



VIETNAM CENTER

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CONTEMPORARY VIETNAM: CLASS, FAMILY, AND GENDER SOCL 264

FALL 2019

Tuesday 10-12:30, Open University, Ho Chi Minh City

Course description

This course introduces key issues in post-war Vietnam's society and culture, with a focus on the impacts of globalization and rapid social change on gender, family, work and socioeconomic class. Readings range from a variety of social sciences disciplines (anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies) and media. We concentrate on the rapid social changes that all Vietnamese experience in this fast developing, emerging market: How are gender roles and family structures changing in Vietnam as a result of globalization? Why is social inequality growing in contemporary Vietnam? Who are new middle class consumers? How are they driving new business, media and politics in Vietnam? How are domestic and foreign tourism, and new work opportunities impacting local communities?

Throughout the course we'll engage in fieldwork exercises and visits in the city. By drawing on personal reflections, service learning experiences, and cultural analysis with Vietnamese partners, you will acquire sets of theoretical and practical skills to analyze the diversity and complexity of post-war Vietnam, and make sense of broader processes of social change in the region.

Course objectives

During this course, students gain the following:

- Introduction to gender, family, and inequality during the globalization period in post-war Vietnam from the 1990s onward.
- Understanding of key impacts of globalization on Vietnamese social and cultural life.
- General understanding of social and regional diversity in contemporary Vietnam.
- Introduction to basic theories of gender, social change, globalization, and field research methods.

I stress that these new skills are applicable outside of Vietnam and Asia. A solid grasp of gender, diversity, inequality, migration and globalization is essential for top jobs in policy, government, law, business, research, non-profit, and academia.

Course requirements

Active participation is essential in this course. I expect you attend each class and participate actively in seminar discussions. Readings average around 30-50 pages per session.

As long as you come to class well prepared to discuss readings and your research, and if you turn in assignments on time while having spent a reasonable amount of time on them (i.e. turning in decent work taken seriously), there should be no worry about your final grade.

Fieldwork exercises provide an opportunity to raise questions, discuss new theories, and tie in readings to field trips, classes or practicum experiences. We'll discuss your fieldwork exercises during the seminar after you present them in class.

At the end of the semester, you'll submit a research essay (10-12 pages). We will discuss your research topics in class. Integrating perspectives from service learning placements and experiences is useful, to base your research in practical findings. Final papers need to be polished, and describe methodological challenges encountered during research.

Short written exercises

- The objective of these 3 short exercises is to provide you with sustained field research engagement and write-up over the semester.
- A second aim is to prepare you to write a good, self-reflective essay on key social issues connected to course themes by drawing from your personal reflections and service learning experiences in Vietnam.

Schedule and topics of short written exercises (field reflections)

- **Reflection #1:** Street life (due Week 3)
- **Reflection #2:** Global flows (due Week 7)
- **Reflection #3:** Research project description and outline (due Week 12)

Grading structure

Final grades are determined as follows (as per grade scale used in all LUC classes):

- Ethnographic exercises 30% (10% each)
- Participation & class prep 30%
- Final research paper 40%

COURSE OUTLINE

THEME 1 – POVERTY, INEQUALITY, AND SOCIOPOLITICAL CHANGE

Week 1. Course introduction (August 27)

- Vietnam: Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction (2010)
<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/video/2010/dec/23/vietnam-economic-growth-development>

Week 2. Reimagining Vietnam, from war to a new consumer society? (September 3)

- "Saigon Street Food: 'There's no future for my son selling this way'" (Guardian UK, June 29, 2015)
<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/jun/29/saigon-street-food-vietnam-illegal-vendors>
- Raymond Williams, "Development" in *Keywords* (Oxford University Press, 1983).

Week 3. Street life and the informal sector (September 10)

- Bill Hayton, *Vietnam Rising Dragon* (Yale University Press, 2010). Chapter 3, "Living on the Streets."

Suggested reading (optional):

- Erik Harms, "Vietnam's Civilizing Process and the Retreat from the Street: A Turtle's Eye View From Ho Chi Minh City" (*City and Society*, 21:2, 2009).

- **Fieldwork Reflection #1. "Street life"**
- **Due (by email) Friday, September 13. Group discussion in class on September 17**

Week 4. Poverty and labor migration (September 17)

- "Flower Seller," "Scrap Food Collector," "Wounded Veteran," "Recycler," "Shoe Shiner," "Nurse" in *It's a Living: Work and Life in Vietnam Today*, ed. Gerard Sasges (NUS Press, Singapore, 2013).

Suggested reading (optional):

- Mike Davis, "Planet of Slums" (*NLR* 26, 2004).

Week 5. Urban mobility and middle-class aspirations (September 24)

- Allison Truitt, "On the Back of a Motorbike: Middle-Class Mobility in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam" (*American Ethnologist* 35:1, 2008).

THEME 2 – GENDER AND FAMILY UNDER RAPID SOCIAL CHANGE

Week 6. Changing norms of gender, love, and family (October 1)

- Ann Marie Leshkovich, "Woman, Buddhist, Entrepreneur: Gender, Moral Values and Class Anxiety in Late Socialist Vietnam" (*Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, vol. 1, 2006).

Suggested readings (optional):

- Harriet Phinney, "Objects of Affection: Vietnamese Discourses on Love and Emancipation" (*Positions* 16:2, 2008).

Week 7. Gender inequality, stigma and discrimination (October 8)

- Helle Rydstrom, "A Zone of Exception: Gendered Violence of Family 'Happiness' in Vietnam" (*Gender, Place and Culture*, vol. 24, 2017).

- ➔ **Fieldwork Reflection #2. Global flows and changing gender norms.**
- ➔ **Due (by email) Friday, October 11. Group discussion in class, October 15.**

Week 8. New challenges in gender and sexuality (October 15)

- Marianne Brown, "Sex Education From Church and State Sends Mixed Messages in Vietnam" (Guardian UK, December 2014).
<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/dec/15/sex-education-church-state-vietnam-abortion>

Suggested reading (optional):

- Tine Gammeltoft, "The Ritualization of Abortion in Contemporary Vietnam" (*Australian Journal of Anthropology* 14:3, 2003).

Week 9. NO CLASS on October 22: Central and Northern Vietnam excursion.

THEME 3 – GLOBALIZATION IMPACTS ON CONTEMPORARY VIETNAMESE SOCIETY

Week 10. War tourism and silenced memories (October 29)

- Christina Schwenkel, "War Tourism and Geographies of Memory in Vietnam," in *Monumental Conflicts*, ed. Derek R. Mallet (Routledge, 2018).

Week 11. War Legacies Museum visit (TBC) (November 5)

Week 12. Tourism and uneven development (November 12)

- Bill Hayton, *Vietnam Rising Dragon* (Yale University Press, 2010). Chapter 8, "See It Before It's Gone."
- Emmanuelle Peyvel and Vo Sang Xuan Lan, "Tourism, Urbanization, and Globalization in Vietnam" (*The Focus*, vol. 73, 2016.)

Suggested readings (optional):

- Christina Schwenkel, "Haunted Infrastructure: Religious Ruins and Urban Obstruction in Vietnam" (*City and Society* 29:3, 2017).
- C. Robert, "The Return of the Repressed: Uncanny Spaces in Tran Anh Hung's Film *Cyclo*" (*Positions* 20:1, 2012).

➔ **Written Reflection #3. Research topic description and annotated outline.**

➔ **Due in class November 12.**

Week 13. Student research project presentations (November 19)

Week 14. Student research project presentations (November 26)

Week 15. Course conclusion (December 3)

- ➔ **RESEARCH ESSAY:** Please email me your paper by **December 3, 2018** (p.m.). No late papers will be accepted.