**RICE CULTURES:**

**TECHNOLOGY, SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT IN ASIA**

**2019**

**HASS 02.219**

**INSTRUCTOR: LYLE FEARNLEY**

**SUBJECT DESCRIPTION**

This course introduces the social scientific study of human-environment interactions, using the history and culture of rice as a 'model system.' The cultivation of rice dates back almost 10,000 years in Asia, and forms the core of an independent origin of civilization, separate from other Eurasian sites that were based around wheat, barley or millet. Some scholars hypothesize that the cultivation of rice also supports a distinctive Asian form of society, and mode of historical or technological development, that differs from standard frameworks of 'Western' modernization. Today rice is one of the most intensively researched crops, as both a model organism for advanced research in genomics and an important object of genetic modification experiments. We will explore how the cultivation of rice raises exciting and provocative questions about the relationships among society, technology and environment. Using rice as a 'model system' for human-environment interactions, the course asks whether Asia's history and culture of rice can provide an alternative figure of technological development and design, and perhaps a model for sustainable relationships between humans and their natural environments.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Students who successfully complete this subject will be able to:

* Analyze and debate the extent to which natural environments shape human societies, and/or human societies shape natural environments
* Elucidate models of human-environment interaction in rice cultures, and apply these models to broader challenges of sustainability
* Explain the theory and model of agricultural modernization, and compare this model with the actual histories of technological development in rice cultures
* Define, discuss and explain how rice agriculture influenced the history and culture of Asian societies

**MEASURABLE OUTCOMES**

* Analysis of relations and interactions between human societies and natural environments (written essay)
* Using rice cultures as a *model system*, apply a model of human-environment interaction to a contemporary threat to sustainability
* Illustrate and interpret, using specific examples, how rice agriculture influenced technological development, history and culture in Asian societies [final exam]

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

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| **Assessment Items** | **Percentage** | **Period** |
| Class participation (including quizzes, reading responses, rice lab notebook) | 20% | Throughout the term |
| Essay | 30% | Week 6 |
| Group presentations | 20% | Throughout the term |
| Final Exam (Mandatory) | 30% | Week 14 |

**Instructional Methods and Expectations**

Each week will be divided into two class sections. The first class (Monday) will consist of in-class writing activities and class discussion based on assigned readings, with occasional mini-lectures led by the instructor. Students must complete the assigned reading before class; class will often begin with a short writing exercise or quiz based on assigned readings. The second class (Thursday) will often be a "lab," in which we will be growing rice plants from seed and experimenting with the practices and technologies of rice culture. The lab portion of the class will take place at the rooftop garden, Building 5, Level 2.

**Course Policies**

* Attendance is mandatory. More than two unexcused absences will result in a penalty of 5% reduction of the class participation grade. More than four will result in a failing grade.
* There will be no make-up quizzes or exams, unless the student has a valid medical or other emergency.

**Academic Integrity**

Students are expected to produce their own work, whether individually or in groups. Do not copy work from the internet or other published sources without proper citations. This is plagiarism and if a student is found to be doing so, he or she will be subject to disciplinary measures including potentially failing the course.

Plagiarism is the use of some one's intellectual work without acknowledgement. It is a serious offense. It is the policy of the university that students who plagiarize will be severely disciplined. Full acknowledgement for all information obtained from sources outside the classroom must be clearly stated in all written work submitted and in all oral presentations, including images or texts in other media and for materials collected online. All ideas, arguments, and direct phrasings taken from some one's work must be identified and properly footnoted. Quotations from other sources must be clearly marked as distinct from the student's own work.

**Consultations**

Office hours: By appointment. Office: 1.402.18.

**CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS**

**UNIT 1: ORIGINS AND ENVIRONMENTS**

***Week 1—Introduction: Anthropology of the Environment***

January 28: Introduction to course.

January 31: The rice plant and domestication

Required Reading

Francesca Bray, “The rice plant: diversity and intensification” in *The rice economies*: 8-26.

***Week 2—What is culture?***

February 4:

Required reading

Clifford Geertz, “The impact of the concept of culture on the concept of man.”

February 7:

***Week 3—What is an environment?***

February 11: Jacob von Uexkull, “Foreword,” “Introduction”, and “Environment Spaces,” in *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans*.

February 14:

**UNIT 2: CONSUMPTION: FOOD**

***Week 4:* Why do we eat what we eat?**

February 18:

Marvin Harris, “The riddle of the sacred cow.”

Sidney Mintz and Daniela Schlettwein-Gsell, “Food patterns in Agrarian Societies: The ‘core-fringe-legume’ hypothesis.”

**Week 5—Why do we eat what we eat?**

February 25

Required

Marshall Sahlins, “Food preference and tabu in American domestic animals.”

Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, "Rice as self: Japanese identities through time."

Suggested

Claude Levi-Strauss, “The culinary triangle.”

February 28

**UNIT 3: PRODUCTION: TECHNOLOGY, POLITICS AND DEVELOPMENT**

***Week 6***

March 4:

Required Reading

Clifford Geertz, “Introduction, "Two types of ecosystem", and The Classical Period,” in *Agricultural Involution*, pp1-46

**Week 7: Break March 11-15**

**Week 8**

March 18:

Required Reading

Clifford Geertz, *Agricultural Involution*, pp. 47-90

Suggested

Walt Rostow, “The five stages of growth.”

March 21

***Week 9***

March 25

Required Reading

James Scott, “State space” and “State evasion,” in *The art of not being governed*

**Week 10**

April 1

Required Reading

Stephen Lansing, “Introduction,” “The powers of water,” and “The waters of power” in *Priests and Programmers*

**Week 11**

April 8

Required Reading

Stephen Lansing, ‘Temple of the crater lake,” “Massive guidance” and “Conclusion: sociogenesis” in *Priests and Programmers*

**Week 12**

April 15

Required Reading

Francesca Bray, “Paths of technical development,” in *Rice Economies.*

Francesca Bray, “Introduction,” in *Technology and Gender*.

**UNIT 4: Sustainability**

**Week 13**

April 22

Required Reading

Jared Diamond, “Collapse.”

J. Stephen Lansing and James Kremer, “Rice, fish and the planet.”

***Week 14: Final Exam--***