Aims

This subject will consider a number of ways in which peasant movements have been viewed by historians and other social scientists. We will examine the circumstances under which peasants act collectively, peasant responses to revolutionary transformations and the limits on the scope of such activity imposed by the economic and socio-cultural settings in which peasants live. Special attention will be given to examining the kinds of sources social scientists employ in the study of peasant society and action.

II/IIIPSB, a linked but separate (second semester) unit, will be devoted entirely to a study of the agrarian and peasant roots of revolution in Central America and to an examination of the agrarian reform process in the region. Although the subject will focus on Latin American cases selected mainly from Mexico, Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, other peasant societies will be discussed where appropriate.

Objectives:

The successful completion of this subject should enable you:

- to identify and analyse the ways in which history and experience have been ‘constructed’,

- understand the historical significance of such categories as: class (peasant, rich, middle and poor peasant, farmer, agricultural worker/rural proletarian), social differentiation, ethnicity, and gender,

- be familiar with some of the methodologies and critical perspectives employed by historians, economists, political scientists and anthropologists in their search to understand the history of other peoples and places,
· understand how theoretical perspectives have reshaped our understandings of the past
· reflect on the ways in which the changing political social and economic environment, within which western social scientists operate shapes research questions and priorities and the categories used to understand unfamiliar settings.

Subject Assessment

Assessment will be based on: two assignments submitted during the semester; one end of semester "reading control" and on participation in the workshop. Essay 1 (a bibliographical exercise linked to the second essay) will be worth 30% of the final mark and should be 1500 words long. It is due on April 13. Essay 2 will count for 50% and will be 2500 words in length. It should be submitted on June 12. The semester Reading Control will be administered on June 11 and will count for 10% of the assessment.

In summary:

Essay 1 (Bibliographical Exercise) 30%
Essay 2 50%
Reading Control 10%
Workshop Participation and Attendance 10%
TOTAL 100%

You must present your essays by the due dates. You should place your essay in the Essay Box (School Office, ground floor) by 4.30 pm on the due date, or post it to the School of History on or before the due date.

You should keep a copy of each essay, and retain these and the returned originals until a final mark has been issued.

Should illness or serious personal emergencies make it impossible for you to meet essay deadlines, you must consult with me well before the submission date. In certain cases deadlines may be extended. However, this should be viewed as a possibility of last recourse. All late work submitted without an extension will be penalised at the rate of one percent per day.

Reading Controls are designed to test your familiarity with the content of the materials assigned for weekly reading. Each Reading Control (lasting approximately 45 minutes) will consist of a series of multiple choice questions and an exercise in which you will be asked to
identify and briefly (in ten to twelve lines) discuss the significance of key issues, individuals, organizations.

Lectures: II/III PSA is a workshop-based subject in which I will introduce topics via a mini lecture at the beginning of workshops. Lectures, films and videotapes will be scheduled throughout the year. Full notice of these will be given in the workshops.

Workshops: Students are required to attend one two hour workshop each week.

The workshop is the core around which the subject will revolve and regular attendance is essential and a prerequisite for successful completion of the course. Each week the workshop members will focus on a particular theme and will deal with the questions announced in the Subject Guide.

Attendance at classes: What you get out of the workshops depends upon what you and your tutor put into them. Attendance at tutorials/workshops is compulsory.

Both lectures and workshops commence in the first week of the semester.

Workshop reading: Reading for the workshops is set out at the front of the Subject handbook. All materials have been placed on Reserve in the University library. Additional copies may be placed in the School's own library (DMB: E 315). Beyond a basic free issue of subject guide and similar handouts, documentary and other material duplicated by the School of History for use as texts in this subject will be charged for.

Workshops will be successful if students prepare for them with care. Please do your preparation well in advance of the workshop. Take notes! Be ready to contribute to the workshop discussion.

You are also strongly advised to browse the Library’s holdings and reference section in order to locate areas that will yield material for your various essays. If you haven’t yet taken one of the free guided tours of the library offered by the Borchart Library’s staff - please sign up right away.

Strategies:

It is important that you keep good notes of your reading. Structure these notes carefully, using headings and sub-headings, and make them legible. Properly done, these notes will prove invaluable in your preparation for workshop discussion and the written assignments.

When making notes of your reading, be sure to record the publication details (i.e., name of author, title, publisher, place of publication, year of publication, page numbers, etc.). There’s nothing more frustrating than trying to recover the exact wording of, or source for that quotation which at the last moment become crucial to your making your argument successfully.

Photocopying of articles can be useful, but you should be careful not to make this a
substitute for careful reading and note-taking. It is a fallacy to assume that simply because you have the material in your hand, you have prepared yourself adequately for workshop discussion or to write an essay.

Books: You will find it a great help if you purchase a number of the following:

Eric Hobsbawm, Bandits (Penguin or Pantheon editions)


Paul Friedrich, Agrarian Revolt in a Mexican Village (New Jersey: Holt Rinehardt)

The university bookshop should have supplies of these books, but you might want to check the SRC Book Exchange for second hand copies. Second hand bookstores in Melbourne (for example, the Grub St Bookshop in Brunswick St, Fitzroy) may also yield copies.

Changing Subjects: During the first three weeks of Semester I you may change your enrolment. If you want to transfer to another subject, you should consult an Adviser of Studies. The adviser can show you the subject guides for all history subjects and generally assist you in making another choice. If you wish to vary your enrolment or withdraw from the subject early it is important to inform your lecturer and the Student Centre. Otherwise, the absence of an act may lead to a failing mark that can prejudice your chance of taking other subjects in the future.

Schedule of Workshops and Readings

Please read all the assigned reading carefully before attending the workshops. The more prepared you are - the more effectively you will be able to participate in workshops.

Week 1 March 2-7 Subject Organization

Workshop Questions: There will be workshops meeting this week. It is important that you attend the one for which you have enrolled.

Week 2 March 9-13

Topic: Towards a Definition of ‘Peasants’

Workshop Questions:

What is a peasant? Is a working definition of the term possible or desirable? The internal stratification of the peasantry.

Reading:
Week 3 March 16-20

**Topic: Peasants: Land and Labour**

**Workshop Questions:**

What are the main sources of landowners’ power over peasants and agricultural workers? What are the differences in the way rural and urban employers’ power are experienced?

**Reading:**


2. Bolivian Land and Labour Documents [Hamdout]

Week 4 March 23-27

**Topic: Dilemmas of Peasant Life**

**Workshop questions:**

What different strategies have been adopted by the peasants of the Dominican community in order to cope with the ‘dilemmas’ of their daily lives? Why are peasants so dependent on outsiders?

**Reading:**


2. Document: Sicilian Harvest Song [Handout]

Week 5 March 30-April 3

**Topic: The Large Estate - Haciendas and Hacienda Life**

**Workshop Questions:**

In what ways can the hacienda be seen as a social and cultural as well as an economic system? What were the key similarities and differences between the large estates described by Margolies and Wells?

**Reading:**


Week 6 April 6-10

Topic: A Peasant Novel

Workshop Questions:

What light does Traven’s novel throw on the material and cultural basis of Indian peasant society in southern Mexico? Which areas of the peasant world are revealed most clearly?

Reading:


2. Sentences by Mexican Indian Peasants [Handout]

TERM HOLIDAYS April 13-24

Week 7 April 27-May 1

Topic: Peasant Banditry- Pre-Political Politics?

Workshop Questions:

What kinds of banditry does Hobsbawm identify? In what kinds of activities do bandits engage? Can these activities be classified as a form of politics? How ‘radical’ can rural banditry be?

Reading:


Week 8 May 4-8

Topic: The Myth of Peasant Conservatism

Workshop Questions:
What are George Foster’s key assumptions? How far are Foster’s arguments acceptable in the light of Huizer’s critique?

Reading:


Week 9. May 11-15

Topic: The Different Forms of Peasant Resistance

Workshop Questions:

What are the "great" and "little" traditions? In what ways do they influence and shape each other? What does Scott mean when he says that the ‘economic, political and cultural subordination of peasants is a "negotiated sub ordination' with definite moral limits’?

Reading:


Week 10 May 18-22

Topic: Peasant Leadership

Workshop Questions:

In the light of Friedrich’s account of agrarian revolt in western Mexico, what factors appear to have contributed to Primo Tapia’s emergence as a peasant and community leader?

Reading:

Paul Friedrich, Revolt in a Mexican Village (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall), pp. 5-10; 43-105.

Week 11 May 25-29

Topic: Peasants and Land reform- the Case of the Popular Unity Government in Chile 1970-1973
Workshop Questions:

How radically, and in what ways was peasant consciousness and behaviour altered in Cautín province during 1970-1973? What lessons do you derive from Steenland’s account on the issue of peasant involvement in periods of rapid social and political change?

Reading:


Week 12 June 1-5

Topic: Peasants and Guerilla Struggle - Che Guevara and Bolivia

Workshop Questions:

What do you understand by the term ‘foco’ and ‘foquismo’? What were Guevara’s goals in Bolivia? Why did the revolutionary attempt fail?

Reading:


Week 13 June 8-12

Topic: Peru’s Shining Path Movement

Workshop Questions:

How do the authors explain Shining Path’s ability to survive and grow in Peru in the 1980s? What are Shining Path’s goals and methods? How do you explain the prominent role played by women in the movement? How far is Shining Path a “peasant movement”?

Reading:


The reading control test will be administered on June 11

The Second Essay is Due on June 15