

January 22, 2016. Sherry Harlacher, Director of the Center for Textiles and Design, Pleasant Rowland Endowed Director of Helen Louise Allen Textile Collection, UW-Madison. “Exhibiting Southeast Asian Material Culture in Higher Education.”

In 2014, Dr. Catherine Raymond, Director, NIU Center for Burma Studies and Dr. Sherry Harlacher, Director, Denison Museum, Denison University combined objects from two university collections for an exhibition entitled *Dressing Difference: Exploring Ethnicities in Modern Burma*. The collaboration was inspired by the discovery of painted ethnographic albums created by local artists from the Shan States. The exhibition featured textiles, jewelry, weapons, and photographs dating from the late 19th to mid-20th century. Taking into account the differences in available gallery space and differences in student audiences (a liberal arts college versus a public university), the curators chose to emphasize different concepts while preserving the same layout where objects were arranged in an arc that followed the distribution of the various upland ethnic groups along Burma’s eastern, northern, and western frontiers. This collaboration provides a useful case study about how teaching and learning about Southeast Asia is practiced in two very different academic settings.

January 29, 2016. Saowanee Alexander, Sociolinguist in the Department of Western Languages and Literature, Ubon Ratchathani University, Thailand. “Who Speaks ‘Lao’ Anymore? Upward Social Mobility, Language Change, and Issues of Inequality in Northeast Thailand.”

Under Thai nationalist policies, the Northeast (or Isan), which was historically dominated by Lao culture, has gradually become “Thai.” Isan today is in many ways different from what it was in the past. Nevertheless, the default Bangkokians’ view of Isan people remains unchanged: Northeasterners are still their inferiors (see Hesse-Swain, 2011). Yearning to attain a “higher status” drives many Isan people to try to prove that they too are members of Thai society. Those who have embraced the term *khon Isan* have also embraced the Thai identity (Saowanee and McCargo, 2014) while others persist in identifying themselves as Lao. The talk explores relationships between Isan identity from a linguistic perspective. In particular, it examines changes in lexical and phonetic features of Lao (also known as *phasa isan*) spoken in the region in the speech of speakers across generations, and how these changes reflect social inequality, which is pervasive in Thai society.

February 5, 2016. Amy Quan Barry, Professor of English and Creative Writing, UW-Madison. “She Weeps Each Time You’re Born: Vietnam Beyond the American War.”

Quan Barry’s luminous fiction debut brings us the tumultuous history of modern Vietnam as experienced by a young girl born under mysterious circumstances a few years before the country’s reunification, a child gifted with the otherworldly ability to hear the voices of the dead. At the peak of the war in Vietnam, a baby girl is born along the Song Ma River on the night of the full moon. This is Rabbit, who will journey away from her destroyed village with a makeshift family thrown together by war. Here is a Vietnam we’ve never encountered before: through Rabbit’s inexplicable but radiant intuition, we are privy to an intimate version of history, from the days of French Indochina and the World War II rubber plantations through the chaos of postwar reunification. With its use of magical realism—Rabbit’s ability to “hear” the dead—the novel reconstructs a turbulent historical period through a painterly human lens. This is the moving story of one woman’s struggle to unearth the true history of Vietnam while simultaneously carving out a place for herself within it.

Co-sponsored by UW-Madison's Religious Studies Program, Center for the Humanities, and Center for Southeast Asian Studies

February 12, 2016. Zhang Li, Ph.D. Candidate, Institute of International Studies/Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Yunnan University, China. “*Water Diplomacy: Transboundary Cooperation Between China and the Lower Mekong Countries.*”

Against the background of transboundary cooperation on water resources and the scramble for water power increasing steadily among countries, some international agencies and countries have begun to attach importance to "water diplomacy" and regard it as one of the important means to maintain foreign relations. The issues between China and the Lower Mekong Countries on the transboundary development of water resources of the Mekong River urgently need to be solved by water diplomacy. After defining this term, the talk explores the problem of transboundary water cooperation between China and the Lower Mekong Countries. It then highlights factors that contribute to the inadequate implementation of water diplomacy by China and proposes suggestions on what China should do in the future.

February 19, 2016. Sunil Amrith Mehra Family Professor of South Asian Studies and History, Harvard University. Trans-Asia Lecture, Co-Sponsored by the Center for East Asian Studies, the Center for South Asia, and the History Department, UW-Madison. “*Environmental History as Trans-Asia History.*”

How does environmental history reshape our perception of the regional boundaries that have shaped area studies, and the boundary between South Asia and Southeast Asia in particular? This lecture explores alternative conceptualizations of Asia that have arisen from attempts to understand the relationship between climate, land and sea. Beginning with the the history of meteorology in India, the talk explores the origins of the idea of “monsoon Asia,” and proceeds to discuss its unexpected reemergence in current debates on climate change in Asia. Far from making area studies irrelevant before a “planetary turn” in the humanities, an understanding of the environmental crises that confront South and Southeast Asia can be enhanced by drawing on the inter-regional and trans-Asian perspectives that have emerged from recent scholarship. A more connected, trans-Asian environmental history lies at the heart of that project.

February 26, 2016. Kerry Ward, Associate Professor of History, Rice University. “*Undercurrents: British Perceptions of Human Smuggling and Slaving in the Western and Eastern Indian Oceans in the Mid-Nineteenth Century.*”

British perceptions of slave trading in the western and eastern Indian Oceans varied partly as a result of policies regarding anti-slavery activities in both regions. Human smuggling and slaving were generated both by unrest in local societies combined with intensifying European colonial encroachment that affected the vulnerability of people to slave raiding as well as creating new markets for bonded labor. Intense British 'anti-slavery' intervention along the east African coast and western Indian Ocean contrasts markedly with the muted response to slave trading in the eastern Indian Ocean and South China Sea.

Sponsored by the University Lectures Committee and co-sponsored by the Center for Southeast Asian Studies.

March 4, 2016. Thomas Borchert, Associate Professor of Religion, University of Vermont. “Thai Monks, Freedom of Speech and the Ability to Speak in a Time of Protest.” Monks are generally perceived as having a special place within the Theravada world. They are leaders within society, and their speech, broadly construed, is effective, as demonstrated by recent events. The “Saffron Revolution” in Burma was triggered by monks asserting their right to express themselves on behalf of the nation; recent speeches by monks in both Burma and Sri Lanka are thought to have triggered Buddhist attacks on Muslims in both countries and in Thailand, and in 2014, the monk Buddha Issara set up a protest stage from which he preached twice a day in order to bring down the caretaker government of Yingluck Shinawatra. While it was not his speech alone, of course he was an important member of the coalition that ultimately precipitated a coup in May of that year. At the same time, within Thailand, the right to speak freely is not one that all monks share equally. Although as citizens the right of Thai monks to free speech has been constitutionally guaranteed (when there has been a constitution), as members of the Sangha they are often subject to greater constraint, in society as a whole and even in the wats in which they live. In this talk, Dr. Borchert considers the attitudes of monks with regard to the right to free speech and also speculates about the conditions that enable and constrain their ability to speak in post-Coup Thailand.

March 11, 2016. Duncan McCargo, Professor of Political Science, University of Leeds and Visiting Professor of Political Science, Columbia University. “(Un)Happy Stories from Thailand’s Constitutional Court.”

This presentation discusses some key cases brought before Thailand’s Constitutional Court following the 2006 military coup, borrowing its title from a memoir penned by former Court president Wasant Soypanit. It argues that behind the formal complaints levied by the petitioners lay accusations along the treason spectrum: that pro-Thaksin politicians were seeking to undermine the system of government and alter the status of the crown. The 2012 constitutional amendment case, which almost precipitated a major political crisis, will form the main focus of the discussion. Did the workings of the court illustrate a new politicization of the Thai judiciary? Or were these cases simply business as usual?

March 18, 2016. Dr. Prajak Kongkirati, Lecturer, Faculty of Political Science and Head of the Southeast Asian Studies Center, Thammasat University, Thailand. “Bullets and Ballots: Electoral Violence and Democracy in Thailand, 1997-2014.”

From 1997 to 2006, the 1997 Thai Constitution, its newly designed electoral system, the rise of a strong populist party led by Thaksin Shinawatra, and the 2006 coup transformed local political structures and power balances. Thaksin’s ambitious goal of monopolizing the political market raised the stakes of electoral competition, forcing provincial bosses to employ violent tactics to defeat their competitors. Consequently, the demand for and supply of electoral violence increased, as witnessed in the 2001 and 2005 elections. After the 2006 coup, political settings at the national and local levels underwent another major change. The royal-military intervention in the electoral process combined with growing ideological politics stifled and marginalized provincial bosses, thereby decreasing the demand for violence. As a result, incidents of violence during the 2007 and 2011 elections declined. The exercise of privatized violence by the provincial bosses was a remnant of the political and economic order established in the 1980s. This unsettling phenomenon will not entirely disappear until the patrimonial structure of the state is radically transformed and personalistic fighting over government spoils and rent-distribution

are substantially reduced. However, the February 2, 2014 elections witnessed a significant change in the pattern of electoral violence in Thailand. It changed from targeted killings among the rival candidates to mob violence aimed at disrupting the electoral process and institutions. The protesters mobilized under the People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC) and employed violent tactics to disrupt electoral voter registration, vote casting, and vote counting activities. The degree of violence was the highest in the country's electoral history. The PDRC's animosity towards the election marked an unprecedented development in the country's prolonged political conflict.

April 8, 2016. Yos Santasombat, Professor of Anthropology, Chiang Mai University. “*The Impact of China’s Rise on Southeast Asia.*”

This talk analyzes the impact of China's rise on the Mekong Region at a critical period of Southeast Asian history. Three decades of sustained economic growth have given rise to a powerful and prosperous China. As the most populated country and the second largest economy in the world, China has become an increasingly influential player in global and regional affairs. Economic ties between China and her southern neighbors are particularly strong. Yet relations between China and the Mekong region are inherently complex and embedded in other socio-cultural and political issues. China's accelerated growth, increasing economic footprint, global search for energy and natural resources and rapid pace of military modernization have created a wide range of new challenges for smaller countries in Southeast Asia. These new challenges both encourage and limit cooperation between China and the emerging ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). The talk addresses some of these challenges, with particular focus on the impact of Chinese investment, trade, foreign aid and migration, and some of the consequences of each.

More broadly, over the past decade, the increasing political alliances between China and the Mekong region have been established by three interdependent factors, namely (1) the expansion of trade, investment and foreign aid; (2) increasing territorialization through large-scale concessions and mega-projects; and (3) the expansion of Chinese economic culture that goes hand in hand with the increasing flows of new Chinese migrants into the Mekong region.

April 15, 2016. Anthony Irwin, doctoral student in Languages and Cultures of Asia, UW-Madison. “*Surrounding the Sacred: Rebuilding the Buddhist Landscape in Chiang Rai, Thailand.*”

When Chiang Rai was resettled in 1844 the city and its surrounding territory had been abandoned for a period of forty years. As new communities sprang up over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, people found themselves living amongst scores of abandoned Buddhist temple sites. Still today, stupa ruins stick up in the verdant river valley like the stumps of great trees, and tumbled piles of bricks punctuate karst cliffs that rise into the surrounding mountains. The presence of this abandoned Buddhist material has been central to the motivations and techniques behind Buddhist construction in Chiang Rai. Many of the active temples throughout the city are built over older sites, and current Buddhist construction often incorporates older material into new structures.

This talk explores one way in which Chiang Rai Buddhists have approached and dealt with abandoned Buddhist material in their midst—they have covered it up. The specific building practice known as *khrop* [ครอบ] is a technique of encasing, surrounding, and covering over older Buddhist material with new, outer facades. *Khrop* is more than a building technique; it is an

important ethic of preservation, protection, and reverence. Performing acts of *khrop*, and the material products of the practice, are leveled on specifically Theravada Buddhist foundations. This talk investigates acts of *khrop* to plumb Buddhist understandings of time, community, and power.

April 22, 2016. Cleo Calimbahin, Executive Director of Transparency International-Philippines/Associate Professorial Lecturer of Political Science, De La Salle University, Manila. “No Dirge for Dynasties: DNA, DQ, and Drama in the 2016 Philippine Presidential Elections.”

On May 9, the Philippine electorate will head to polling precincts to vote for over 18,000 elective posts. At the precinct, the Filipino voter faces the burden of remembering multiple candidate names given the synchronized nature of elections in the Philippines. It therefore comes as no surprise that in the 2016 presidential and national elections, celebrities and dynasties will have the edge. The persistence of dynastic politics in the Philippines weakens efforts at political party building and uncontested seats are on the rise. Recent political events also show that Estrada and Arroyo have re-defined the vice-presidential race. Some politicians have shifted their aim at the vice-presidency because of its increased relevance, competition and possibilities. The campaign for the vice-presidency is evolving, becoming more competitive and contributing further in undermining the creation of genuine political parties and exacerbating campaign finance issues. With President Aquino’s positive end of term rating, Filipinos continue to hope for reform and improved economic and political conditions. The 2016 election is crucial and can build on the gains of the Aquino administration. Looking at the front runners, will the Philippines vote for continuity or change?

April 29, 2016. David Biggs, Professor of History, University of California-Riverside. “In the Footprints of War: Environmental History and Militarized Landscapes in Central Vietnam.”

In many historic places, war does not simply sweep across the landscape. Often, militants and military camps become embedded in spaces long-shaped over decades or even centuries by earlier “footprints” of military conflict. On the central coast of Vietnam, journalist Bernard Fall described “The Street Without Joy” as a narrow corridor of fields and villages along the coastal highway that French troops struggled to hold from 1947 to 1954. Meanwhile, the Việt Minh retreated to the mountains and built new “tactical zones” and a rebel “inter-zone” government in the interior. Their success derived not only from new construction – weapons workshops, safe zones, and supply routes – but also a deep engagement with the long-militarized landscapes of the coast. This talk examines the First Indochina war through a landscape lens, considering how combatants negotiated with each other and historic landscapes in their campaigns. Military and political success hinged on the ability to build new networks out of these conflict-prone, historic spaces.