

**SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY**

Course	PhD
Course Number	To be assigned
Course Title	<b>Government and Politics in Southeast Asia- I</b>
Course Type	Optional
Semester	Monsoon Semester
Course Teacher & Contact Details	Name: Dr Rahul Mishra Associate Professor, Centre for Indo-Pacific Studies (CIPS), SIS, JNU Room No: 208, SIS-I Email: <a href="mailto:rmishra@mail.jnu.ac.in">rmishra@mail.jnu.ac.in</a> Tel No: Mobile: 9871014440 Landline:
Credits	2 or 3
Contact	4 hours per week
Class Schedule and Room Number	To be decided
Tutorials (for difficulties & discussion)	To be decided

**Course Statement**

Southeast Asia is arguably the most diverse region in the world when it comes to the type of government structures. The region, which comprises eleven countries, has one absolute constitutional monarchy (Brunei), two socialist countries (Laos and Vietnam), a military

dictatorship (Myanmar), a constitutional monarchy with a predominant military (Thailand), an elected constitutional monarchy with unitary features (Cambodia), a multicultural democratic republic dominated by a single political party (Singapore), an Islamic democratic state (Malaysia) and three democracies (Indonesia, The Philippines, and Timor Leste).

Each of the eleven Southeast Asian countries have their own peculiar political and constitutional histories, making the region unique in terms of politics and government features.

This course offers insights into different government and political structures of countries of the Southeast Asian region. Divided in two parts i.e. Government and Politics in Southeast Asia Part I and Part II, running across two semesters, this course aims to take a deep dive into the history and evolution of forms of government in Southeast Asia. Each module of this course focusses on a particular country, how its political system evolved over a period of time, the role of political institutions and actors, as well as the role of the civil society and citizens of the country.

It also focuses on the current state of politics in these countries and to what extent democracy plays a role in shaping the politics and governance structures in these countries.

### **Course Objectives**

Key objectives of this course are:

1. To understand the nature of governments in the Southeast Asia.
2. To examine theoretical frameworks that help explain political cultures in Southeast Asia;
3. To analyse and assess the contemporary politics in eleven Southeast Asian countries and the role political institutions and actors play in shaping the government and politics of their respective countries.
4. To assess the role of democracy in Southeast Asia and understand why it has not taken firm roots in the region.

### **Learning Outcomes**

1. Explain the role of history and political culture in shaping the government and politics of countries of the Southeast Asian region.
2. To analyse the role political institutions play in contemporary politics in Southeast Asian countries;
3. Analyse the role of civil society in Southeast Asia;
4. Critically analyse and theorize the role of democracy, authoritarianism, and monarchy in Southeast Asia;
5. Assess ASEAN's approach to democracy and human rights in the region;
6. Appraise ASEAN's role in dealing with the challenges it faces.

### **Evaluation Methods**

1. Mid Semester evaluation (50%)
    - Term paper & Presentation: 20%
    - Book Review: 10%
    - Examination: 20%
  2. End-Semester Examination (50%)
  3. SIS Research Manual should be used as a guide to write assignments. Available at [https://www.jnu.ac.in/sites/default/files/SIS\\_Research\\_Manual\\_0.pdf](https://www.jnu.ac.in/sites/default/files/SIS_Research_Manual_0.pdf)
- Students should maintain high degree of academic integrity, which includes abstaining from copying and plagiarism. For details on plagiarism and research ethics refer to the SIS Research Manual.

### **Course Outline:**

This course provides an in-depth exploration of government and politics in the Southeast Asian region, focusing on the history, structure, and evolving role of various forms of political systems in the region. Through lectures, readings, and discussions, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of political dynamics and forms of government in the

region, and its impact on domestic and intra-regional politics. The course will also examine the role of democracy and authoritarianism in Southeast Asia.

## **Modules**

### **Module I: Democracy and Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia**

- History of politics in Southeast Asia
- Colonial background, post-independence developments leading to political changes
- Theories of government, political systems, political culture
- Democracy as a form of government in Southeast Asia

### **Module II: Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore**

- Malaysia is a Federal Constitutional Monarchy and Parliamentary Democracy. Malaysia's political system features a unique rotational monarchy among nine sultans. The Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, is the head of government. The country has a complex multi-ethnic political landscape, with Barisan Nasional (BN) and Pakatan Harapan (PH) as major coalitions.
- The nine sultans take turns being the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (King) for five-year terms. This king acts as the head of state, but their role is largely ceremonial. Malaysia's parliamentary system is based on the British model. The Prime Minister and their Cabinet hold most of the power.
- The Barisan Nasional coalition (BN) is traditionally seen as representing the Malay majority, while Pakatan Harapan (PH) is a more multi-ethnic alliance. Maintaining balance between ethnicities is a constant consideration.
- Indonesia's multi-party system is a fascinating aspect of its democracy. Indonesia has a large number of political parties, with estimates ranging from around 10 (if you only consider those who have won seats in parliament) to over 70 (including all registered parties). This fragmentation can make it difficult for any single party to win a majority in parliament.
- Unlike a two-party system with clear ideological divides (e.g., left vs. right), Indonesian parties represent a wider spectrum of views on religion, nationalism, and

economic policy. However, all parties must adhere to Pancasila, the five principles that define the Indonesian state.

- Although Singapore is officially a Parliamentary Republic, it is often characterized as a "benevolent dictatorship" due to the prolonged dominance of the People's Action Party (PAP) in its political landscape since the country's independence in 1965. The PAP's sustained control has led to a centralized governance model that some argue resembles a soft authoritarian regime.
- The current Prime Minister is Lawrence Wang, preceded by Lee Hsien Loong, the son of Singapore's founding father, Lee Kuan Yew, which has perpetuated a legacy of leadership within the same political lineage.

### **Module III: The Philippines**

- The Philippines, a Presidential Republic, operates under a democratic system with a strong presidency. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., elected in 2022, follows in the political footsteps of his father. The country has a vibrant civil society and media, though issues such as corruption, political dynasties, and insurgencies in the southern regions persist.

### **Module IV: Timor Leste/East Timor**

- Timor-Leste, a Southeast Asian nation occupying half the island of Timor, is a young democracy emerging from a long struggle for independence.
- After gaining independence from Portugal in 1975, Indonesia invaded and occupied the territory for nearly a quarter-century. In 2002, following a U.N.-administered referendum, Timor-Leste finally achieved its hard-fought independence.
- The country then adopted a semi-presidential system with a directly elected President, currently José Ramos-Horta, who serves as head of state.
- The Prime Minister, Xanana Gusmão, leads the government, which is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the country.

### **Modules V: Student Evaluations (Dates to be decided)**

Mid-semester examination (1)

Term paper and presentations (2)

Book reviews (Nil)

End-semester examination (1)

## Readings

### Essential Readings

- Damien Kingsbury (2016), *Politics in Contemporary Southeast Asia: Authority, Democracy and Political Change*, London: Routledge
- John Funston (2001), *Government & Politics in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute
- Beeson, Mark (ed.) 2004. *Contemporary Southeast Asia: Regional Dynamics, National Differences*. London: Palgrave.

### Module specific readings

## Module I

### Essential Readings

- Ralph Ketcham (2021), *The Idea of Democracy in the Modern Era*, University Press of Kansas, USA
- Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner (2006), *Electoral Systems and Democracy*, Johns Hopkins University Press, USA
- William Case (2015), *Routledge Handbook of Southeast Asian Democratization*, Routledge
- Loh, F. K. W. (2008). Procedural democracy, participatory democracy and regional networking: the multi-terrain struggle for democracy in Southeast Asia. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 9(1), 127–141.

### Additional Readings

- William Case (2017), *Populist Threats and Democracy's Fate in Southeast Asia Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia*, Routledge

## Module II

### Essential Readings

- Mohamad, M. (2017). Religion and politics in Malaysian nation-building: a “double-movement” of hegemonic and plural Islam. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 18(3), 445–453.
- Saidin, M. I. S. (2023). Malaysia’s crisis of political legitimacy: Understanding the 2020 power transition and ‘Sheraton Move’ polemics through the ‘eyes’ of Malaysian political science graduates. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 9(1).

### Additional Readings

- Edmund Terence Gomez, Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman (2020), *Malaysia's 14th General Election and UMNO's Fall Intra-Elite Feuding in the Pursuit of Power*, Routledge
- Amitav Acharya (2014), *Indonesia Matters: Asia's Emerging Democratic Power*, World Scientific Publishing Company
- Jacques Bertrand (2021), *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia* (Cambridge University Press
- Beeson, Mark (ed.) 2004. *Contemporary Southeast Asia: Regional Dynamics, National Differences*. London: Palgrave
- Douglas E. Ramage (1995), *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance*, Routledge

## Module III

### Essential Readings

- Cartagenas, A. (2010). Religion and Politics in the Philippines: The Public Role of the Roman Catholic Church in the Democratization of the Filipino Polity. *Political Theology*, 11(6), 846–872.

- Rodolfo Severino, 2006. *Southeast Asia in search of an ASEAN Community*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute

### **Additional Readings**

- Ferrer, Miriam Coronel (1997), *Philippine Democracy Agenda: Civil Society Making Civil Society*, Volume 3. Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, 1997.

### **Module IV**

#### **Essential Readings**

- Damien Kingsbury, Michael Leach (2013), , *The Politics of Timor-Leste Democratic Consolidation After Intervention*, Cornell University, Southeast Asia Program Publications  
Lydia Beuman (2016), *Political Institutions in East Timor Semi-Presidentialism and Democratisation*, Routledge