

Language, Culture and Society in Southeast Asia

Fall 2013

ANTH 3691 LING 3691

CRN: 53157, 55324

12.45-2.00 pm

Duques 360

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Office: 2112 G Street NW, room 201

Office Hours: W: 10-12.00

In this course, students will learn about Southeast Asia by focusing on communication: how language – and the tools that mediate it (e.g. writing, radio, television, music and the internet) – vary by historical circumstances, culture, and social contexts in this region of the world. At the same time that we examine the evolution of language in the region, we will simultaneously track and reflect on the development of linguistic approaches to the area: from historical-linguistic approaches and the emphasis on the autonomy of linguistic form, to language as a window on unconscious beliefs, to language as an object and finally a focus on speech as an index of status, power and meaning.

The course thus begins with an examination of the language families in the region. How and when did they form? How can their distribution provide us with clues about ancient patterns of migration? What are the controversies about language definition and classification and what are their implications for the present? Next we examine how the structures of Southeast Asian languages reveal insights into the structure of cultural beliefs and ideologies; then we investigate how language becomes an object that mediates between cultural practices and systems of authority; finally we explore how language indexes status, power and the evolving relation of language and modernity in the policies of colonial and postcolonial nation states as they relate to schools, legal systems and the news.



## Course Schedule

- 1) August 26<sup>th</sup> Introductions and expectations. In this class we will meet each other, discuss the syllabus, and course expectations.
- 2) August 28 Introduction to the region of Southeast Asia. and some basic concepts

Read: 1) Heidhues, Introduction and Chapter 1; 2) "Archaeology, Linguistics and the Expansion of the East and Southeast Asian Neolithic" Charles Higham in Archaeology and Language, II pp. 103-114.

## Language, Origins, and the Autonomy of Linguistic Form

- 3) September 2 No Class Labor Day
- 4) September 4<sup>th</sup> Approaches to Southeast Asian linguistic prehistory: Language families, groupings, classification methods.

Read: 1) "Historical Linguistics" *Encyclopedia of Anthropology* 2) Enfield, Nicholas "Areal Linguistics and Mainland Southeast Asia"

- 5) September 9<sup>th</sup> The Austronesian expansion: culture and language moving south and east.

Read: 1) Peter Bellwood "Founder Rank Enhancement" 2) Blust, Robert "Early Austronesian Social Organization"

- 6) September 11 Mainland SEAsian languages

Read: 1) Nick Enfield "Chapter 2, Background Mainland Southeast Asia" in *Linguistic Epidemiology* 2) Heidhues, Chapter 2 "Temples and Rice: Land Based Kingdoms"

*Assignment: Choose five languages from the Bima-Sumba sub-group of the Austronesian database in*

*<http://language.psy.auckland.ac.nz/austronesian/classification.php?node=Austronesian,%20Malayo-Polynesian,%20Central-Eastern,%20Central%20Malayo-Polynesian,%20Bima-Sumba>*

*Look for cognates (for a practical guide to cognate spotting see Gudschinsky's ABCs of lexicostatistics). Put all languages on an X and Y axis and calculate the percentage of shared cognates among 100 or 200 word lists; Based on this see if you can develop a family tree. Describe your procedures and explain why you put the language families where you did on the tree. 2-3 pages due September 19. You may work in teams of 2-3 on this to calculate percentages of cognates, but each person should write his/her own analysis, family tree and paper.*

## Language: A Window on Culture?

7) September 16<sup>th</sup> The role of language as a classification system

Read: 1) Conklin "Hanunoo Color Categories" 2) Tambiah "Animals are Good to Think, Good to Prohibit" 3) Alvarez-Caccamo "Codes"

8) September 18 Grammar and classification.

Read: 1) Becker, Person in Kawi: Exploration of an Elementary Semantic Dimension" in Beyond Translation 2) Becker "The Figure a Classifier Makes: Describing a Particular Burmese Classifier" in Beyond Translation

For fun: some (mostly obscure) classifiers in English:  
<http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/about/faqs/animals/names.htm>

9) September 23<sup>th</sup> Grammar as classification

Read: 1) Becker, "Elusive Figures of Burmese Grammar" 2) Becker "the Figure a Sentence Makes: An Interpretation of Classical Malay Sentence"

*Assignment: Do a domain analysis of color, kinship, taste or plant analysis of a Southeast Asian language, by interviewing a native speaker of a Southeast Asian language. Contact the embassies to find Southeast Asian language speakers if you're having trouble finding someone. For examples of how to do this kind of analysis, see Frake "Ethnographic Study of Cognitive Systems." 2-3 pages due October 5<sup>th</sup>. How does the structure of the vocabulary differ from that in English?*

## Language as Written Object

10) September 25 Contemporary Print Literacies – Southeast Asian Scriptural Orthodoxies

Read: 1) Heidhues Chapter 3: "Multiplicity of Beliefs: The Religions of Southeast Asia" 2) Goody and Watt "Consequences of Literacy" 3) Conklin "Bamboo Literacy in Mindoro" 3) "Media" Spitulnik

11) September 30<sup>th</sup> The Sanskrit Cosmopolis Performing Sanskrit

Read: 1) Sheldon Pollock "Sanskrit Cosmopolis" 2) Kuipers and McDermott "Scripts of Insular Southeast Asia" in The Worlds Writing Systems

12) October 2<sup>nd</sup> Performing Sanskrit

Read: 1) Becker "Text-Building, Epistemology and Aesthetics" in Beyond Translation

Read: 1) Cummings "Scripting Islamization: Arabic Texts in early Modern Makassar" Ethnohistory

13) October 7<sup>th</sup> Islam and the ideologies of Writing

Read: Cummings "Scripting Islamization: Arabic Texts in early Modern Makassar"  
Ethnohistory

14) October 9<sup>th</sup> Performing Sacred Texts and Personal Piety

Read: Gade "Taste, Talent and the Problem of Internalization"

15) October 14<sup>th</sup> Personal Uses of Literacy

Read: 1) Wierenga "Writing Love: Expressing Nearness and Dearness in Malay Love Letters" 2) Djenar "On the Development of a Colloquial Writing Style: Examining the Language of Indonesian Teen Literature"

16) October 16<sup>th</sup> Midterm: IDs and Essay Questions

## Language as Index of Status, Power and Authority

17) October 21<sup>st</sup> Comparing the Colonial Powers and their Approaches to Language

Read: 1) Heidhues Chapter 4, "Southeast Asia as a Crossroads" 2) Errington "Colonial Linguistics" Annual Review of Anthropology 3) "Indexicality" Hanks 4) "Function" Silverstein

18) October 23<sup>rd</sup> Language, Hierarchy and the Problems of Linguistic Modernity – the case of Javanese

Read: 1) Soepomo Poedjosoedarmo "Javanese Speech Levels" 2) Anderson "Sempah, Sumpah: The Politics of Language and Javanese Culture"

19) October 28<sup>th</sup> Ritual Speech Registers

Read: 1) Kuipers Language, Identity and Marginality Chapters 1 and 2. 2) Heidhues Chapter 5 "New Directions, New Elites" 3) Fox, James "Ritual Languages, Speech Registers"

*Research paper proposal due October 28<sup>th</sup>. Choose a language phenomenon that is distinctive to Southeast Asia and research it carefully. Gather as much information as you can about it and make an argument about it based on your research. Proposal 1 page. For additional information about writing a research paper, consult Turabian in the electronic reserves for this class.*

20) October 30<sup>th</sup> Language and Nationalism

Read: 1) Kuipers Language Identity and Marginality Chapters 3 and 4. 2) Heidhues Chapter 6 "Violence and Transition"

21) November 4<sup>th</sup> The Language of Modernity

Read: Kuipers Language, Identity and Marginality Chapters 5 and 6.

## Language as Ideology

22) November 6<sup>th</sup> Ideologies of Modernity: Gender

Read: 1) Smith-Hefner "Language Shift and Ideologies of Modernity" 2) Heidhues Chapter 7 "Development and Democracy"

23) November 11<sup>th</sup> Language and Modernity: Sexuality

Read: Boellsdorff "Gay Language in Indonesia"

24) November 13<sup>th</sup> Mediatized Language

Read: 1) Rafael "Cell Phones and the Crowd" 2) Keeler "Burmese Rap"

25) November 18<sup>th</sup> Research Day

26) November 20<sup>st</sup> Presentations

27) November 25<sup>th</sup> Presentations

28) December 2<sup>nd</sup> Presentations and Conclusions

## Books

Beyond Translation A. L. Becker  
Southeast Asia: A Concise History Heidhues  
Language, Identity and Marginality Kuipers

## Learning Goals

- Learn to identify the principal Southeast Asian language families, and the competing interpretations in language history behind these classifications;
- Learn to identify and analyze the role of language in the cultural systems of the Southeast Asian region
- Learn to make a logical argument in their analytical papers about secondary sources, writing clearly through well-crafted, audience appropriate language;
- Learn to use cultural comparison as a tool for understanding how cultural, social, or economic contexts shape understandings and behaviors
- Learn to work collegially as thinkers and cultural critics
- Learn to apply critical, analytical, and evaluative thinking to one's own writing, through drafting, revising, and/or editing processes appropriate to the discipline in which they are working.

- Understand and learn to use these key terms in linguistic anthropology
  - Indexicality/performance
  - reflexivity
  - media
  - identity
  - code

[For information on learning outcomes and course assessment, see <http://www.gwu.edu/~apira/courseassessment.html>]

## GRADING

<b>Short Papers</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Midterm</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Final Project (Presentation plus 15 page paper)</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Final</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Class Participation</b>	<b>15%</b>

## CLASS POLICIES

Assignments must be posted to BB before the class. Late work is accepted but penalized in relation to how late the paper is. If for some reason you cannot post your paper to BB, email it to me as an attachment. You are expected to attend all classes, except in extreme family emergencies.

University Policy on Religious Holidays:

1. Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance;
2. Faculty should extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations;
3. Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday should arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities

[NOTE: for other university policies on teaching, see <http://www.gwu.edu/~academic/Teaching/main.htm> ]

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I personally support the GW Code of Academic Integrity. It states: "Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information." For the remainder of the code, see: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

## SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

### *DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)*

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>

### *UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER (UCC) 202-994-5300*

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:

- crisis and emergency mental health consultations
- confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals

<http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices>

### **SECURITY**

In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.