



THE SCHOOL
FOR FIELD STUDIES

Language and Culture of Cambodia

SFS 2080

Syllabus
2 credits

The School for Field Studies (SFS)
Center for Environmental Justice and Mekong Ecologies
Siem Reap, Cambodia

This syllabus may develop or change over time based on local conditions, learning opportunities, and faculty expertise. Course content may vary from semester to semester.

www.fieldstudies.org

© 2024 The School for Field Studies



COURSE CONTENT SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Please note that this is a copy of a recent syllabus. A final syllabus will be provided to students on the first day of academic programming.

SFS programs are different from other travel or study abroad programs. Each iteration of a program is unique and often cannot be implemented exactly as planned for a variety of reasons. There are factors which, although monitored closely, are beyond our control. For example:

- Changes in access to or expiration or change in terms of permits to the highly regulated and sensitive environments in which we work;
- Changes in social/political conditions or tenuous weather situations/natural disasters may require changes to sites or plans, often with little notice;
- Some aspects of programs depend on the current faculty team as well as the goodwill and generosity of individuals, communities, and institutions which lend support.

Please be advised that these or other variables may require changes before or during the program. Part of the SFS experience is adapting to changing conditions and overcoming the obstacles that they may present. In other words, this is a field program, and the field can change.

Course Overview

The Language and Culture course contains two distinct but related modules: Cambodian society and culture, and Khmer language. This course will provide a basic introduction to spoken Khmer as well as the history and culture of Cambodia.

The socio-cultural module is designed to help students experience some immersion in the culture and become more adept at working effectively in their community-based directed research efforts. Though this course will primarily focus on Cambodia, Vietnamese history will also be addressed because of the shared politics and history of the region.

The Khmer language module offers listening and oral practice of the Khmer language at a beginner/basic level of proficiency to increase students' communication and comprehension skills. Students will learn and practice language based upon relevant everyday life experiences such as going to a restaurant, purchasing an item at the market, or asking for directions. Both modules emphasize the understanding of and direct interaction with the local communities with which the SFS Center works. This exposure to culture and language will be reviewed and processed through occasional lectures, field visits to important cultural sites and festivals, community outreach, and classroom discussion.

Community activities include the following: an overnight homestay with a local family, workshops with local university students to exchange knowledge and skills, such as cooking, dancing, or playing sports, participating in community events, and sessions of community service. Assignments include journal entries, cultural discussions, cultural briefings, and community interactions.

Learning Objectives

Both modules are designed to help students learn about Cambodian culture and work more effectively in their community-based directed research efforts. We expect students to be proactive in taking advantage of the opportunities for community interaction created by the program, as well as by creating their own opportunities for positive community engagement.

Cambodian Sociocultural Module

Through this component students will:

- Develop an understanding of Cambodian culture
- Learn about the rich history of the Kingdom of Cambodia and their position within the larger context of Southeast Asia
- Understand the current social and political issues of Cambodia as a result of the periods of conflict and colonization
- Understand social structure, family, and religion in Cambodia
- Develop an appreciation for Cambodian art and music

Khmer Language Module

Through this component students will:

- Learn the basic structure of the Khmer language
- Learn greetings and commonly used phrases
- Construct and recite useful Khmer sentences
- Learn a practical set of vocabulary aimed at day to day use in the community as well as an operational vocabulary that may assist students while in the field

Assessment

We expect active participation in discussions and in classes, readings and field activities. Some of the classes presented below may change, but updated information will be given with sufficient notice. Student performance in this course will be evaluated based on the assessment items and their proportional weight to your final grade as described in the table below. Each assessment item will be evaluated on an individual basis.

The evaluation breakdown for the course is as follows:

Assessment Item	Value (%)
Participation in Community Activities	10
Participation in Language Market Visits	20
Khmer Language Midterm Quiz	10
Culture Discussions and Reflective Journaling	20
Peer Cultural Briefing	20
Final Khmer Language Exam	20
TOTAL	100

Participation in Community Activities (10%)

We expect students to be actively involved in community engagement and you will be graded not only on attendance, but level of participation in these events.

Participation in Language Market Visits (20%)

Several excursions to local markets and events in connection with important festivals and performances. Students are expected to fully participate in these activities.

Khmer Language Midterm Quiz (10%)

Review understanding of the Khmer words and sentence structures that have been discussed in class in the past weeks. Allow students to write up their own profile and read out in Khmer.

Reflective Journaling (20%)

Students will submit two journal entries during the semester to reflect on specific cultural events, activities or social experiences and interactions. These entries will be accepted in a variety of mediums such as drawing, photography, poetry, creative writing or prose. Students can choose to submit a digital or physical copy of their journal entries.

Peer Cultural Briefing (20%)

Students will work in pairs or solo in a specific topic of interest related to culture including art, music, belief, way of life and traditional practice in Cambodia that you have observed. Then present the topic in class to their peers.

Final Exam (20%)

The final Khmer language exam must be completed in two hours. This may include multiple methods of assessment including an oral and written portion.

Grading Scheme

A	95.00 - 100.00%	B+	86.00 - 89.99%	C+	76.00 - 79.99%	D	60.00 - 69.99%
A-	90.00 - 94.99%	B	83.00 - 85.99%	C	73.00 - 75.99%	F	0.00 - 59.99%
		B-	80.00 - 82.99%	C-	70.00 - 72.99%		

General Reminders

Honor Code/Plagiarism – SFS places high expectations on their students and we hold students accountable for their behaviors. SFS students are held to the honor code below. SFS has a zero-tolerance policy towards student cheating, plagiarism, data falsification, and any other form of dishonest academic and/or research practice or behavior. Using the ideas or material of others without giving due credit is cheating and will not be tolerated. Any SFS student found to have engaged in or facilitated academic and/or research dishonesty will receive no credit (0%) for that activity.

“SFS does not tolerate cheating or plagiarism in any form. While participating in an SFS program, students are expected to refrain from cheating, plagiarism and any other behavior which would result in a student receiving credit for work which they did not accomplish on their own. Students are expected to report any instance of cheating or plagiarism by others.”

Deadlines – Deadlines for written and oral assignments are instated to promote equity among students and to allow faculty ample time to review and return assignments before others are due. As such, deadlines are firm; extensions will only be considered under extreme circumstances. Late assignments will incur a penalty of 10% of your grade for each day you are late. After two days past the deadline, assignments will no longer be accepted. Assignments will be handed back to students after a one-week grading period. Grade corrections for any assessment item should be requested in writing at least 24 hours after assignments are returned. No corrections will be considered afterwards.

Content Statement – Every student comes to SFS with unique life experiences, which contribute to the way various information is processed. Some of the content in this course may be intellectually or emotionally challenging but has been intentionally selected to achieve certain learning goals and/or showcase the complexity of many modern issues. If you anticipate a challenge engaging with a certain topic or find that you are struggling with certain discussions, we encourage you to talk about it with faculty, friends, family, the HWM, or access available mental health resources.

Participation – Since we offer a program that is likely more intensive than you might be used to at your home institution, missing even one lecture can have a proportionally greater effect on your final grade simply because there is little room to make up for lost time. Participation in all components of the course is mandatory, it is important that you are prompt for all activities, bring the necessary equipment for field exercises and class activities, and simply get involved.

Course Content

Type: **D**: Discussion, **FC**: Field Components, **GL**: Guest Lecture, **L**: Lecture

Cambodian Sociocultural Module

No	Title and outline	Type	Time (hrs)	Further Learning Materials
1	History of Cambodia I A condensed timeline of events from the Angkorian era to the present	L	1.5	Chandler (2007).
2	History of the Angkor Empire Visit Angkor Archeological Complex with a professional guide to explain the historical and cultural features of the sites	GL; FC	1.5	Petrotschenko (2014).
3	Modern Cambodian Culture and Religion Q&A with local university students	D; FC	2.5	Kent, A. (2003).
4	History of Cambodia II Lecture about the Cambodian civil war and the regime of Democratic Kampuchea	GL	1.5	Film: First They Killed My Father. Dy. Kh, et al. (2007)
5	Community/Cultural Engagement I Overnight homestay at the floating village of Prek Toal on the Tonle Sap lake	L; FC	2.0	
6	Community/Cultural Engagement II Visit market and cooking local food	L; FC	2.5	
7	Understanding Cambodia's Genocide Interviews with elders in Koh Pdoa, visit to Toul Sleng, group debriefing/reflection	FC; D	3.5	
8	Khmer Music & Dance Performances Phare, the Cambodian Circus	FC	1.0	
		Total	16	

Khmer Language Module

No	Title and outline	Time (hrs)
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course introduction Pronunciation basics Sentence structure/basic phrases Greetings 5 different ways of Sampeah 	1.0
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers/Money/Directions 	1.0
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pronouns Basic phrases II 	1.0
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Common nouns and particles Yes/no question structure Question word: Where? All Question words & question markers Asking and giving directions 	1.0

No	Title and outline	Time (hrs)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describing families Food/vegetables/fruits 	1.0
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negatives Bargaining 	1.0
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New adjectives Animals Using 'Jieng' (more than) for comparisons 	1.0
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Words and question markets 	1.0
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food & Markets Restaurant Phrases 	1.0
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weather Colors 	1.0
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final exam review 	1.0
Total		11
Overall Total		27
UMN Instructional Hours*		32.4

**UMN defines* an instructional hour as a 50-minute block. SFS syllabi are written in full 60-minute hours for programming purposes. Therefore 50 full hours = 60 UMN instructional hours (for four credit courses) and 25 full hours = 30 UMN instructional hours (for two credit courses).

Reading/Further Learning Materials

1. Asian Studies Center, MSU. Cambodia –Religion Facts. Retrieved from http://asia.isp.msu.edu/wbwoa/southeast_asia/cambodia/religion.htm.
2. **Chandler, D. (2007)**. A history of Cambodia: Fourth edition. Boulder: Westview Press.
3. Davis, E. (2006). The pretas are coming! Ghostly metaphors of city and country in modern Cambodia. Unpublished conference paper for the MCAA at University of Wisconsin, Madison.
4. **Dy. Kh, et al. (2007)**. A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979). The Documentation Center of Cambodia.
5. Hinton, A.L. (2004). Why did they kill? California: University of California Press.
6. Hinton, A.L. (1998). Ahead for an eye: Revenge in the Cambodian genocide. *American Ethnologist*, 25(3), 352-377.
7. **Kent, A. (2003)**. Recovery of the collective spirit: The role of the revival of Buddhism in Cambodia. University of Gothenburg. Retrieved from <http://www.gu.se/english/research/publication?publicationId=71410>.
8. Kwon, H. (2006). After the massacre: Commemoration and consolation in Ha My and My Lai. Berkeley: University of California Press.
9. **Petrochenko, M. (2014)**. Focusing on the Angkor temples: The guidebook (3rd Edition).
10. Zucker, E. (2014). Forests of struggle: Moralities of remembrance in upland Cambodia. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Nonfiction Works and Novels

11. Asma, S.T. (2006). *The gods drink whiskey: Stumbling toward enlightenment in the land of the tattered Buddha*. London: Harper One.
12. Brinkley, J. (2011). *Cambodia's curse: The modern history of a troubled land*. New York: Public Affairs.
13. Carmichael, R. (2015). *When clouds fell from the sky: A disappearance, a daughter's search and Cambodia's first war criminal*. Bangkok: Asia Horizons Books.
14. Chanrithy, H. (2000). *When broken glass floats: Growing up under the Khmer Rouge*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.
15. Kaplan, R.D. (2012). *The Vietnam solution*. *The Atlantic Magazine*. May 21, 2012. Retrieved from: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/06/the-vietnam-solution/308969/>
16. Ninh, B. (1996). *The sorrow of war: A novel of North Vietnam*. Riverhead Books.
17. O'Brien, T. (1990). *The things they carried*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
18. Panh, R. (2013). *The elimination: A survivor of the Khmer Rouge confronts his past and the commandant of the killing fields*. New York: Other Press.
19. Ratner, V. (2013). *In the shadow of the banyan: A novel*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
20. Ryman, G. (2006). *The King's last song*. New York: Harper Collins.
21. Ung, L. (2000). *First they killed my father*. New York: Harper Collins.
22. Ung, L. (2005). *Lucky child: A daughter of Cambodia reunites with the sister she left behind*. New York: HarperCollins.

Popular Films

23. Fitzgerald, S. (2006). *Bombhunters*. Spin Film.
24. **Jolie, A. & Panh, R. (2017). *First They Killed My Father***. Netflix & Bophana Production.
25. Mam, K. (2013). *A River Changes Course*. Migrant Films & the Documentation Center of Cambodia.
26. Panh, T. (2013). *The Missing Picture*. Catherine Dussart Productions (CDP), Arte France, & Bophana Production.
27. Pirozzi, J. (2014). *Don't Think I've Forgotten: Cambodia's Lost Rock and Roll*. Primitive Nerd, Harmony Productions, & Pearl City.
28. Roper-Jones, D. (2017). *A Cambodian Nature Film*. Siem Reap: Fauna in Focus.
29. Sugano, M. (2014). *Cambodian Son*. Studio Revolt.
30. Vogel, C. & Socheata, P. (2006). *New Year Baby*. Broken English Productions & Dark Matter Creative, Center for Asian American Media (CAAM).