

HH3023 Burma/Myanmar: A History



Instructor: Dr Goh Geok Yian

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 2-3pm, or by appointment

Seminar day, time and venue: Tuesday, 9:30-12:30, HSS-TR+2 (HSS-B1-07)

Course Aims

Burma/Myanmar: A History introduces you to the development of cultures, peoples, polities, and societies which occupy the territory of what constitutes the modern nation-state of Myanmar. The course draws materials from archaeology, history, and art history. By drawing case studies, examples, images and readings, the course helps you to acquire elementary skills to interpret the information you learn in the class meetings. Once you can identify and contrast available data, you will be able to compose historical narratives surveying and evaluating societies and peoples of Burma/Myanmar from ancient times to the present day. Discussion about the case studies is significant because the sites examined formed the early connecting nodes of what might have been an extensive network of technology transfer along the north-south and east-west corridors linking China and India via mainland Southeast Asia. You will also learn what sources are available, how scholars used these sources, and how they come to write the essays they wrote.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)

By the end of this course, you (as a student) will be able to:

1. Explain the difference between the nomenclature of Burma versus Myanmar.
2. Describe important events and developments in the history of Burma/Myanmar from prehistory to the present day.
3. Discuss major themes in the study of Burmese historiography.
4. Formulate an argument on the place and importance of Burma/Myanmar in Southeast Asian and world histories.

Course Content

This course explores the development of cultures, peoples, polities, and societies which occupy the territory of what constitutes the modern nation-state of Myanmar. This course provides a diachronic account of the beginning of cultures in prehistoric Myanmar starting with what archaeologists and palaeoanthropologists identified as the prehistoric communities who established settlements in Iron Age sites such as those in Ywa Htin and Nyaunggan. These sites are significant because they formed the early connecting nodes of what might have been an extensive network of technology transfer along the north-south and east-west corridors linking China and India via mainland Southeast Asia. Students will then follow the development of Burma/Myanmar chronologically from prehistory through the classical and colonial periods to the present day. This course examines key themes of each important historical period to provide a continuous and coherent account of the geo-spatial entity, Burma/Myanmar up to the 21st century.

List of key topics taught is as follows:

1. Key themes, such as continuity versus discontinuity, tradition versus modernity, urban versus rural, highlands versus lowlands, etc
2. Type of sources, such as archaeological and art historical for periods spanning from prehistory through 20th century, historical documents such as inscriptions, chronicles and other written sources from 600 CE, oral histories and traditions for the period since the 19th century etc.
3. Different periods in Burma/Myanmar's history:
 - Prehistory
 - Protohistory: Pyu
 - Classical periods: a) Bagan, b) Fragmentary polities: Ava and Bago, c) Hanthawati-Taungngu, d) Ava, e) Konbaung
 - Anglo-Burmese wars
 - Colonial
 - Japanese Occupation
 - Burma/Myanmar: post-independence
4. Religion: world religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism versus supernaturalism
5. Kingship and political government
6. Type of economy in Burma between the precolonial, colonial and postcolonial periods
7. Monumental Architecture
8. Population and demographics: urban versus rural areas, different regions
9. Ethnicity: ethnic majority versus minority groups
10. Urbanization

Assessment (includes both continuous and summative assessment)

Component	Weighting	Team/Individual
1. Seminar Presentations	30%	Team
2. Short Paper Responses	20%	Individual

3. Participation in class discussions	10%	Individual
4. Research Paper	40%	Individual

Seminar Presentations - 30%:

Students are expected to take turns to present readings to the class in a pair. Students will present and lead discussions during these presentations; each student is expected to complete a total of three(3) presentations. Two of these presentations will be pair-presentations. The final presentation will be an individual presentation of the student's final research paper. Each pair presentation should last between 20 and 30 minutes including a discussion led by the presenters. Each pair of presenters will receive a group score (15%) and an individual score (15%). The group score is determined by the following criteria: a) coherence, content and structure of the presentation, and b) equitable distribution of the workload (peer feedback about individual contributions to the project is taken into account). The individual score will be assessed based on the individual performance in producing the presentation, delivering it, and in responding to questions from the class.

Short Paper Responses - 20%:

Students are required to submit four(4) short paper responses (400-500 words each) during the semester. The topics for these response papers will be given in class: two in the first half and two in the second half. Students are expected to utilize relevant course readings to write these response papers.

Participation in class discussions - 10%:

Students are expected to participate in class discussions and any activities conducted within the classroom.

Research Paper - 40%:

Students are required to submit a final research paper of 3,500-4,000 words, exclusive of citations and bibliography. The topic of this paper must be related to one or several themes examined in this course. Students will select a book title from a list of readings comprising largely primary sources (historical and literary writings such as novels) written by Burmese (translated) and non-Burmese. Students must discuss contents and themes of the book within the historical context which it characterizes as well as the context within which the text was produced. Students must also relate the book to the subjects examined in the course, for instance, if a student elects to read *Blood Bond (Thway)*, he or she can discuss the narrative and themes of the book in the context of the way the Japanese Occupation was experienced in Myanmar. The paper must be accompanied by a bibliography of academic works. For instance, for the discussion of *Blood Bond*, students should reference works by R. Taylor, Thant Myint-U, M. Callahan, and Dorothy Guyot etc.

Formative feedback

You will receive formative feedback through written responses to your papers and verbal feedback through in-class comments on students' group presentations and discussion. Generic summative feedback will be given to seminar group presentations and personal specific feedback (to individual written assignments) will be given to individual student.

I will consider the following points when giving comments to students:

1. Provide constructive and positive feedback whenever possible.
2. Return my feedback to students as soon as I can.
3. I will be specific in making suggestions regarding how each student can improve on her/his work.
4. Focus on the students' advancement toward their goal.
5. With respect to presentations and in-class discussions, I will encourage students to express their views freely.

Learning and Teaching approach

Approach	How does this approach support students in achieving the learning outcomes?
Lecture	The instructor will begin each seminar with a presentation introducing and providing the context for understanding each week's theme. The presentation will last between 30 and 45 minutes and includes the use of slides and other multi-media files.
Team-based presentations	Students in the class would select topics they want to present. The presentations provide opportunities for the students to practice public speaking and allow them to hone their presentation skills in a supportive environment. The presenters will respond to questions and comments from the instructor and the class; they would have to think quickly and respond to the questions posed to them. The students will learn teamwork.
In-class free-style discussions	The students will be encouraged to comment, critique, and make queries on the group presentations. This approach allows students to develop confidence in public speaking and also alert them to the importance of peer feedback.

Reading and References

Texts subject to changes.

Textbooks/References

1. Aung-Thwin, Michael. *Pagan: the Origins of Modern Burma*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985.
2. Aung-Thwin, Michael. *Myth and History in the Historiography of Early Burma: Paradigms, Primary Sources, and Prejudices*. Singapore; Athens: 1998.
3. Aung-Thwin, Michael and Maitrii Aung-Thwin. *A History of Myanmar Since Ancient Times: Traditions and Transformations*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2013.
4. Aung-Thwin, Maitrii. *The Return of the Galon King: History, Law, and Rebellion in Colonial Burma*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010.
5. Bennett, Paul. *Conference under the Tamarind Tree: Three Essays in Burmese History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971.

6. Callahan, Mary P. *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.
7. Goh Geok Yian. *The Wheel-Turner and His House: Kingship in a Buddhist Ecumene*. Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2015.
8. Goh Geok Yian, John Miksic, and Michael Aung-Thwin (eds.) *Bagan and the World: Early Myanmar and Its Global Connections*. Singapore: ISEAS Press, 2017.
9. Ikeya, Chie. *Refiguring Women, Colonialism, and Modernity in Burma*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011.
10. Lieberman, Victor. *Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy and Conquest, c. 1580-1760*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984.
11. Lieberman, Victor. *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800-1830*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
12. Ma Ma Lay. *Not Out of Hate: A Novel of Burma, transl. by Margaret Aung-Thwin*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1991.
13. Miksic, John and Goh Geok Yian. *Ancient Southeast Asia*. London and New York: Routledge, 2016.
14. Scott, James. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.
15. Steinberg, David I. *Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: 2009.
16. Taylor, Robert H. *The State in Myanmar*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009.
17. Thant Myint-U. *The Making of Modern Burma*. New York: 2001.
18. Thant Myint-U. *The River of Lost Footsteps*. New York: 2006.

List of Books for Research Paper*

*Students who wish to read other titles rather than the ones listed here must seek approval first before proceeding to write their paper on the book they select.

1. Aung San Suu Kyi. *Freedom from Fear and Other Writings*. New York: Penguin, 1991.
2. Collis, Maurice. *Trials in Burma*. London: Faber and Faber, 2011.
3. Journal Kyaw Ma Ma Lay. *A man like him: Portrait of the Burmese Journalist, Journal Kyaw U Chit Maung*. Translated by Ma Thanegi. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008.
4. Ma Ma Lay. *Blood Bond. Translated by Than Than Win*. Honolulu: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 2004.
5. Ma Ma Lay. *Not Out of Hate*. Translated by Margaret Aung-Thwin. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1991.
6. *The Glass Palace Chronicle*. Translated by Pe Maung Tin and G.H. Luce. Rangoon: Rangoon University Press, 1960.
7. Orwell, George. *Burmese Days*. Mariner Books, 1974.
8. Pascal Khoo Thwe. *From the Land of Green Ghosts: A Burmese Odyssey*. London: Perennial, 2003.
9. Shway Yoe (James George Scott). *The Burman: His life and notions*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1963.
10. Thant Myint-U. *The River of Lost Footsteps*. New York: 2006.

Course Policies and Student Responsibilities

(1) General

You are expected to complete all assigned pre-class readings and activities, attend all seminar

classes punctually and take all scheduled assignments and tests by due dates. You are expected to take responsibility to follow up with course notes, assignments and course related announcements for seminar sessions you have missed. You are expected to participate in all seminar discussions and activities.

(2) Absenteeism

Group presentations and in-class discussions require students to attend classes in order for them to contribute to the course discussions. Absence from class without a valid reason can affect your overall course grade. Valid reasons include falling sick supported by a medical certificate and participation in NTU's approved activities supported by an excuse letter from the relevant bodies.

If you miss a class, you must inform the course instructor via email (gygoh@ntu.edu.sg) prior to the start of the class.

(3) Penalties for late submission

Penalties will be levied for late submissions unless there are approved medical or other certificated reasons explaining the delay. Students must ensure that they inform the instructor regarding any delay as soon as possible. Students failing to submit an assignment will be denied credit points for this course. In exceptional circumstances extensions may be granted for individual students, but only for students who ask BEFORE the assignments' submission dates.

(4) Plagiarism in writing research papers

It is important that all unacknowledged materials in students' essays are their own work. The University has strict rules pertaining to plagiarism that may result in disciplinary procedures. Students are reminded that copying or using any part of any essay (published and unpublished) and any other written work including another student's essay or written work without citing the author(s) is considered plagiarism. Verbatim citations from other writings must be placed within quotation marks. Students are encouraged to paraphrase sources. Whether quotations and/or paraphrases are used, students are required to cite their sources.

Academic Integrity

Good academic work depends on honesty and ethical behaviour. The quality of your work as a student relies on adhering to the principles of academic integrity and to the NTU Honour Code, a set of values shared by the whole university community. Truth, Trust and Justice are at the core of NTU's shared values.

As a student, it is important that you recognize your responsibilities in understanding and applying the principles of academic integrity in all the work you do at NTU. Not knowing what is involved in maintaining academic integrity does not excuse academic dishonesty. You need to actively equip yourself with strategies to avoid all forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, academic fraud, collusion and cheating. If you are uncertain of the definitions of any of these terms, you should go to the [academic integrity website](#) for more information. Consult your instructor(s) if you need any clarification about the requirements of academic integrity in the course.

Course Instructors

Instructor	Office Location	Phone	Email
Goh Geok Yian Associate Professor of History	HSS-03-84D/ HSS-05-09	6904-2072 / 6513-8163	gygoh@ntu.edu.sg

Planned Weekly Schedule

Week	Topic	Course LO	Readings/ Activities
1	Burma: an overview: geography, environment, climate, people, culture etc	1, 2	<p><u>Readings:</u> Aung-Thwin, M. and M. Aung-Thwin. A History of Myanmar Since Ancient Times. London: Reaktion Book, 2012. "Prologue", "Introduction", and "Setting".</p> <p><u>Activities:</u> Introductory lecture and class discussions. Housekeeping matters: such as assigning presentation topics.</p>
2	Key themes, approaches, periods, and concepts. Prehistory Studying Burmese history: the sources	1, 2, 3, 4	<p><u>Readings for Prehistory:</u> Aung-Thwin, M. "Origins and Development of the Field of Prehistory in Burma," <i>Asian Perspectives</i> 40, 1 (2001): 6-34.</p> <p>Moore, E. <i>Early Landscapes of Myanmar</i>. Bangkok: River Books, 2007. "Chindwin and Samon Chiefdoms," pp. 85-128.</p> <p><u>Reading on the relevance of studies on prehistory in modern Myanmar:</u> Higham, Charles. "Archaeology in Myanmar: Past, Present, and Future," <i>Asian Perspectives</i> 40, 1 (2001): 127-38.</p> <p><u>Activities:</u> General discussions on Weeks 1 and 2 readings.</p>

			<p>Students read all four readings and come prepared to discuss these readings.</p> <p>Students should form pairs and sign up for presentations for the first half of the semester presentations.</p>
3	Pre-Bagan Burma: "Pyu" and other "urban" sites	2, 3, 4	<p><u>Readings:</u> Gutman, Pamela and Bob Hudson. "The archaeology of Burma (Myanmar) from the Neolithic to Pagan". In Ian Glover and Peter Bellwood (eds.) Southeast Asia: From prehistory to history. Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2004, pp. 149-76.</p> <p>Who were the "Pyu"?: Moore, Elizabeth. Early Landscapes of Myanmar. Bangkok: River Books, 2007. "'Pyu' and 'Mon'", pp. 129-228.</p> <p>"Pyu" and Burman/Burmese "civilizations": urbanism and early sites Hudson, B. and Terry Lustig. "Communities of the past: A new view of the old walls and hydraulic system at Sriksetra, Myanmar (Burma)." Journal of Southeast Asian Studies 39, 2 (2008): 269-96.</p> <p><u>Activities: Brief Lecture/ Student Presentations</u></p> <p>Significance of "Pyu" in modern Myanmar?</p> <p>The three student pair presenting this week will present the key ideas</p>

			<p>presented in the readings, critique (not synonymous with criticize) these ideas, and come up with questions which they will ask the class. Presenters' performance will be graded based on both their presentations (content and structure) and their ability to engage the class in discussions. <u>This will be the standard format for each seminar meeting.</u></p>
4	Bagan: capital and polity of the first Myanmar Empire	2, 3, 4	<p><u>Readings:</u> Aung-Thwin, M. and M. Aung-Thwin. A History of Myanmar Since Ancient Times. London: Reaktion Book, 2012. "Pagan: The Golden Age of Myanmar."</p> <p>Strachan, Paul. Imperial Pagan: Art and Architecture of Old Burma. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989. "Introduction", and Chapters 1-3.</p> <p><u>Spotlight-Kingship and Religion</u> <u>Religion:</u> Lieberman, Victor. "The Political Significance of Religious Wealth in Burmese History: Some Further Thoughts." Journal of Asian Studies 39, 4 (1980):753-69.</p> <p>Aung-Thwin, M. "The Role of Sasana Reform in Burmese History: Economic Dimensions of a Religious Purification." The Journal of Asian Studies 38, 4 (1979): 671-88.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Kingship:</p>

			<p>Goh, Geok Yian. <i>The Wheel-Turner and His House: Kingship in a Buddhist Ecumene</i>. Dekalb: NIU Press, 2015. Chapters 1 and 2.</p> <p><u>Activities: Brief Lecture/ Student Presentations</u></p>
5	After Bagan: Ava and Bago (Pegu) – fragmentary polities?	2, 3, 4	<p><u>Readings:</u></p> <p>Aung-Thwin, M. “A tale of two kingdoms: Ava and Pegu in the fifteenth century,” <i>Journal of Southeast Asian Studies</i> 42, 1 (2011): 1-16.</p> <p>Aung-Thwin, M. <i>Myth & History in the Historiography of Early Burma</i>. Athens and Singapore: Ohio University Centre for International Studies and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998.</p> <p>Bennett, Paul. <i>Conference under the Tamarind Tree</i>. New Haven, C.T.: Yale University Press, 1971. “The ‘Fall of Pagan: Continuity and Change in 14th-Century Burma.”</p> <p><u>Activities: Brief Lecture/ Student Presentations</u></p>
6	Taungngu: Hanthawati-Bago	2, 3, 4	<p><u>Readings:</u></p> <p>Lieberman, Victor. <i>Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy and Conquest, c. 1580-1760</i>. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984. Chapter 1.</p> <p>Elephant wars: Than Tun and Sunait Chutintaranond. <i>On Both Sides of the Tenasserim Range</i>. Bangkok: Institute of Asian</p>

			<p>Studies, 1995.</p> <p>Miksic, John and Goh Geok Yian. Ancient Southeast Asia. London: Routledge, 2016. Chapter on “Elephant Wars and Theravada Buddhism on Mainland Southeast Asia”.</p> <p><u>Activities: Brief Lecture/ Student Presentations</u></p>
7	Restored Taungngu: Second Ava	2, 3, 4	<p><u>Readings:</u></p> <p>Lieberman, Victor. Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy and Conquest, c. 1580-1760. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984. Chapter 2.</p> <p>Goh Geok Yian. The Wheel-Turner and His House: Kingship in a Buddhist Ecumene. Dekalb: NIU Press, 2015. Chapter 4.</p> <p><u>Activities: Brief Lecture/ Student Presentations</u></p>
8	Konbaung Dynasty, 1752-1826	2, 3, 4	<p><u>Readings:</u></p> <p>Thant Myint-U. The Making of Modern Burma. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Chapters 1-3.</p> <p>Yi Yi. “Life at the Burmese Court under the Konbaung Kings”. Burma Historical Research Department Silver Jubilee publication.</p> <p><u>Activities: Brief Lecture/ Student Presentations</u></p>
9	The British and Burma: three Anglo-Burmese Wars	2, 3, 4	<p><u>Readings:</u></p> <p>Thant Myint U. The Making of Modern Burma. New York:</p>

			<p>Cambridge University Press, 2004. Chapters 4-7.</p> <p><i>Spotlight: Colonialism and Archaeology: the making of British Burma:</i></p> <p>Glover, Ian. "National and Political Uses of Archaeology in South-East Asia", <i>Indonesia and the Malay World</i> 31, 89 (2003): 16-30.</p> <p>Moore, Elizabeth. "Pagoda Desecration and Myanmar Archaeology, 1853-86". In M.J. Klokke and V. Degroot (eds.) <i>Materializing Southeast Asia's Past</i>. Singapore: NUS Press, 2013, pp. 242-52.</p> <p>OR</p> <p><i>Political Institution:</i></p> <p>Taylor, Robert. <i>The State in Myanmar</i>. Singapore NUS Press, 2009. Chapter 2.</p> <p><u>Activities: Brief Lecture/ Student Presentations</u></p>
10	British Burma: 1886-1942	1, 2, 3, 4	<p><u>Readings</u></p> <p>Taylor, Robert. <i>The State in Myanmar</i>. Singapore NUS Press, 2009. Chapter 3.</p> <p>Thant Myint U. <i>The Making of Modern Burma</i>. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Chapter 8.</p> <p><i>The Colonizers/The Colonized: Mentalite of British Burma</i></p> <p>George Orwell's <i>Burmese Days</i>. First publication in 1934. Excerpts. Free online e-copy: (https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/o/orwell/george/o79b/)</p>

			<p>Ma Ma Lay''s Not Out of Hate. Translated by Margaret Aung-Thwin. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1991. Excerpts.</p> <p><u>Activities: Brief Lecture/ Student Presentations</u></p>
11	The Japanese Occupation & Burmese Independence	2, 3, 4	<p><u>Readings:</u></p> <p>Taylor, Robert. The State in Myanmar. Singapore NUS Press, 2009. Chapter 4.</p> <p>Callahan, Mary. Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003. Chapters 1-2.</p> <p>Japanese Occupation in Burmese Biography and Novel: Journal Kyaw Ma Ma Lay. A man like him: Portrait of the Burmese Journalist, Journal Kyaw U Chit Maung. Translated by Ma Thanegi. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008. Excerpts.</p> <p>Ma Ma Lay. Blood Bond. Translated by Than Than Win. Honolulu: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 2004. Excerpts.</p> <p><u>Activities: Brief Lecture/ Student Presentations</u></p>
12	Burma/Myanmar: 1962-2015	1, 2, 3, 4	<p>General reading:</p> <p>Aung-Thwin, M. "Mranna Pran: When context encounters notion." Journal of Southeast Asian Studies 39, 2 (2008): 193-217.</p> <p>The Myanmar State: Callahan, Mary. Making</p>

			<p>Enemies: War and State Building in Burma. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003. Chapter 7.</p> <p>Steinberg, David. Burma: The State of Myanmar. Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2001. Chapters 1-2.</p> <p>The Lesser-known Myanmar: Schober, Juliane. "The Longevity of Weikza and Their Practices," Journal of Burma Studies 16, 2 (2012): 283-307.</p> <p><u>Activities: Brief Lecture/ Free-style discussions on week's topic</u></p>
13	Research Paper Presentations	1, 2, 3, 4	<p><u>Activities:</u> student presentations on their research paper topic (10 minutes each)</p>