

Instructors:
Michael Dove
James Scott
Steven Stoll

Anthropology 541a
History 765a
Political Science 779a
F&ES 753a

Mondays, 1:30-5:20

**77 Prospect Street
Room A002**

Agrarian Societies: Culture, Power, History, and Development

This seminar presents a multi-disciplinary perspective on the modern transformation of the countryside of the world. The rise of a capitalist mode of production as the engine of a world economy, the emergence of a contentious international polity of nation-states, and the propagation of rationalizing religions and standardizing education are three distinct yet intersecting processes in the modern transformation of the world since the 1500s. These processes have not been inevitable, irreversible, or complete. However, they have been compelling, in so far as they have come to frame both our acceptance of and resistance to the modern order in which we find ourselves.

“Peasant studies” is a rubric for the loosely bounded, interdisciplinary exploration of the initial modernization of the European countryside and the subsequent engagement and ongoing incorporation of the countryside of Asia, Africa, and the Americas into this modern order. At its most precocious, it tries to comprehend the intrusive thrusts of nation-state formation, capitalist production, and the rationalization of belief into the most distant agrarian regions of the world. At its most instructive, it insists that people everywhere have confronted those forces with their particular histories and distinctive, local configurations of environment, society, and culture. Everywhere, the encounters of old and new ways of viewing the world and organizing activities have been fitful and frightful, always metamorphic, but never uniform. Animating peasant studies has been the concern to demonstrate the varied ways in which peasants have shared in the making of the modern world that has in turn transformed their lives.

We intend this to be an introductory seminar. That is, we assume you may be ignorant of much of the basic literature. We also assume that you work hard and learn fast. Although the varying backgrounds of students and faculty require us to be somewhat eclectic, we hope that the seminar will prove foundational in an interdisciplinary sense for subsequent work on agrarian issues in any discipline. We encourage you, in your writing and discussion, to make vigorous efforts to be

J.S. Otto and N.E. Anderson. 1982. "Slash-and-Burn Cultivation in the Highlands South: A Problem in Comparative Agricultural History," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 24, pp.131-47. **(Reading Packet)**

September 19

Week 3

Steven Stoll and James Scott

Animal Planet: On the Influence of Animals in Shaping the Rural Landscape

Readings:

Virginia DeJohn Anderson. 2004. *Creatures of Empire: How Domesticated Animals Transformed Early America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. **(Labyrinth Books)**

Elinor G.K.Melville. 1994. *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2. **(Reading Packet)**

September 26

Week 4

James Scott and Steven Stoll

Plant Planet: On the Influence of Plants and Seeds in Shaping the Rural Landscape and Homo Sapiens

Readings:

Michael Pollan. *The Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World*. 2001. New York: Random House. **(Labyrinth Books)**

James C. McCann. 2005. *Maize and Grace: Africa's Encounter with a New World Crop, 1500-2000*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. **(Labyrinth Books)**

October 3

Week 5

Michael Dove and James Scott

The "Bovine Mystique" and Development Discourse

Reading:

James Ferguson.1994. *The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. **(Labyrinth Books)**

October 10 Week 6 Steven Stoll and James Scott

Agrarian Capitalism

Readings:

Allan Kulikoff. 1989. "The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 46 (January), pp.120-44. [Use the SML ADatabases and Article Searching@ to go to JSTOR.org]

Brian Donahue. 2004. *The Great Meadow: Farmers and the Land in Colonial Concord*. New Haven: Yale University Press. (**Labyrinth Books**)

Steven Stoll. 2005. "A Review of Donahue, *The Great Meadow*." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 62 (January).
<http://www.wm.edu/oieahc/wmq/Jan05/stoll.pdf>

October 17 Week 7 Steven Stoll

Americans and the Politics of Land in the 19th century

Readings:

Thomas R. Hietala. 1990. *Manifest Design: Anxious Aggrandizement in Late Jacksonian America*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. (**Labyrinth Books**)

October 24 Week 8 James Scott

Resistance, Rebellion, and Revolution

Readings:

E.J. Hobsbawm. 1959. *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movements in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. New York: Norton. (**Labyrinth Books**)

John Womack. 1968. *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution*. New York: Knopf. (**Labyrinth Books**)

October 31 Week 9 Michael Dove

Cotton Sharecroppers: James Agee and Walker Evans in the U.S. South

Readings:

James Agee and Walker Evans. 1988/1939. *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Three Tenant Families*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. (**Labyrinth Books**)

Dale Maharidge and Michael Williamson. 1989. *And Their Children After Them: The Legacy of Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, James Agee, Walker Evans, and the Rise and Fall of Cotton in the South*. New York: Pantheon Books. AMaggie Louise,” pp. i-v; “Preface,” pp.xv-xxiv; AKing Cotton,” pp.3-16; and “1936-1940,” pp.17-72. (**Reading Packet**)

November 7

Week 10

Steven Stoll and James Scott

The Agrarian Depression

Readings:

Randall S. Beeman and James A. Pritchard. 2001. *A Green and Permanent Land: Ecology and Agriculture in the Twentieth Century*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press. (**Labyrinth Books**)

Russell Lord. 1938. *To Hold This Soil*. Miscellaneous Publication No. 321, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Chapter 1. (**Reading Packet**)

November 14

Week 11

Michael Dove

Rural People, Forests, and Discourses of Deforestation

Reading:

James Fairhead and Melissa Leach. 1996. *Misreading the African Landscape: Society and Ecology in a Forest-Savanna Mosaic*. Cambridge University Press. (**Labyrinth Books**)

November 28

Week 12

James Scott

Intensive, Sustainable, Household Agriculture: A Viable Future

Readings:

Robert McC. Netting. 1993. *Smallholder, Householder, Farm Families and the Ecology of Intensive, Sustainable Agriculture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. (**Labyrinth Books**)

Andrew Kimbrell. 2002. *The Fatal Harvest Reader: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture* (excerpts). (**Reading Packet**)