



**S F S** 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.

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## **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.

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## 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

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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

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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
• Entry into Cambodian Culture	
• Khmer Rouge Genocide Site	
Peer Cultural Briefing	15
Final Khmer Language Exam	25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

### 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 (15%)

We will host a series of workshops with local university students to exchange knowledge and skills, such as cooking, dancing, or playing sports. Students are expected to fully participate in these activities.

### Final Exam (35%)

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

**Readings** – The suggested readings and films are optional but are valuable resources to expand your understanding of culture and society in Cambodia. The readings and films might also be useful for you in preparing your cultural briefing. Some of the films might be shown by the Student Affairs Manager as optional cultural activities throughout the semester.

**Plagiarism** – using the ideas or material of others without giving due credit is cheating and will not be tolerated. A grade of zero will be assigned for anyone caught cheating or aiding another person to cheat either actively or passively. All assignments unless specifically stated should be individual pieces of work.

**Deadlines** – Deadlines for written and oral assignments are instated for several reasons. They are a part of working life to which students need to become accustomed and promote equity among students. Deadlines allow faculty ample time to review and return assignments before others are due. Late assignments will incur a 10% penalty for each day that they are late. No assignment will be accepted after three days. Assignments will be handed back to students after a one-week grading period.

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

## Course Content

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

### Cambodian Sociocultural Module

No	Title and outline	Type	Time (hrs)	Further Learning Materials
1	<b>History of Cambodia I</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A condensed timeline of events from the Angkorian era to the present</li> </ul>	L	1.5	Chandler (2007).
2	<b>History of the Angkor Empire Lecture</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visit Angkor Archeological Complex with a professional guide to explain the historical and cultural features of the sites</li> </ul>	GL; FC	1.5	Petrotschenko (2014). National Geographic. (2009).

No	Title and outline	Type	Time (hrs)	Further Learning Materials
3	<b>Modern Cambodian Culture and Religion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current-day Cambodia Q&amp;A with PUC university students</li> </ul>	GL; D	1.0	Kent, A. (2003).
4	<b>Community/Cultural Engagement I</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overnight homestay at the floating village of Prek Toal on the Tonle Sap lake</li> </ul>	L; FC	1.0	
5	<b>Community/Cultural Engagement II</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning and participating in waste management awareness raising with Pannasastra University students</li> </ul>	L; FC	2.0	
6	<b>History of Cambodia II</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lecture about the Cambodian civil war and the regime of Democratic Kampuchea</li> </ul>	L	1.0	Boreth (2003). Hughes (2008).
7	<b>Historical Phnom Penh</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Optional visit to the National Museum of Cambodia and the Royal Palace</li> </ul>	FC	1.0	
8	<b>Khmer Music &amp; Dance Performances</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phare, the Cambodian Circus</li> <li>Optional visit to Apsara Dance</li> </ul>	FC	1.0	
<b>Total contact hours</b>			<b>10</b>	

### Khmer Language Module

No	Title and outline	Time (hrs)
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Course introduction</li> <li>Pronunciation basics</li> <li>Sentence structure</li> <li>Greetings</li> <li>5 different ways of Sampeah</li> <li>Greetings</li> <li>Basic phrases I</li> </ul>	1.0
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular pronouns</li> <li>Age-based pronouns</li> <li>Gender-based pronouns</li> <li>Basic phrases II</li> </ul>	1.0
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greeting and giving a Buddhist monk a gift</li> <li>Asking and giving directions</li> </ul>	1.0
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Common verbs</li> <li>Places</li> <li>Sentences</li> </ul>	1.0
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Common nouns and particles</li> <li>Yes/no question structure</li> <li>Question word: Where?</li> </ul>	1.0

No	Title and outline	Time (hrs)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All Question words &amp; question markers</li> </ul>	
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negatives</li> <li>Bargaining</li> </ul>	1.0
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Numbers</li> <li>Age</li> </ul>	1.0
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New adjectives</li> <li>Animals</li> <li>Using 'Jieng' (more than) for comparisons</li> </ul>	1.0
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Food &amp; Markets</li> <li>Restaurant Phrases</li> </ul>	1.0
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Midterm Quiz</li> </ul>	1.0
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prep for local market visit</li> </ul>	1.0
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local market visit</li> </ul>	2.0
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describing families</li> </ul>	1.0
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Common Khmer Phrases</li> </ul>	1.0
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural environment terms</li> <li>Colors</li> </ul>	1.0
16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time vocabulary</li> <li>Time and environment</li> <li>Cumulative practice</li> </ul>	1.0
17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final exam review</li> </ul>	1.0
18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final exam</li> </ul>	2.0
<b>Total Contact Hours</b>		<b>20</b>

## Further Learning Materials

1. Asian Studies Center, MSU. Cambodia –Religion Facts. Retrieved from [http://asia.isp.msu.edu/wbwoa/southeast\\_asia/cambodia/religion.htm](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. Hinton, A.L. (2004). Why did they kill? California: University of California Press.
5. Hinton, A.L. (1998). Ahead for an eye: Revenge in the Cambodian genocide. American Ethnologist, 25(3), 352-377.
6. 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>.

7. Kwon, H. (2006). *After the massacre: Commemoration and consolation in Ha My and My Lai*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
8. Petrotchenko, M. (2014). *Focusing on the Angkor temples: The guidebook (3rd Edition)*. •Zucker, E. (2014). *Forests of struggle: Moralities of remembrance in upland Cambodia*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

### **Nonfiction Works and Novels**

9. Asma, S.T. (2006). *The gods drink whiskey: Stumbling toward enlightenment in the land of the tattered Buddha*. London: Harper One.
10. Brinkley, J. (2011). *Cambodia's curse: The modern history of a troubled land*. New York: Public Affairs.
11. 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.
12. Chanrithy, H. (2000). *When broken glass floats: Growing up under the Khmer Rouge*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.
13. 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/>
14. Ninh, B. (1996). *The sorrow of war: A novel of North Vietnam*. Riverhead Books.
15. O'Brien, T. (1990). *The things they carried*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
16. 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.
17. Ratner, V. (2013). *In the shadow of the banyan: A novel*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
18. Ryman, G. (2006). *The King's last song*. New York: Harper Collins.
19. Ung, L. (2000). *First they killed my father*. New York: Harper Collins.
20. Ung, L. (2005). *Lucky child: A daughter of Cambodia reunites with the sister she left behind*. New York: HarperCollins.

### **Popular Films**

21. Fitzgerald, S. (2006). *Bombhunters*. Spin Film.
22. Jolie, A. & Panh, R. (2017). *First They Killed My Father*. Netflix & Bophana Production.
23. Mam, K. (2013). *A River Changes Course*. Migrant Films & the Documentation Center of Cambodia.



24. Panh, T. (2013). The Missing Picture. Catherine Dussart Productions (CDP), Arte France, & Bophana Production.
25. Pirozzi, J. (2014). Don't Think I've Forgotten: Cambodia's Lost Rock and Roll. Primitive Nerd, Harmony Productions, & Pearl City.
26. Roper-Jones, D. (2017). A Cambodian Nature Film. Siem Reap: Fauna in Focus.
27. Sugano, M. (2014). Cambodian Son. Studio Revolt.
28. Vogal, C. & Socheata, P. (2006). New Year Baby. Broken English Productions & Dark Matter Creative, Center for Asian American Media (CAAM).