The Politics of Identity in Southeast Asia
Graduate Seminar

Despite the presence and popular support of many long-standing social movements and organizations throughout the world, the field of political science has yet to provide answers to some of the most basic questions regarding the role and relevance of group-based identity politics. Among these are basic inquiries into the nature of symbolic representation and whether ‘symbolic’ is an appropriate way to describe any minority-majority group representation, the impact of women, religious and ethnic minorities in the political arena and the potential costs/benefits to democratic governance their presence provides, and how group-based movements and their goals have supported and/or competed with the goals of other groups for increased political representation and power. We will attempt to address as many of these issues as we can, focusing on three distinct themes throughout the semester: group-based identity in political history and theory; identity in the electoral and government arenas; and the distinction between reactive and active group-based policy-making and outcomes.

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the study of identity and politics, with a focus on the comparison between the politics of identity in the countries of Southeast Asia. First, we will investigate some of the issues animating the study of identity politics, conducting a brief overview of some of the major theoretical and historical works on social movements, feminism and cultural contexts, and constraints on minority groups in political life. Then we will begin to unpack the incorporation of identity into representative politics, focusing on the many institutional, cultural and economic challenges faced by minority political elites, mechanisms for increasing group-based participation and success in the political (particularly electoral) arena, as well as some of the reasons for diverse domestic representation outcomes in the Southeast Asian context. Finally, we will evaluate a range of anti-discrimination policy initiatives and how these types of policies may make the transition from reactive to pro-active in orientation and outcome. Throughout, we will work towards an answer, or at least begin to provide an answer to, the question: (how) does identity affect politics in Southeast Asia?

It is not possible to cover this range of topics for all the countries of Southeast Asia so readings will be confined primarily to those countries with some substantial role (at some point in the mid-20th century to present) for electoral politics, though this does not necessarily render the cases democratic by many standards. The reason for this distinction is to focus on the themes of the course in the context of politics via the application of rule of law and individual or group-based representation, for which some form of participatory elections is a necessary though not sufficient condition. As such, the course will focus on Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. In limiting the number of cases students will hopefully achieve a more in-depth understanding of the topics and themes within a smaller range of country contexts; however, students will also gain skills to compare course materials with other cases in the region. As such, students who wish to write their research paper on Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Brunei or East Timor may do so, provided the subject of their paper is related to a course topic or theme.
METHODS OF EVALUATION

Research Paper (65%)
Each student will write a research paper on the politics of a single group (women, religion, ethnic minority, disabled, etc.) in a Southeast Asian case of the student’s choice. The research paper requires a brief historical overview of the case, an explanation of the group’s standing within the demographic and political context of the case, the status of the group (protected? frequently targeted?), any policies specifically focused on the group in question, and prospects for change in the future. Topic must be submitted and approved by instructor (date listed in syllabus) and all students will briefly present their primary findings in the last class session (~10 minutes each).

Discussion Papers (20%)
Each student will write four 4-5 page discussion papers focusing on a critique of one or two of the week’s readings. The discussion papers require a brief summary of the main arguments of the author(s), theoretical and/or empirical contributions, and a critique of theory and/or method of analysis. Papers simply providing a recap of the existing arguments will be considered incomplete and returned to the student for revision.

Participation (15%)
Students are expected to come to class having completed the session’s readings. For each class two students will be chosen to formulate discussion questions about the material in the readings for that class session and then lead the class through their questions and general discussion.

GRADING SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>98-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>78-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>68-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any grade below 60 will result in the automatic failure of this course.
Plagiarism is defined as deliberate or reckless representation of another’s words, thoughts, or ideas as one’s own without attribution in connection with submission of academic or scholarly work, whether graded or otherwise. Any student found guilty of plagiarism will receive an “F.” Please see College guidelines and ask me if you have any questions.

COURSE TEXTS
Throughout the course of the semester most readings will be scholarly articles, which are available to read or download online or individual book chapters that I will make available as reserve readings or on Blackboard. We will read portions or the entirety of the following books, which can be purchased in the bookstore or online. Although purchasing the books is not required, and for some we will only read one or two sections, they are all highly recommended for any students studying political identity and representation, particularly in Southeast Asia.

- Benedict Anderson. 2006. *Imagined Communities*.
Week 1: Introduction to Identity Politics
What do we mean by ‘the politics of identity?’ How do we compare cases of identity politics?
What are political institutions and how do they affect identity? What are the implications of democracy for the study of the politics of identity?

Week 2: Factors Affecting Identity Politics
What are the origins, international and domestic influences that affect identity group politics?
Readings (approx. 180 pages)

Week 3: Electoral Rules
How do electoral systems affect identity-based representation and the representation of minority groups? What mechanisms are there for affecting representation? Do different types of political organizations (i.e. parties) channel representation differently?
Readings (approx. 175 pages)
Week 4: Decentralization and the Local

How does decentralization and/or local governance affect identity-based representation?
Can localized authority better protect, represent, and govern minority groups?

Readings (approx. 170 pages)
Shair-Rosenfield, Sarah, Hooghe, Liesbet and Gary Marks. “Subnational Authority in Five Asian Countries” (manuscript PDF)

Week 5: Ethnic Identity

***Research paper topic due (~1-2 paragraph description)***

What are the political concerns of ethnic identity groups? What types of policies can solve/address those concerns? What is the majority-minority dynamic?

Readings (approx. 175 pages)

Week 6: Ethnic case studies and comparative analysis

Readings (approx. 200 pages)
Week 7: Religious Identity
What are the political concerns of religious identity groups? What types of policies can solve/address those concerns? What is the majority-minority dynamic?
Readings (approx. 160 pages)

Week 8: Religion case studies and comparative analysis
Readings (approx. 190 pages)

Week 9: Gender Identity
What are the political concerns of women? What types of policies can solve/address those concerns? How do gender issues affect family and broad social policies?
Readings (approx. 175 pages)
Week 10: Gender case studies and comparative analysis
Readings (approx. 150 pages)
http://www.bu.edu/globalbeat/pubs/ib34.html

Week 11: Overlapping (and Competing?) Identity Issues
Is gender like other types of minority group-based identity issues? What if identities overlap, such as ethnic and religious concerns? How might overlapping identities create problems or divided interests in policy-making?
Readings (approx. 150 pages)
Strolovich, Dara Z. 2010. Ch.6 “Do Interest Groups Represent the Disadvantaged? Advocacy at the Intersection of Race, Class, and Gender” in Krook and Childs (eds) *Women, Gender and Politics*.

Week 12: Reactive versus Proactive Identity-based Policy
What are some of the reactive policy concerns of minority identity groups? What are some of the proactive policy concerns of minority identity groups? How do they differ?
How do groups publicize (communicate and teach about) these concerns?
Readings (approx. 150 pages)

**Week 13: Symbolic Representation and Democratic Deficits  ***Research paper due***
Readings (approx. 160 pages)

Shair-Rosenfield, Sarah. “The Alternative Incumbency Effect: Electing Women Legislators in Indonesia” (manuscript PDF)

**Week 14: Conclusions and Research Presentations**