ahmad

McKay, Benjamin. "Auteur-ing Malaysia: Yasmin Ahmad and Dreamed Communities." [GF] 106-119.

FALL RECESS October 17-18

Week 9

October 22

Midterm Exam

October 24

Vietnam

The Country (vs the City)

Screen:

Nostalgia for the Country Side (Dir. Dang Nhat Minh (1996) 116 min).

Read:

Pham, Ngoc Truong, "Vietnam / A Brief History of Vietnamese Films" from Film in Southeast Asia

Thaveeporn Vasayakul, "Vietnam / Doi Moi Difficulties" from Government and Politics in Southeast Asia.

Week 10

October 29

Diasporic Vietnamese Directors

The Scent of Green Papaya (Dir. Tran, Anh Hung, 1993)

Cyclo (Dir. Tran, Anh Hung (Dir. Tran, Anh Hung, 1995) or

The Vertical Ray of the Sun (Dir. Tran, Anh Hung, 2000)

Carr, Patrick. "Fragmented Visions of Social Stasis in the Films of Tran Anh Hung." *Asian Cinema* 16.1 (Spring/ Summer 2005): 149-161.

October 31**Fighting French Colonialism**Screen:

Poussière d'empire (Dir. Lam Le, 1983.)

Read:

Norindr, Panivong. "The Postcolonial Cinema of Lam Le: Screens, the Sacred, and the Unhomely in Poussière d'Empire." In Winston, Jane and Leakthina Ollier, Eds. Of Vietnam. New York: Palgrave, 2001. 143-157.

Week 11**November 5**

Screen: *Three Seasons* (Dir. Tony Bui, 1999)

Read: Lam, Mariam B. "Circumventing Channels: Indie Filmmaking in Post-Socialist Vietnam and Beyond." [GF]. Pp. 87-105.

November 7**Cambodia****Technology, Memory and Trauma**

Screen: *The Land of Wandering Souls* (Dir. Rithy Panh, 2000, 100min.)

Read:

Michael Renov, "Towards a Poetics of Documentary" from Theorizing Documentary (CR)

Ingrid Muan and Ly Daravuth "Cambodia: A Survey of Film in Cambodia" [FSEA]. 93-106.

Eliza Romey, "Cambodia: King, Artist, Film-maker: The Films of Norodom Sihanouk" [FSEA]107-118.

Week 12**November 12****On Testimonial and Witnessing the Khmer Rouge Genocide**

Screen: S21: The Khmer Rouge Death Machine (Dir. Rithy Panh, 2002 101 min.)

Read: Susan J. Brison, "Trauma Narratives and the Remaking of the Self" from Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present.

David Chandler, "Choosing the Enemies" and "Forcing the Answers" from Voices from S-21: Terror and History in Pol Pot's Secret Prison.

Rithy Panh, "Cambodia, a wound that will not heal"

Sorpong Peou, "Cambodia: After the Killing Fields" [GPSA] 36-73.

See Website: Yale University's Cambodian Genocide Program (www.yale.edu/cgp/)

November 14**Khmer Artistic Expression**Screen:

Les artistes du théâtre brûlé. (Dir. Rithy Panh, 2005 82 min.)

Readings:

Turnbull, Robert. A Burned-Out Theater: The State of Cambodia's Performing Arts." In Ollier, Leakthina and Tim Winter, Expressions of Cambodia. New York: Routledge, 2006. 133-149.

Week 13

November 19

Laos

A Fledging "National Cinema" ?/ The Lao New Wave

Screen: *Chanthaly* (Dir. Mattie Do (2012) 109 min)

At the Horizon (Dir. Anysay Keola (2012) 101 min)

Phichit, Bounchao. "Lao Cinema." [FSEA]. 83-92.

Muong-Hane, Thi-Von, "In Search of Laotian Cinema." SAC. Pp. 224-235.

Norindr, Panivong. "The Emergence of the Laotian Film Industry: A Short Overview." SAC. Pp. 243-249.

Boulloud, Fanny. "On the Tracks of Film Distribution in Laos." SAC. Pp. 255-259.

Norindr, Panivong. "The Future of Lao Cinema." *Visual Anthropology*. 31 1-2 (2018):14-33.

November 21

Student Presentation

Week 14

November 26

Student Presentation

Thanksgiving Holyday

November 27-December 1

Week 15

December 3

Student Presentation

December 5

Conclusion