

**Editor's note:** The following essay is an account of a workshop on Southeast Asia sponsored by the Asia Council of the University System of Georgia (USG) that occurred last year and is published both to foster the creation of similar short introductory workshops and provide online resources for educators interested in infusing Southeast Asia in core curriculum courses. The web links in the online resources list that appears at the end of the essay is also in the *EAA* online supplemental materials for this issue at our website for easy access. All entries in the resource list were either parts of presentations in the workshop or relevant journal articles authored by workshop speakers.

# USG Asia Council Teaching Southeast Asia Workshop

By Paul A. Rodell and Salli Vargis

**O**n April 11th and 12th, 2014, the Asia Council of the USG hosted a workshop titled “Teaching Southeast Asia” for university and college faculty. In total, six sessions of one hour and fifteen minutes each were conducted by five presenters and covered a wide range of topics: basic history, religion, cartography, global trade networks, economics, religion, literature, and indigenous cultures.

This workshop was the third in a series sponsored by the Asia Council that began in response to state budget cuts that made overseas faculty development trips financially unfeasible. Earlier workshops focused on India and China, and the goal of all these programs was to give nonspecialist faculty the ability to infuse Asian materials into their undergraduate core curriculum courses. The council modeled the workshops on programs run by the East-West Center in Honolulu and the Weatherhead East Asian Institute of Columbia University, which have proven effective.

The Asia Council has been able to sponsor the workshops because of a number of factors that might make the Georgia initiative possible in other states. A limited amount of funds the Asia Council had in its account that could be carried forward from earlier years provided funding. Asianists in other states might appeal for special funds from their state education departments, or apply to Asian donors or private domestic or Asia-based foundations. Meanwhile, a number of Georgia's Asian studies faculty generously gave their time and expertise to serve as presenters with the council covering their travel and hotel expenses. The Asia Council also had sufficient funds to make the workshops free to faculty participants and provide a Friday dinner and a Saturday box lunch.

To attract as many faculty as possible, the Clarkston Campus of Georgia Perimeter College (GPC) in the northeast Atlanta metropolitan area was selected as the site. Coauthor Salli Vargis, the current Asia Council chair who teaches at GPC, made local arrangements including room bookings, catering, and discounted hotel rates for out-of-town participants. She and another council member also designed an electronic flier that was distributed statewide, thanks to the council's website, and sent emails to campus directors of international studies programs. David Starling, vice chair and webmaster of Asia Council, helped digitally disseminate information about the workshop.

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## Creating the Program

I designed the program and developed the materials for the participants. Once the local arrangements were made, including workshop dates, a final list of speakers was determined. All speakers were reminded that the audience would be composed of nonspecialists, so presentations should be pedagogical rather than traditional expositions on research topics that might be more appropriate for an academic conference of specialists.

The speakers were strongly encouraged to identify supplemental materials that participants might use to develop their own knowledge or for direct classroom use. Similarly, speakers were asked to develop PowerPoint presentations on their respective topics, which they submitted to me. A participant roster of email addresses was distributed as was a similar list of the presenters.

All PowerPoints and supplemental materials were loaded onto small 2GB USB “thumb drives” donated by GPC and distributed to the participants. This approach to distributing materials was greatly appreciated by the participants and was less costly and bothersome than bulky photocopies of material. After the workshop, much of the material was uploaded to the Asia Council's website.<sup>1</sup> Lecture PowerPoints and much of the workshop supplemental readings are available at the Asia Council website.

## The Speakers and Presentations

The program began with a welcome from Salli Vargis and GPC's Vice President for Academic Affairs. My opening talk, “Southeast Asia History: Themes & Resources,” was a broad overview of the region that began with a series of maps to locate Southeast Asia within Asia and then a focus on the crossroads nature of the region, which serves as a link between Confucian East Asia and South Asia with its Hindu traditions. I explained that this geographic reality helps explain Southeast Asia's amazing diversity of religions, languages, cultures, and political traditions. Special distinction was made between mainland and island Southeast Asia, which have a number of cultural similarities, but also significant differences in religions, economic systems, and political traditions.

While stressing how Southeast Asian societies are very open to external influences, I also drew attention to the region's syncretic character where influences are modified before being adopted. This syncretic process is best shown in religious life, where major religious traditions such as Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism have been shaped by local culture and beliefs to produce the Philippines' folk Catholicism or Islam's tolerant traditional spirit in Indonesia.

In addition to cultural material, I also discussed early trade linkages with China, the European spice trade, patterns of European colonization, and their impact on the region and modern nationalist movements and social change. The talk concluded with World War II as the catalyst that led to voluntary and involuntary decolonization and the creation of contemporary Southeast Asia. *EAA* readers who are interested in integrating Southeast Asia content into world history survey courses should first read

# What is Southeast Asia???

*Is it a tiny subsection of a China-dominated Asia?*



Modified slide from Paul A. Rodell's "What is Southeast Asia History: Themes & Resources." Map source: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas at <http://tinyurl.com/otzbjxh>.

my article "Southeast Asia in World History" from the spring 2009 *World History Bulletin*, which is accessible through the resources list, and then explore my PowerPoints, which are also included in the list.<sup>2</sup>

Next, Jonathan Leightner, an economist from Georgia Regents University in Augusta, made a presentation titled "Lessons from Thailand's 1997 Financial Crisis for the Current Global Economy" about the late-1990s Asian financial crisis that began in Thailand and spread throughout most of Asia. Readers can access his PowerPoint in the resources list developed for this presentation, which was followed by a lively discussion. Since Bangkok was the epicenter of the shockwave, Leightner's analysis included an exposition on Thai political life as it had shaped the country's economy and its volatile political legacy.

Participants were amazed and amused at the complexity of the mix of economics, culture, politics, and international relations that involved Thai investments in the region and the intervention of world-famous financiers such as George Soros. Leightner then used the economic crisis and its long-term impact to introduce the controversial Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, whose tenure was marked by further corruption and economic manipulation. Leightner concluded with a discussion of the international dangers of global financial speculators and their connections to corrupt local political leaders, as well as the future consequences for many more countries in the world beyond Thailand and Southeast Asia.<sup>3</sup>

The afternoon sessions concluded with a spirited talk by Georgia Southern University History Associate Professor Robert Batchelor, whose session was devoted to the Selden Map he discovered in the Bodleian Library in England and that plays the central role in his recently published

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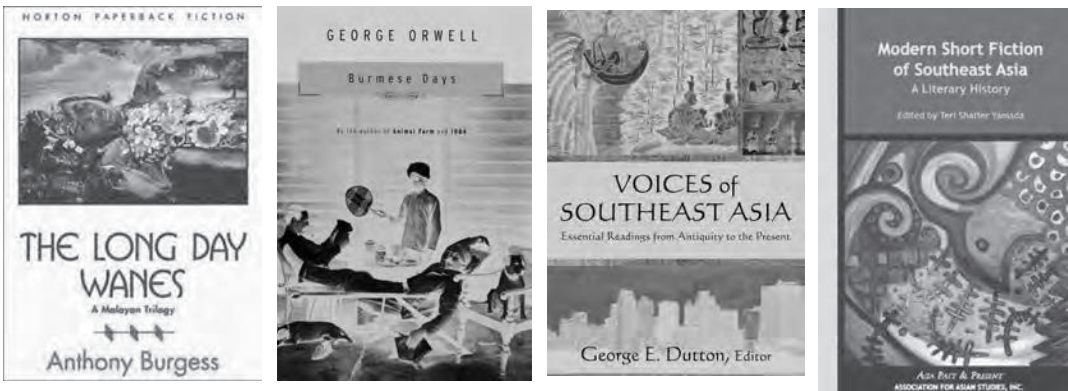
book, *London: The Selden Map and the Making of a Global City, 1549–1689*. In his talk, Batchelor used numerous maps and graphics to display the trade patterns connecting Southeast Asia to southern China and beyond.

His initial introduction of the map and trade patterns quickly expanded to discussions of seafaring technologies and nautical methods of location while on the oceans, as well as the currents and annual climatic variations that have shaped Southeast Asia's contacts with different parts of Asia and the wider world. He then showed how Southeast Asia's maritime nature affected not only trade and migration patterns of various ethno-linguistic groups, but also state development and the spread of religion, especially Buddhism and Islam from India.





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In addition to his own book, *Education About Asia* readers who are interested in understanding early China's interactions with Southeast Asia should access Batchelor's article "The Selden Map and the Archipelagos of East and Southeast Asia" in the fall 2014 issue of *Education About Asia*, and a link to the article is included in the resources list. Charles Wheeler is another historian of Southeast Asia who has written about Vietnamese maritime interactions with other parts of Southeast Asia and China that influenced world history. Readers can learn about both maritime and land interactions between the peoples of what is now Việt Nam and other parts of Asia through reading the article "Silk Roads into Vietnamese History" in the winter 2005 issue of *Education About Asia*. Wheeler tells the story about how, beginning even before the Common Era, land routes in what is now Việt Nam led to settlements along the long coastline, which facilitated the transmission and reception of goods and ideas to and from other cultures; please see the link to the article in the resources list.

Participants were served a buffet supper and then reassembled for a short session on the region's literature and culture that I conducted. For this session, I assembled a display table of titles by Southeast Asian and noteworthy European authors. I had used all the books as supplements in my own courses and found them to have been appreciated by the student readers.

The titles varied from the Vietnamese writer Nguyen Du's epic poem *The Tale of Kieu* to Pramoedaya Ananta Toer's *Child of All Nations*—one of the titles in his internationally acclaimed *Buru Quartet* of historical novels—to F. Sionil Jose's *Dusk*, a novel set at the end of Spanish colonial rule

in the Philippines. The recommended European authors included Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* for Việt Nam, George Orwell's *Burmese Days* and Anthony Burgess's *The Long Day Wanes*, set in post-World War II Malaysia. The edited volumes *Voices of Southeast Asia*, compiled by George E. Dutton, and Teri S. Yamada's *Modern Short Fiction of Southeast Asia* are especially useful for world literature classes.

The participants returned Saturday for two final sessions. Professor Eric Kendrick was the first morning speaker, addressing the topic "Indigenous Cultures of Southeast Asia: Language, Religion, and Culture"; an eighty-five-slide PowerPoint he used in his presentation may be accessed through the resources list. Kendrick is an English as a Second Language Assistant Professor at Georgia Perimeter College who has an active interest in the Southeast Asian immigrant community in the Atlanta metro area and has traveled to Southeast Asia, especially Việt Nam, a number of times to work with and study indigenous cultures.

Kendrick began by defining what indigenous minorities groups were, where they lived, and their subordinate socio-economic position. In Southeast Asia, some countries such as Cambodia are very homogeneous, but others such as Myanmar/Burma and Laos have large and even majority populations of

"minority" peoples. Despite their numbers, the indigenous peoples are frequently discriminated against in national political, economic, and religious life. They are marginalized linguistically and often receive few social services such as education and health care.

I began the final presentation, "Islam in Southeast Asia," which is the name of a course I recently introduced at Georgia Southern University. I then discussed some of the most useful reading material for classrooms or as resource material for the instructor. These sources included the historical text by Howard Federspiel, *Sultans, Shamans & Saints: Islam and Muslims in Southeast Asia* and the Asia Society's workbook, *Interweaving Cultures: Islam in Southeast Asia: A Guide for Teachers and Students*. In addition to these historical and cultural materials, I recommended Gordon P. Means' *Political Islam in Southeast Asia*.

Most of this last session, however, was conducted by Georgia Perimeter College Political Science Assistant Professor Shyam Sriram, who talked about Islam as a faith and linked Southeast Asia to the wider Darul Islam. Sriram was born and raised a Hindu in India but converted to Islam and has worked with Atlanta's Southeast Asian immigrant Muslims and traveled in the area. He did a marvelous job linking the Atlanta Metro area, Southeast Asia, and the global Islamic community.

### Working in the Present, Looking to the Future

In this day of continued underfunding of education, Georgia's Asia Council began its series of faculty development workshops that are not intended to permanently replace the valuable experience of bringing the state's faculty to Asia. However, given current political-economic realities, it is

better to offer workshops such as these so non-Asianist faculty can be prepared to infuse some Asian content into their core curriculum courses. The Council is now making plans for its fourth workshop that will be devoted to Japan. If individuals in other states are interested in more detailed information, we invite inquiries. ■

## NOTES

1. See the Asia Council website at <http://tinyurl.com/n2xp8yr>.
2. In addition to my *World History Bulletin* article, participants also received copies of the long out-of-print *World of Southeast Asia* book of primary source readings by Harry Benda and John Larkin (used copies can be purchased online) and a bibliography for the region's history on USB thumb drives.
3. Readers interested in further information about the 1997 Asian financial crisis should see Jonathan Leightner, "Thailand's Financial Crisis: Its Causes, Consequences, and Implications," *Journal of Economic Issues* 41, no. 1 (2007): 61–76 and two chapters from his book *The Limits of Fiscal, Monetary, and Trade Policies: International Comparisons and Solutions* (Singapore, World Scientific, 2014).

## SOUTHEAST ASIA RESOURCES LIST FROM APRIL 2014 WORKSHOP FROM PAUL RODELL'S SOUTHEAST ASIAN HISTORY PRESENTATION

"Southeast Asia in World History," *World History Bulletin*, Spring 2009. Available at <http://tinyurl.com/mmut7v9>

## PDF AND POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS

- "Southeast Asia History: Themes & Resources," <http://tinyurl.com/pawfzlt>.
- "Early Southeast Asian States," part 1, <http://tinyurl.com/qkqkmcw>; part 3, <http://tinyurl.com/ltn6whm>. (part 2 is currently unavailable online).
- "Cultural Southeast Asia," <http://tinyurl.com/kht2z4s>.
- "India and the Southeast Asian Connection," <http://tinyurl.com/nnsakrj>.
- "Southeast Asia Trade and Europe," part 1, <http://tinyurl.com/qz39m7y>; part 2, <http://tinyurl.com/onrovot>.
- "Overseas Chinese," <http://tinyurl.com/pqfnup6>.
- "Colonial Economic and Social Transformation," part 1, <http://tinyurl.com/oorxvsg>; part II, <http://tinyurl.com/ox743c4>.
- "Nationalism and Social Change," part 1, <http://tinyurl.com/m83alg6>; part 2, <http://tinyurl.com/pgu9ke4>; part 3, <http://tinyurl.com/kuufxrs>.
- "WWII as a Catalyst," part 1, <http://tinyurl.com/qajgg5q>; part 2, <http://tinyurl.com/pn27xaj>.
- "Southeast Asia Online Resources," <http://tinyurl.com/mmut7v9>.
- "Southeast Asian Literatures," <http://tinyurl.com/lm3acsl>.

## FROM JONATHAN LEIGHTNER'S 1997 THAILAND FINANCIAL CRISIS PRESENTATION

## PDF PRESENTATIONS

- "Lessons from Thailand's 1997 Financial Crisis for the Current Global Economy," <http://tinyurl.com/qcexc8e>.
- "Introduction to the Worldwide Economic Crisis," <http://tinyurl.com/lxrby3n>.
- "Banking Policy," <http://tinyurl.com/o7unjon>.

## RELATED MATERIALS FOR ROBERT BATCHELOR'S THE SELDEN MAP AND SOUTHEAST ASIA PRESENTATION

- Batchelor, Robert. "The Selden Map and the Archipelagos of East and Southeast Asia." *Education About Asia* 19, no. 2 (2014): 33–38. <http://tinyurl.com/oelb736>.
- Wheeler, Charles. "Silk Roads into Vietnamese History." *Education About Asia* 10, no. 3 (2005): 8–12. <http://tinyurl.com/qam7mkb>.

## FROM ERIC KENDRICK'S INDIGENOUS CULTURES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA PRESENTATION

## PDF PRESENTATION


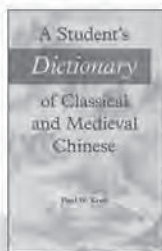

- "Indigenous Cultures of Southeast Asia: Language, Religion, and Culture," <http://tinyurl.com/lmmweep>.

## RECOMMENDED BOOKS FROM THE SOUTHEAST ASIA WORKSHOP

- Batchelor, Robert. *London: The Selden Map and the Making of a Global City, 1549–1689*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.
- Burgess, Anthony. *The Long Day Wanes*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993.
- Cole, Elizabeth A., and Marleen Kassel. *Interweaving Cultures: Islam in Southeast Asia: A Guide for Teachers and Students*. New York: Asia Society, 2007.
- Du, Nguyen. *The Tale of Kieu*. Translated by Huynh Sanh Thong. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.
- Dutton, George E. *Voices of Southeast Asia*. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2014.
- Federspiel, Howard. *Sultans, Shamans & Saints: Islam and Muslims in Southeast Asia*. University of Hawai'i Press, 2007.
- Greene, Graham. *The Quiet American*. London: Penguin Classics, 2004.
- Jose, F. Sionil. *Dusk: A Novel*. New York: Modern Library, 1998.
- Means, Gordon P. *Political Islam in Southeast Asia*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009.
- Orwell, George. *Burmese Days*. New York: Mariner Books, 1974.
- Toer, Pramoedaya Ananta. *Child of All Nations*. Westminister: Penguin Books, 1996.
- Yamada, Teri Shaffer. *Modern Short Fiction of Southeast Asia*. Ann Arbor: Association of Asian Studies, 2009.

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SALLI VARGIS earned her PhD in History from Mississippi State University with a minor in Asian Studies. She has been teaching at Georgia Perimeter College since 1995 and is a Professor of History and Honors Coordinator at the Newton Campus. Vargis is very active in international education and serves as chair of the University System of Georgia's Asia Council, which conducts faculty development workshops and study abroad programs.

<p><b>A Student's Dictionary of Classical and Medieval Chinese</b></p> <p>Paul W. Kroll</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• December 2014</li> <li>• ISBN 978 90 04 28365 7</li> <li>• Paperback, xvi, 714 pp.</li> </ul> <p>• <b>List price EUR 49,- / US\$ 49.-</b></p> <p>Also available as hardback!</p>	<p><b>Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism – now complete!</b></p> <p>Edited by Knut A. Jacobsen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• December 2014</li> <li>• ISBN 978 90 04 27128 9</li> <li>• Hardback, 6 vols.</li> </ul> <p>Also available as online resource: <a href="http://brill.com/ehnl">brill.com/ehnl</a></p>
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