

Yale-NUS College

**YID3206 AGRARIAN CHANGE AND
ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSFORMATIONS**
Semester 1, AY 2017-18

Global Room 1, EC-01-03A, Tuesdays and Fridays, 1-2:30 pm

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Rural studies remain to be an important area of scholarship in the 21st century. Although the United Nations claim that we are now entering an era of rapid urbanisation, agrarian change and the associated environmental transformations will continue to spark interest among policymakers, academics, activists, and most importantly farmers. For one, rural population is still more than half of the total in South and Southeast Asia, and the circumstances of de-agrarianisation are still debated. More importantly, most of the resources consumed in urban areas are still produced in agrarian spaces and resource frontiers. Food production in rural areas, in particular, is expected to prevail and the pressure to produce biofuels on agrarian lands is ever present. Large tracts of rural lands in the ‘Global South’ are being acquired to ‘create’ new production spaces that cater to the growing consumer demands of wealthier countries (and their cities). Cases of state- and market-driven re-agrarianisation and re-peasantisation are being documented, allegedly in response to these growing resource demands. Meanwhile, agriculture continues to encroach on frontier lands to give way to agri-industrial crops, as evident in the case of massive deforestation in Indonesia and the Amazon. The haze that periodically choke us here in Singapore reminds us of the agrarian changes and environmental transformations happening at immense scales in communities elsewhere. The situation is much worse for those living in the hinterlands, uplands, and frontier lands—the peasants and indigenous farmers—who are vulnerable and directly exposed to the processes of agri-industrialisation.

This module will introduce students to the field of agrarian change and its intersections with environmental transformations. This body of literature draws primarily from critical agrarian studies (political economy and political ecology), with contributions from environmental studies, rural and environmental sociology, environmental history, cultural ecology, and Science, Technology, and Society. The module is organized around interactive lectures and intensive class discussions, with opportunities for students to participate in a field trip in rural Malaysia. The expected learning outcomes for the students are as follows:



- 1) students will be familiar with historical and contemporary social, economic, political and cultural processes involved in agrarian-environmental changes in the lowlands, uplands, and highlands. By the end of the semester, they will be knowledgeable of processes like rural-urban migration, de-agrarianisation, land control and exclusion, re-agrarianisation, among others;
- 2) students will be knowledgeable of concepts and theories useful to critically engage agrarian-environmental issues, such as commoditisation and commodification, primitive accumulation, accumulation by dispossession, territorialisation, conservation enclosures, intimate exclusions, environmental and agrarian governmentality, class differentiation, ethnic formations, gendered agrarian analysis, everyday forms of resistance, social and cultural remittances, among others;
- 3) students will be capable of drawing from, building on, and critiquing theories and concepts in examining the complexities and nuances of any case of interest in agrarian-environmental change; and
- 4) Lastly, students will have the competence to write pointed critical essays, a visual narrative essay, and an academic paper on agrarian change.

Course Material:

The readings will be as follows:

- Altieri, M. 2009. Agroecology, small farms, and food sovereignty. *Monthly Review*, 61(3), 102-113.
- Baird, I., Barney, K. 2017. The political ecology of cross-sectoral cumulative impacts: modern landscapes, large hydropower dams, and industrial tree plantations in Laos and Cambodia. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 44(4), 769-795.
- Baka, J. 2013. The political construction of wasteland: Governmentality, land acquisition and social inequality in South India. *Development and Change*, 44(2), 409-428.
- Bernstein, H. 2010. Class dynamics of agrarian change. Fernwood: Nova Scotia, CA. Chapters 7 and 8.
- Borras, S.M. 2008. Competing views and strategies on agrarian reform: International perspectives. Ateneo de Manila Press: Manila, Philippines. (Selected chapters)
- Borras, S.M., Edelman, M., & Kay, C. 2008. Transnational agrarian movements: origins and politics, campaigns and impact. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 8, 169-204.
- Borras, S.M., Franco, J.C. 2012. Global land grabbing and trajectories of agrarian change: A preliminary analysis. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 12(1), 34-59.
- Brad, A., Schaffartzik, A., Pichler, M., Plank, C. 2015. Contested territorialisation and

- biophysical expansion of oil palm plantations in Indonesia. *Geoforum*, 64, 100-111.
- Dressler, W. 2014. Green governmentality and swidden decline on Palawan Island. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 39, 250-264.
 - Dressler, W., Guieb, E.R. 2015. Violent enclosures, violated livelihoods: environmental and military territoriality in a Philippine frontier. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 42(2), 323-345.
 - Glover, D., Stone, G.D. 2017. Heirloom rice in Ifugao: an 'anti-commodity' in the process of commodification. *Journal of Peasant Studies* (online first)
 - Grainer, C., & Sakdapolrak, P. 2013. Rural-urban migration, agrarian change, and the environment in Kenya: a critical review of the literature. *Population and Environment*, 34(4), 524-553.
 - Hall, D., Hirsch, P., & Li, T.M. 2011. Powers of exclusion: Land dilemmas in Southeast Asia. NUS Press: Singapore. Chapters 1 and 6.
 - Hill, R.D. 2013. Agriculture in the Malaysia region. Singapore, Singapore: NUS Press. (selected chapters)
 - Jackson, C. 2003. Gender analysis of land: Beyond land rights for women? *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 3(4), 453-480.
 - Li, T.M. 2010. Indigeneity, capitalism, and the management of dispossession. *Current Anthropology*, 51(3), 385-400.
 - Lipper, L. et al. 2014. Climate-smart agriculture for food security. *Nature Climate Change*, 4, 1068-1072.
 - Manno, J.P. 2012. Introduction to the special issue on commoditization, *Bulletin of Science, Technology, and Society*, 32(1), 3-6.
 - McMichael, P. 2013. Food regimes and agrarian questions. Fernwood: Nova Scotia, CA. Chapters 2, 3 and 4.
 - Montefrio, M.J.F. 2012. Privileged biofuels, marginalized indigenous peoples: The coevolution of biofuels development in the tropics. *Bulletin of Science, Technology, and Society*, 32(1), 41-55.
 - Montefrio, M.J.F., Ortiga, Y.Y., & Josol, M.R.C. 2014. Inducing development: Social remittances and the expansion of oil palm. *International Migration Review*, 48(1), 216-242.
 - Montefrio, M.J.F. 2016. Land control dynamics and socio-ecological transformations in upland Philippines. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 44(4), 796-816.
 - Muller, C. et al. 2011. Climate change risks for African agriculture. *PNAS*, 108(11), 4313-4315.
 - Peluso, N.L. 2009. Rubber erasures, rubber producing rights: Making racialized territories in West Kalimantan, Indonesia. *Development and Change*, 40(1), 47-80.
 - Razavi, S. 2009. Engendering the political economy of agrarian change. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36(1), 197-226.
 - Rigg, J. 2006. Land, farming, livelihoods, and poverty: Rethinking the links in the rural south. *World Development*, 34(1), 180-202.
 - Scott, J. 1985. Weapons of the weak: everyday forms of peasant resistance. Yale Press: New Haven, CT. (selected chapters)
 - Sikor, T., & Vi, P.T.T. 2005. The dynamics of commoditization in Vietnamese uplands village, 1980-2000. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 5(3), 405-428.
 - Taylor, M. 2017. Climate-smart agriculture: what is it good for? *Journal of Peasant Studies* (online first).
 - Van den Berg, L., Hebinck, P., Roep, D. 2017. 'We go back to the land': processes of re-peasantisation in Araponga, Brazil. *Journal of Peasant Studies* (online first).

- Vandergeest, P., Peluso, N. 1995. Territorialisation and state power in Thailand. *Theory and Society*, 24 (3), 385–426.
- Woods, K. 2011. Ceasefire capitalism: military-private partnerships, resource concessions and military-state building in the Burma-China borderlands. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38(4), 747-770.
- Zoomers, A. 2010. Globalisation and the foreignisation of space: seven processes driving the current global land grab. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 37(2), 429-447.

Course Assessment Breakdown

Class Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation and attendance in class discussion @ 7% • 8 short written responses @ 8% (due 10 November on a rolling basis) 	15%
500-word critical commentary essays <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 practice essay (due on 22 Aug, Tues) @ 5% • 3 topical essays (due 17 October on a rolling basis) @ 10% 	35%
Visual Narrative Essay (due on 17 Nov, Fri)	20%
Draft Commentary Article <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal (due on 12 Sep, Tues) @ 5% • Extended outline (due on 24 Oct, Tues) @ 5% • Final paper (due on 30 Nov) @ 20% 	30%
TOTAL	100%

Description of Requirements

Class Participation (15%) = participation in class discussion (7%) + short responses (8%)

Students are expected to read all the assigned material prior to attending classes and to participate in all discussions. As Yale-NUS students, they are expected to not just be passive consumers of information; they should *actively engage* with the readings and discussions. The class participation grade (7%) will be based on the contribution students make (i.e. the questions, comments, answers, and feedback given) towards the learning experience of their classmates. An excellent participation grade would mean the student providing meaningful insights in class and small group discussions by raising thought-provoking questions and comments and directly conversing with peers (e.g. questioning or building on someone else's comments). Being part of the "conversation" is key here. Overspeaking and dominating discussions are not encouraged. Hence, participation is not a "quantity game," but rather a measure of the quality of contribution to discussions. Feedback will be provided to each student by the end of Week 6.

To facilitate meaningful discussion in class, students will be required to write **8 short responses** (equating to 8% of the final grade) by the end of Part IV of the course (10 November). A list of questions will be given every after class and each student will have a

choice to answer one question. There are 16 sessions to choose from, but students are only obliged to write 8 short responses. Each short response should be **no longer than 200 words** and **submitted prior to the beginning of a particular class session**. Responses for a particular session submitted after the beginning of class will no longer be accepted (i.e. the canvas submission page will automatically reject submissions after 1 pm, i.e. prior to the start of every class session.) Each student can submit more than 8 responses, but only the top 8 marks will be considered in the final grading. Students are not allowed to submit both short response and critical commentary essay (see below) for the same class session. Each submission will be graded **1 point** for an excellent response, **0.75** for a good response, and **0.5** for an inadequate response.

Critical Commentary Essays (35%)

Part of the learning outcomes for the course is for students to learn to critically engage concepts, theories and debates in agrarian and environmental studies. For this assignment, students will be required to write a total of **four (4)** critical commentary essays: **one (1)** practice essay on the assigned reading for 22 August (Tues); and **three (3)** essays on readings assigned for any of the 12 topics scheduled from 25 August to 17 October. Each commentary essay will be **no longer than 500 words** and is expected to be pointed and well argued, demonstrating strong understanding of relevant concepts and theories. Students are encouraged to complete at least 1 of the 3 topical essays before the recess break. They are encouraged not just to merely use the concepts and theories, but to attempt to critically engage the readings by identifying gaps and weaknesses, adding nuances and complexity, combining with other concepts and theories, to name a few. The instructor's expectations for this particular requirement are high. Given that, students will be allowed to write additional essays should they wish to get higher marks. More details will be given on the first meeting in Week 1. Again, students are not allowed to submit both short response (see above) and critical commentary essay for the same class session.

Visual Narrative Essay (20%)

A visual narrative essay builds on the strengths of both written narratives and photos to tell a compelling story. The photo can capture the attention and interest of the reader, further drawing them to the written arguments. Students will be grouped in pairs to work on a particular theoretically informed story based on an interesting insight they will learn in the field trip. Each pair will select a photo where they will build their narrative or choose a photo based on a planned narrative. **An essay of no longer than 750 words** will accompany the photo. The essay should be tightly argued and theoretically/conceptually informed with appropriate citations. Students who are unable to participate in the field trip can craft a visual narrative essay based on a relevant issue in Singapore (e.g. changes in the remaining peri-urban agricultural productions areas in the city state). The essay (including the hi-res photo) is **due on 17 November (Friday) at 11:59 pm** (via canvas). The visual narrative essays will be exhibited in public towards the end of the semester. More information will be given in Week 8.

A Draft Manuscript (30%)

A draft manuscript is essentially a term paper, but with the added tone of "work in progress" to encourage students to continue working on their preliminary ideas in the future. The paper is an opportunity for students to go deeper into their exploration of particular substantive and theoretical areas discussed in class. Emphasis will be given on meaningful engagement with the literature, concepts, and theories, as they explore particular topics of interest. Essentially, the requirement will ask students to 1) provide an interesting, narrowly defined research question, puzzle, hunch or statement on any topic related to agrarian and environmental

change, 2) locate these within a tightly reviewed literature, 3) provide preliminary analysis using evidence, broadly defined, and 4) recommend future directions for further inquiry. The draft manuscript should be no more than 3500 words. Students will be required to submit a **manuscript proposal by 12 September (Tuesday) at 11:59 pm** and an **extended outline by 24 October (Tuesday) at 11:59 pm** (both via canvas), which will help them build on their complete draft manuscript. The complete draft manuscript is due on **November 30 (Wed) at 11:59 pm**. More information will be given in Week 3.

Late Assignment Policy

Assignment will be considered late if the student misses the deadline without a VR note or Medical Certificate from a Doctor. Late assignments will be deducted by 5 percent per 24 hours after the deadline. Meaning, an assignment graded '90' at the outset will be marked down to '80' if submitted two days after the deadline. Short responses and critical essays submitted after the corresponding class sessions will no longer be accepted.

Canvas Page Policy

All readings are available in the E-Reserve Readings folder of our canvas site. Announcements will be sent out via canvas at least 2 days before each class to remind students of what to do for the upcoming class session. Students will receive every announcement in their Yale-Nus email. Course requirements must be submitted electronically as an MS Word document via Canvas on the day they are due. Grades and feedback on submitted material will be available on canvas as well.

Other Course Policies

- Attendance is required; it is generally acceptable for a student to miss a class or two, but anything beyond that will reflect badly on the student's participation grade. Students should request for permission from the instructor if they anticipate missing a class;
- The teaching methods used in the course require full participation of students. Every student is also expected to participate fully in each class discussion. Therefore, students are expected to have done a generous reading of the course material ahead of time. They should also be prepared to engage in meaningful debates and conversations with their classmates and instructor. Dominating class discussions will have a negative impact on participation grade. The instructor will send feedback regarding the students' participation in class before the recess break;
- Other class policies (e.g. use of technology and proper decorum in class) will be negotiated on the first day.

Academic Integrity Policy

Academic honesty is essential in upholding the integrity of knowledge production. Just as their instructors and academic mentors, students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty. Acting with academic integrity requires that (a) students do their own work, (b) students not interfere with the work of others, (c) students accurately and honestly represent the content of their work, and (d) students properly attribute others' work. Moreover, a work submitted for another class (either in part or whole) will not be accepted. If a student wishes to build on from previous work, he/she should make an arrangement to discuss the matter with the instructor. Proper citation and referencing are expected.

Violations of the College's academic integrity standards undermine both the community and

the individual growth of students. Accordingly, they will be addressed with the utmost seriousness and sanctions ranging from grade penalties to expulsion. Examples of violations of academic integrity include plagiarism, copying or sharing homework answers, submitting work completed for one course as 'new' work for another course, or fabricating or falsifying research data. The policies of the college require instructors to refer any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Integrity Committee for assessment and adjudication. It is the responsibility of the student to refer to the Yale-NUS College Handbook of Academic Integrity and the websites below if they are unclear of what constitutes academic dishonesty and plagiarism.

For more information please visit the Student Services website, Policies and Procedures section: <https://studentlife.yale-nus.edu.sg/policies/academic-integrity/>.

Please refer to the Yale-NUS library information (below) on proper citations and plagiarism: <http://library.yale-nus.edu.sg/plagiarism/>)

For this particular module, students are required to use the APA format (see <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> for reference).

Health and Wellness Contacts

Students are encouraged to contact the Yale-NUS Health and Wellness Centre if they are experiencing stress or if they feel they might benefit from private counseling. The wellness centre also offers a wide range of enriching workshops and events. Students may also reach out to the Vice Rector within their residential College. Please refer to this link for more information: <https://studentlife.yale-nus.edu.sg/wellness/>

Schedule of Topics, Readings and Assignment

Date	Topic/Assignment
Week 1	
Aug 15 (Tues)	<p>Course Overview and Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Why study agrarian change today? • The ‘political economy’ traditions of studying agrarian change <p><u>Information on critical commentary essays to be given</u></p>
PART I: MAJOR AGRARIAN ISSUES AND ITS COMPLEXITIES	
Aug 18 (Fri)	<p>21st Century Land Grabbing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global land grabbing as a new form of land accumulation • The global land rush as driven by neoliberal globalisation <p><u>Required Readings:</u> http://www.circleofblue.org/LAND.html Borras and Franco 2012; Zoomers 2010</p> <p><u>Eligible for:</u> short response (SR)</p>
Week 2	
Aug 22 (Tues)	<p>De-agrarianisation or Re-peasantisation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General tendencies for urbanisation and de-agrarianisation, and the counter arguments for re-peasantisation <p><u>Required Readings:</u> Rigg 2006; Van den Berg et al. 2017</p> <p><u>Due:</u> Practice critical commentary essay</p>
Aug 25 (Fri)	<p>Climate Change and Agriculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global land grabbing as a new form of land accumulation <p><u>Required Readings:</u> Muller et al. 2011; Lipper et al. 2014; Taylor 2017</p> <p><u>Eligible for:</u> SR; critical commentary essay (CCE)</p>

PART II: THEORIES OF AGRARIAN DYNAMICS	
Week 3	
Aug 29 (Tues)	<p>The political economy/ecology perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation for Part II • Review of Marx concepts in Agrarian Studies • The Agrarian Question <p><u>Required Readings:</u> TBD</p> <p>Information on Draft Manuscript to be given</p>
Sep 1 (Fri)	Hari Raya Haji (Holiday)
Week 4	
Sep 5 (Tues)	<p>World systems and food regime theory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agrarian progression from early capitalism to colonial period and to the neoliberal period <p><u>Required Readings:</u> Introduction to World Systems Theory. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79gCqjl6ihQ McMichael 2013</p> <p><u>Eligible for:</u> SR; CCE</p>
Sep 8 (Fri)	<p>Markets and commodification/commoditization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commodity markets and their role in agrarian change <p><u>Required Readings:</u> Manno 2012; Montefrio 2012; Glover and Stone 2017</p> <p><u>Eligible for:</u> SR; CCE</p>
Week 5	
Sep 12 (Tues)	<p>State territorialisation and enclosures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State or internal territorialisation and the practice of enclosures • Role of territorialisation in agricultural expansion <p><u>Required Readings:</u> Vandergeest and Peluso 1995; Brad et al. 2015</p> <p><u>Due by 11:59 pm:</u> Manuscript proposal</p> <p><u>Eligible for:</u> SR; CCE</p>

Sep 15 (Fri)	<p>Militarisation and violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence and threats of violence <p><u>Required Readings:</u> Dressler and Guieb 2015; Woods 2011</p> <p><u>Eligible for:</u> SR; CCE</p>
Week 6	
Sep 19 (Tues)	<p>Class formation and differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class formation and differentiation in rural areas <p><u>Required Readings:</u> Bernstein 2010; Sikor and Vi 2005</p> <p><u>Eligible for:</u> SR; CCE</p>
Sep 22 (Fri)	<p>Gender relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributions of feminist scholars to agrarian studies • Gender analysis of land <p><u>Required Readings:</u> Jackson 2003; Razavi 2009.</p> <p><u>Eligible for:</u> SR; CCE</p>
Week 7	
Recess Week (Sep 23 – Oct 1)	
Week 8	
Oct 3 (Tues)	<p>Ethnic and racial formations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic dynamics in relation to land control • Complicating “indigeneity” and collective land tenure regimes <p><u>Required Readings:</u> Peluso 2009; Li 2010</p> <p><u>Eligible for:</u> SR; CCE</p> <p>Information on Visual Narrative Essay to be given</p>
Oct 6 (Fri)	<p>Governmentality and subject formation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foucault’s governmentality and the production of environmental and agrarian subjects <p><u>Required Readings:</u> Baka 2013; Dressler 2014</p> <p><u>Eligible for:</u> SR; CCE</p>

Week 9	
Oct 10 (Tues)	<p>Intimate exclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smallholders as agents of the powers of exclusion • Intimate exclusions <p><u>Required Readings:</u> Hall et al. 2011</p> <p><u>Eligible for:</u> SR; CCE</p>
Oct 13 (Fri)	<p>Migration Dynamics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal and international migration of smallholder farmers and the development and land-use implications in sending communities <p><u>Required Readings:</u> Grainer and Sakdapolrak 2013; Montefrio et al. 2014</p> <p><u>Eligible for:</u> SR; CCE</p>
Week 10	
Oct 17 (Tues)	<p>Social-Ecological Dynamics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental and agrarian change co-dynamics • Cross-sectoral and cumulative environmental-agrarian dynamics <p><u>Required Readings:</u> Montefrio 2016; Baird and Barney 2017</p> <p><u>Eligible for:</u> SR; CCE</p>
PART III: LEARNING IN THE FIELD	
Oct 20 (Fri)	<p>Agrarian-Environmental Changes in Malaysia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical agrarian political economy in Malaysia, with focus on Cameroon Highlands <p><u>Required Readings:</u> Hill 2013;</p>
Week 11	
Oct 24 (Tues)	<p>Field Trip Preparations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing on schedule • Introduction to visual sociology and visual narrative exercise • Introduction to field methods <p>Due by 11:59 pm: extended outline of manuscript</p>

Oct 27 (Fri)	Cameroon Highlands Fieldtrip
Week 12	
Oct 31 (Tues)	No classes in lieu of field trip
PART IV: RESPONSES AND RESISTANCE	
Nov 3 (Fri)	Agrarian Reform <u>Required Readings:</u> Borras 2008 <u>Eligible for:</u> SR
Week 13	
Nov 7 (Tues)	Social Movements and Resistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political mobilization of peasants • Everyday forms of peasant resistance <u>Required Readings:</u> Borras et al. 2008; Scott 1985 <u>Eligible for:</u> SR
Nov 10 (Fri)	“Alternative” Agriculture Movements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agroecology and food sovereignty movement <u>Required Readings:</u> Altieri 2009 <u>Eligible for:</u> SR
Week 13	
Nov 14 (Tues)	Paper Workshop
Nov 17 (Fri)	Wrap-up and Synthesis Due by 11:59 pm: Visual Narrative Essay
Nov 20 - 24	READING WEEK
Nov 25 - Dec 9	<u>Due on November 30 (Wed):</u> Complete draft manuscript