

# Assignment Prompts: What Do Students Want?

Henry D. Delcore, Ph.D.

Department of Anthropology / Institute of Public Anthropology

The way you write your assignment prompts affects the seriousness with which students take your assignments, and their perceptions of your standards, how approachable you are, and how much you care about their success. Students also draw from prompts conclusions about the personalities of their instructors, judging them as, for example, “condescending,” “supportive” or “lazy.” These insights are drawn from a series of focus groups on our campus about student expectations of assignment prompts. The findings herein can help you make informed decisions about what to include in prompts, and predict some likely student reactions to those choices. Overall, this analysis illustrates that although there is no “silver bullet” to crafting effective prompts for all students, it does pay to rethink the language and structure of your prompts.

## Executive Summary

- The Basics
  - Students agree that all prompts should include, minimally, information about topic, length, format, due dates, use of sources, and grading procedures and expectations.
- Clarity
  - Overall, students prefer clear, detailed prompts because they decrease stress, help them to understand instructor expectations, effectively complete assignments, work without asking their instructors questions, and integrate assignments into busy lives.
  - Specific elements of “clarity” include:
    - Well-defined stages for completing the assignment and clear point values for each stage/part.
    - Bullet points, sub-sections and other formatting elements that break up the prompt
    - Specific due dates
    - Specific guidance on citation format
    - Sample topics and sources, if appropriate
  - Detailed prompts strike some students as too directive, causing stress and inhibiting creativity. We also find evidence that very detailed prompts can promote a singular focus on good grades.
- Clarity and Seriousness
  - Clear, detailed assignment prompts tend to motivate students to take assignments seriously and/or expect that instructors have high standards; less detailed prompts, or prompts that are vague on key issues, tend to leave students uncertain and unmotivated to take assignments seriously.
  - Some students see vague prompts as a breakdown in the reciprocal nature of teaching and learning, taking a “you get what you ask for” approach to instructors who do not give enough guidance.

- Instructor Approachability
  - Rhetorical choices in prompts, like length, format and level of detail, influence students' impressions of instructors' approachability.
  - Students are split on whether or not detailed prompts promote interaction with instructors; however, if approachability is the goal, then prompts should explicitly state that students can contact instructors for help.
  
- Does the Instructor Care?
  - There is some evidence that a detailed prompt communicates care for student success on the part of the instructor.

## **Introduction**

In 2009-2010, my students and I conducted eight focus groups with 48 Fresno State juniors and seniors about their expectations of and reactions to assignment prompts. The participants came from a wide variety of schools and colleges, though over half were business, social science or science majors. Thirty eight of the participants reported having a GPA of 3.0 or better. I moderated one of the focus groups, while the other seven were moderated by Leslie Goldthorpe-Davis, Kimberly Holzem, Cody Madsen and Marcus Moreno, students trained in my ethnographic field methods course.

Each focus group began with an open-ended question about what students hoped for in assignment prompts. Next, we presented the participants with two sample prompts, one brief (Prompt 1), the other detailed (Prompt 2), followed by discussion of their pros and cons. Both were actual prompts used in social science courses (see Appendix); I authored Prompt 2, though participants in the focus groups were not told the origins of the prompts. I suggest reviewing the prompts before reading the analysis below.

Based on our experiences moderating the groups, we developed a set of codes and then close-coded the data. Marcus Moreno assisted with a manual read-through of the focus group transcripts, after which Dr. James Mullooly (Anthropology) and I analyzed code occurrence and co-occurrence using the qualitative data analysis program, ATLAS.ti.

A clear limitation to these data is their decontextualized nature. Prompts are delivered by instructor to students in a class context and the impressions and conclusions students draw from prompts themselves are tempered by their interactions with instructors, who may be able to soften hard edges or clarify questions. By giving students prompts on which to comment, independent of a specific class or instructor, we took those prompts out of their context. However, some instructors offer little guidance on assignments aside from prompts, creating a situation akin to our research. Further, some students attend class spottily, miss or misunderstand oral instructions, or are reluctant to contact instructors with questions. As a result, they may be left with the prompt itself as the only or at least the main guideline for assignments. Hence, while more contextual research on students and prompts is certainly warranted, this research does attend to the fact that after our spoken words melt away, a textual assignment prompt is often all that students have.

## The Basics

First, there was wide consensus among the participants that, minimally, a prompt should include information about topic, length, formatting, due dates, use of sources, and grading procedures and expectations. Without these basic elements, the students agreed that they would feel unsure or even unable to complete the assignment.

## Clarity

In the general discussion portion of the sessions, clarity emerged as an important theme. Students, overwhelmingly, seek clarity in prompts because it enables them to get to work quickly (though they recognize that they do not always do so), and it decreases stress, especially around the issue of instructor expectations. One student noted that he handed the same paper in to two different instructors and got an A from one and C from the other. Some instructors may object to handing in the same paper twice, but the student was making the point that instructors' expectations vary, that this causes stress, and that assignment prompt clarity helps reassure students that they are on the right track. Because of its perceived clarity, the students preferred, by about a 3:1 margin, Prompt 2.

Problems noted with Prompt 1 included uncertainty about the due date, format, topic, the rough draft and the definition of various terms. The due date in the "14<sup>th</sup> week" struck some students as vague; they preferred an actual date. The format of the pages (font size, spacing, etc.) was not specified, and one student wondered what would happen if someone used a large font and the paper was over the page limit. (Prompt 1 cites a word count, but for some students, this does not seem to substitute for more specific guidance on the format of the text.) About topic, Prompt 1 says that "students will choose one topic among the issues we discuss." Several participants wanted more specific guidance about topics. One student wondered if the optional rough draft would be graded (perhaps she has encountered ungraded but mandatory rough drafts in other classes), and why she might choose the rough draft option at all. Finally, the prompt failed to define certain terms and requirements. For example, it says to "come prepared" for a mandatory conference with the instructor. Students wondered what "come prepared" meant in this context; understandably, the idea of meeting an instructor without knowing whether you were prepared or not was a source of stress. Prompt 1 also cites several things to be discussed in the meeting, including "presentation outline." "Presentation outline" was not defined, and one student wondered if they would be expected to have their PowerPoint presentation ready at the time of the meeting. Finally, several wondered how the instructor defined "scholarly sources."

Note that some of the issues with Prompt 1 might be cleared up by the instructor in class. For example, paper topics might be clearer once the instructor specifies which class topics are eligible as paper topics. However, the research participants seemed anxious to have at least some of these matters codified in the prompt.

Though they voiced some reservations about Prompt 2 (see below), the participants overwhelmingly preferred its perceived *clarity* over the perceived vagueness of Prompt 1. First, students referred to Prompt 2 as more "broken down," referring to the use of sub-sections for "Paper Proposal," "Rough Draft," "Final Draft," etc. This is consistent with other comments that revealed a preference for bullet points and other formatting mechanisms that presented key points in short bursts rather than narrative paragraphs. Participants also praised Prompt 2's presentation of due dates, sample sources, and specific format guidelines, including citation format. Students also appreciated the

detailed breakdown of point values for each stage of the paper. (However, opinions about the presentation of sample topics was evenly split; some preferred sample or required topics, other preferred more latitude or felt they did better on papers when they were allowed to choose the topic.)

One student commented that she felt she could “go to the prompt for help.” She seemed to view the prompt as a resource for getting questions answered, in contrast to the recognition made by others they would need to ask questions to clarify issues with Prompt 1. While we should encourage interaction with instructors about assignments, students in the focus groups did not want to have to interact about the basic parameters of an assignment. Importantly, the participants in several of the sessions told vivid, detailed anecdotes about intimidating encounters with professors who declined to clarify questions about assignments or brushed off students either in class or at their office. The students’ desire for clear, detailed prompts must be seen in light of these experiences.

A student athlete noted that the longer prompt was better for her because sometimes she is away for competitions and cannot communicate directly with her instructors; Prompt 2 would enable her to get to work without asking questions. In fact, her insight registers a larger fact about students: they are often very busy with activities outside of class and, while not “on the road,” may feel cut off from their instructors and hence prefer detailed prompts.

In sum, the students felt more confident about completing the second assignment satisfactorily. One student said that he wants to “fulfill the professor’s expectations,” and the more detail he receives about the assignment, the more he feels able to do this.

### **Prompts and Student Seriousness**

Students told us that the clearer the prompt, the more seriously they take the assignment. Specifically, we saw a consensus among the students that the instructor who wrote Prompt 2 had high standards, and that, if presented with the two prompts, they would tend to take the Prompt 2 assignment more seriously than the Prompt 1 assignment.

Several students said, with agreement of others present, that they expected the instructor who authored Prompt 2 to have higher expectations than the instructor who authored Prompt 1. In one session, a student commented that the more detailed the prompt, the more detailed the paper would be – a statement that provoked nods and several similar comments from around the table. Yet another student said she would probably budget more time for the Prompt 2 paper than the Prompt 1 paper. This provoked another participant in the session to note that the Prompt 1 assignment probably required the same amount of work as the Prompt 2 assignment, but that she would devote more time to the Prompt 2 assignment. Finally, in several sessions, students agreed that they felt they were able to do better on assignments with prompts that had the level of clarity and detail of Prompt 2.

Some students expressed the linkage between clarity and seriousness in a clearly reciprocal way. One woman said, “[Instructors] need to be specific about what they want. If they’re not, they can’t complain too much. If they can’t communicate with us what they want then we can’t give it to them.” As she spoke, several others around the table interjected agreement and followed up with supporting comments. In a different session, a student commented that the less information in a prompt, the more likely he is to give the instructor “whatever comes out of my head”; however, armed more information about what the instructor wants, he feels he can then give that back. Several of the other participants around the table nodded in agreement as he spoke.

One of the richest exchanges came in a discussion that encompassed both Prompt 2 and the structure of the assignment itself. Four (of six) students in one of the sessions talked for nearly five minutes in praise of the staged nature of the Prompt 2 assignment. One emphasized that the stages were well-spaced and that he felt he would have enough time between them to work on the next stage, as well as attend to other responsibilities. He added that the spaced, staged structure reassured him that the instructor realized that students have a lot of things going on aside from the class in question. Agreeing, another student said she felt that the instructor must care that you actually do well by giving you time between stages to absorb feedback. A third student added that he expected the final paper would be held to a high standard, but that the stages and feedback along the way would both help students achieve a good result and “help me improve my writing.” Several other participants agreed that this would be a class with high standards. As one student summed up, “If the professor is going to put that much effort into you, then he’s going to expect the same effort of you.” While we tried to focus on the prompts themselves, rather than the assignments, the discussion above underlines the link, for students, between well-conceived assignments and prompts and the seriousness with which they take assignments and even whole classes. Note that the Prompt 1 assignment is also staged to some degree, though the format of the prompt and its perceived lack of clarity led students to give it, and its instructor, less credit for having high standards and promoting seriousness toward the assignment.

Even students who felt Prompt 2 was too detailed or picayune agreed that the assignment would be graded more rigorously. In one session, several students lampooned what they saw as the overly serious and detailed nature of Prompt 2. One of them said that he expected a misplaced comma would cause him to drop a letter grade, implying that the impression of high standards – or, more accurately, tough grading - held even for those who felt Prompt 1 was laughably detailed. Another student who participated in the fun-making in that session said he would be unable to do the Prompt 2 assignment at the “last minute,” provoking the other three students in the session to agree that they would indeed wait till the last minute to do the Prompt 1 assignment.

### **Can a Prompt be Too Clear?**

Can a prompt be too clear? The answer is “yes,” but this problem only affects a small minority of students.

While the consensus was that the clarity of Prompt 2 cut down on stress, some students had the opposite reaction. One participant spoke generally about long, detailed assignment prompts she has encountered and said that they can cause her stress as she tries to figure out how to include all the required elements in her paper. Another felt that Prompt 2 had “too much information” and that the instructor was being “condescending.”

Another objection involves the impression that the instructor is mandating what students actually write as opposed to giving guidelines. One participant said Prompt 2 was “too specific and too controlling.” Another, an honors college student, listened while several session-mates praised the clarity of Prompt 2. He then commented that he agreed that “everything is here,” and that giving guidance is “ok,” but that Prompt 2 went “too far.” He felt that “if you don’t want the paper the professor wants you to write then you’re gonna be in trouble.” A session-mate agreed, and they listed the suggested topics, mandated one sentence thesis statement, and suggested sources as things that, in one student’s words, go “beyond guidance to ensuring the students say what you want them to say in a

paper.” Other session participants disagreed, however, and provided justifications for the detail of Prompt 2.

Some positive comments about Prompt 2 also reveal a worrisome aspect of clear, detailed prompts: some students prefer them because they perceive them as being easier or leading merely to better grades. One participant, in a discussion about “which prompt would you rather be given,” said that he would choose Prompt 2 because he felt the instructor already knew what he wanted, it was clearly laid out, and he would *be able to get a better grade* as a result. Several session-mates agreed that they would choose Prompt 2 because it had “everything laid out,” and the suggested sources would cut down on the amount of research they would have to do. These students were praising Prompt 2, but for reasons that, pedagogically, may not promote student learning.

### **Is the Instructor Approachable?**

Without prompting, the session participants often freely commented on the extent to which the prompts encouraged them to interact with the instructor. Their opinions were mixed; roughly half felt Prompt 1 encouraged more interaction with the instructor, the other half felt Prompt 2 did so.

Some students felt the exhaustive nature of Prompt 2 would cut down on interaction with the professor because it answered so many questions one might have, while Prompt 1 presumes that there will be communication with the instructor. One conjectured that the Prompt 2 instructor had had many questions about the assignment in the past and decided to include as much information as possible in the prompt to cut down on those questions.

In one session, students discussed the impression that the Prompt 1 instructor is expecting interaction with students about the assignment, would be “more willing to be in communication with the students,” “more approachable,” “more willing to get to know you,” and would “take the time to answer your questions.” By contrast, one student felt that even explicit encouragement in Prompt 2 to “consult” the instructor did not overcome the “don’t come and ask me” feel of the prompt. He said that “[by putting encouragement to consult the instructor] in there it’s almost saying you shouldn’t have to consult with me because it’s all right here but if you really need to I can do it.”

However, others felt that Prompt 1 would require asking so many questions that they would feel they were “bugging” the instructor; these comments recall the difficult situations some students encounter when approaching some professors (above). These students preferred the detail of Prompt 2 because it would enable them to get right to work without many questions, and, as one student noted, just because you have few questions about how to complete the assignment does not mean you cannot interact with the instructor.

About half of the students who broached the “approachability” issue felt that the Prompt 2 instructor was, on balance, quite approachable. The general gist of the remarks is that the level of detail of Prompt 2, including recommended sources and format guidelines, showed that the instructor was offering a lot of help and would therefore be approachable for even more help. And, in contrast to the skeptical comment about “consulting” the instructor above, most students took Prompt 2’s encouragement to “consult” the instructor as a sincere invitation to seek out the instructor for help.

Aside from the general statements about approachability noted above, students tended to have strong opinions about the personality of the instructor who wrote Prompt 2, some of which did not

encourage interaction. One said the author seemed scary, another labeled him (students used male pronouns to refer to both prompt authors) “condescending,” and yet another said that the prompt was “intimidating” and that the instructor “better be a nice teacher.” Another student said he felt Prompt 2 was “yelling at him.”

The mixture of impressions of instructor approachability drawn from the prompts highlights the multivocality of text. Some felt the tone of Prompt 2 was friendly and the instructor approachable, but others drew the opposite conclusion. However, it is true that the Prompt 2 author repeatedly encourages students to seek out the instructor for advice and that many students took that encouragement as sincere. While some diversity in students’ impressions of instructor approachability is likely, it must be considered a best practice to include, in prompts, explicit encouragement to ask questions and interact with the instructor.

### **Does the Instructor Care?**

Again without prompting, students offered opinions about the degree to which the two instructors cared about their students’ success. Keeping in mind the negative impressions of the Prompt 2 instructor (above), the handful of students who broached the topic of “caring” agreed that the Prompt 2 author “cared” more about his students’ success than the Prompt 1 author.

Several students felt that the Prompt 2 instructor wanted his students to do well, as evidenced by the detailed instructions and resources like format guidelines and sample sources. The staged nature of the assignment, as noted above, also made a big impression on some. As one student said, “[the Prompt 2 instructor] really cares about the student and wants them to succeed and is giving them all the pit stops to make sure and guarantee that they are going to succeed.” Another said that she could “tell that this teacher cares and wants you to do well, and wants to help you out and give you improvement.” One student terms the Prompt 2 author as “supportive” because he encourages students to seek him out for help.

One student conjectured that the Prompt 1 instructor cared less about his students because the prompt was not very detailed, and perhaps the instructor was “lazy.”

### **Online Classes**

While online classes only came up a few times, when they did, students agreed strongly that clear, detailed prompts, like Prompt 2, were essential to online classes because they felt that such classes had fewer lines of communication with instructors.

## Appendix

### Prompt 1

**Type of Assignment: Research Paper**

**Department: a department in Social Sciences**

RESEARCH PAPER. All students will choose one topic among the issues we discuss on which they will: (1) formulate a thesis, (2) do library research (must have a minimum of five references, of which at least 3 are scholarly sources, not including course texts), and (3) write a five-page\* paper with the fifth page reserved for references (1250 words min.), and (4) give a 6-9 minute PowerPoint presentation in class (60 pts.). All students must submit their research paper during the 14th week of class (125 points). If you choose to submit a DRAFT research paper for me to evaluate, it will be due the day of your presentation and is worth 50 points of the 125 points possible for this assignment (this means the revised, final paper would be worth 75 points, and it would still be due the 14th week of class).

“MINI MEETING” (10 points). A 10-15 minute conference with me is required at least 2 weeks before your research paper is due. We will discuss your writing in general & review your thesis, presentation outline, and your evidence (bring any articles you’ve collected). You must come prepared on or before the date noted to receive full credit. Failure to meet may result in a 10-point deduction.

## Prompt 2

**Type of Assignment: Research Paper**

**Department: a department in Social Sciences**

This assignment is worth a total of 150 points (out of 500 in the course). It consists of four stages: Paper Proposal, Proposed Sources, Rough Draft, Final Draft. You must complete each stage of the assignment. Each stage will be graded, and you cannot move on to the next stage without completing the previous one.

	<u>Point values for each stage</u>	<u>Due dates</u>
<u>Paper Proposal</u>	20	Sep. 24
<u>Proposed Sources**</u>	20	Oct. 8
<u>Rough Draft</u>	30	Nov. 14
<u>Final Draft</u>	80	Dec. 10

\*\*Important: When handing in the Proposed Sources, also notify me of any major changes in topic or focus.

**Paper Proposal:** Consists of a maximum one page, double-spaced statement of paper topic. At the top of the page, write **one sentence** that states the topic of the paper. Skip a line, and then briefly provide some additional details describing the major topic or question you plan to address. Make sure to relate your topic the major themes in the course (see below). If you know any useful sources, you can include them at this time, too. Put some time into this proposal ! At this stage, thoughtfulness and a little work at the library will reduce your workload later on, because clarity of focus will reduce unnecessary future trips to the library, unrelated reading, etc. While you are developing your Paper Proposal, DO consult with me by phone, email, or in person.

**Proposed Sources:** Consists of a list of *at least* five sources that you plan to use for your paper. For each source, provide the bibliographic entry using Chicago Scientific Style. Consult <http://www.lib.ohio-state.edu/guides/chicagogd.html> for the proper format. This is also the format you will use in the bibliography of the rough draft and final draft. After each entry, give a brief explanation of how the source is related to your topic. NOTE: To complete this stage, you will have to actually begin reading your sources to see which are appropriate and which are not ! Once again, it will save you time if you consult with me about sources before handing in the assignment.

Sources will typically include books and journal articles. Articles from popular magazines and Internet sites *might* be appropriate, but you should check with me about these. After all the assignments are handed in, I will give you feedback on your sources and recommend any sources you might want to add.

**Rough Draft:** The Rough Draft includes the following: (1) On the first page of the rough draft, include an outline of the *entire* paper. (2) In the remainder of the draft, at least *two-thirds* (7-10 pages) of the paper must be written out. The Introduction and Conclusion *must* be among the parts of the paper that you complete for the Rough Draft. (3) Bibliography of at least five sources. Also, make sure that you include citations of sources within the text of the paper so I can see where you have found your information (see below on format of in-text citations).

Based on all this, I will be able to recommend improvements in writing style, structure and organization, and content. Because it is your chance to get feedback *before* the Final Draft, the Rough Draft is the key to a successful paper !

**Final Draft:** The final paper should be 10-15 pages, double-spaced, one-inch margins, 10-12 point font, and page numbers. Be sure to include a final outline of the entire paper, the text of the paper (with citations in the text, as with the rough draft), and a bibliography. If the paper is missing any of these elements, I will not grade it.

**Note on Bibliographies and Citation:** Your bibliographies should use the Chicago Scientific Style. Guidelines can be found at: <http://www.lib.ohio-state.edu/guides/chicagogd.html>. This site tells you how to format entries in the bibliography, which comes at the end of the paper. You must also credit sources *in the body of the paper*. All ideas that are not your own, as well as direct quotes, must be followed by a citation. It is NOT acceptable to slightly alter a quote and pretend it is your own work. If a phrase, sentence or passage is substantially the work of another (even if you have changed a few words here and there), then the source must be cited. Suppose this is a passage from one of your papers:

The ruins at Borobudur include bas relief carvings depicting the lives of the Buddha. Such bas reliefs were common in India, but the Javanese innovated on Indian style by arranging them in a line, so that a visitor can walk along and view the Buddha's lives in order (Heidhues 2000:47).

Note that in this example, there is no direct quotation, but the information has clearly been obtained from a source (*Southeast Asia: A Concise History*, by Mary Heidhues). Here's an example with a direct quote:

The ruins at Borobudur include bas relief carvings depicting the lives of the Buddha. "Such reliefs were common in India, but the idea of telling a story by placing the depictions in a line was a Javanese innovation" (Heidhues 2000:47).

It is okay to use **some** direct quotes, but in general, you should minimize the number of direct quotes in your paper. Papers composed mostly of quotes taken from various sources will not be successful. In other words, you need to consider the sources you are consulting and then work the ideas and information from them into your own words.

**Help with Writing:** This assignment is structured to encourage you to seek help with your writing. At each stage, I will be available to help you with your work. There are also other resources at the university that can help: The Writing Center can help with general writing problems and grammar. It is located in Lab School 137, 278-3052. The Learning Resource Center also provides help with writing style and organization of assignments. It is located in Education 184, 278-0334.

### Paper topics

**Upland-lowland or majority-minority relations:** This topic invites you to examine upland-lowland or majority-minority relations in a particular time and place, with a focus on political, economic or cultural relations. Sample topics with **political** emphasis might include: upland-lowland relations and the Indochina War, upland/minority peoples and pre-modern (pre-20<sup>th</sup> century) states, upland/minority peoples and modern states, etc. A sample of a **cultural** topic might be: conversion to lowland religions

by upland groups. An **economic** topic might focus on upland-lowland (or coastal-inland) trade in some area during a particular period.

**Religious systems:** For this, you can focus your attention on the religious beliefs and practices of one cultural group. However, your paper must in some way address the issue of religious syncretism (the combination of different religious traditions into a complex whole). For example, a paper on Islam in Java would have to also include coverage of other non-Muslim belief systems that co-exist with Javanese Islam. Another way to handle this is to look at religious diversity within a single group – for example, a comparison of Catholicism and Buddhism in Vietnamese culture.

**The effects of changing subsistence patterns:** This is perhaps the broadest of the topic areas. Generally, this will involve examining changes in subsistence patterns of a single group over time. The group in question might be a minority group within one of the modern states – such as one of the many groups in Borneo whose subsistence has been affected by logging and deforestation. You might also look more broadly at the effect of national development on majority culture (for example, the cultural changes occurring in Thailand as a result of rapid economic development).

**Suggested Sources:** Most of these books are on reserve in the Reserve Book Room, under Anth 123. Several are on reserve for other university classes. These are general works, and represent good places to start your research.

### **General Texts**

Robbins Burling, *Hill Farms and Padi Fields*

Charles Keyes, *The Golden Peninsula: Culture and Adaptation in Mainland Southeast Asia*

Robert Lester, *Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia*

Milton Osborne, *Southeast Asia: An Illustrated Introductory History*

Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce* (2 volumes)

Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era: Trade, Power, and Belief*

Anthony Reid, *Charting the Shape of Early Modern Southeast Asia*

D. R. Sardesai, *Southeast Asia, Past and Present*

David Joel Steinberg (ed.), *In Search of Southeast Asia: A Modern History*

Donald Swearer, *The Buddhist World of Southeast Asia*

Nicholas Tarling (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia* (4 volumes)

### **Southern China**

Louisa Schein, *Minority Rules: The Miao and the Feminine in China's Cultural Politics*

Nicholas Tapp, *The Hmong of China*

### **Burma**

Bertil Lintner, *Outrage: Burma's Struggle for Democracy*

Ronald Renard, *The Burmese Connection: Illegal Drugs and the Making of the Golden Triangle*

Martin J. Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*

### **Thailand**

Walden Bello, *A Siamese Tragedy*

Robert Cooper, *Resource Scarcity and the Hmong Response*

W.R. Geddes, *Migrants of the Mountains: The Cultural Ecology of the Blue Miao (Hmong Njua) of Thailand*

Charles Keyes, *Thailand: Buddhist Kingdom as Modern Nation-State*  
John McKinnon, *Hill Tribes Today: Problems in Change*  
John McKinnon and Wanat Bhruksasri (eds.), *Highlanders of Thailand*  
Nicholas Tapp, *Sovereignty and Rebellion: The White Hmong of Northern Thailand*  
Nicholas Tapp, *The Hmong of Thailand*  
David Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*

### **Laos**

Sucheng Chan, *Hmong Means Free: Life in Laos and America* (not on reserve, but a copy is located in Woodward Special Collection on 4<sup>th</sup> floor of library)  
Yang Dao, *Hmong at the Turning Point*  
Grant Evans, *Lao Peasants Under Socialism*  
Carol Ireson, *Field, Forest, and Family: Women's Work and Power in Rural Laos*  
Judy Lewis and Damrong Tayanin, *Minority Cultures of Laos: Kammu, Lua', Lahu, Hmong, and Mien*  
Peter Simms, *The Kingdoms of Laos*  
William Smalley, *Mother of Writing: The Origin and Development of a Hmong Messianic Script*  
Martin Stuart-Fox, *A History of Laos*  
Martin Stuart-Fox, *Laos: Politics, Economics, and Society*  
Chia Koua Vang, *The Life of Shong Lue Vang: Hmong "Mother of Writing"*

### **Cambodia**

Nayan Chanda, *Brother Enemy*  
David Chandler, *A History of Cambodia* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)  
May Ebihara, Carol Mortland, and Judy Ledgerwood (eds.), *Cambodian Culture Since 1975*  
Charles Higham, *The Civilization of Angkor*  
Ian Mabbett and David Chandler, *The Khmers*  
Michael Vickery, *Cambodia, 1975-1982*

### **Vietnam**

Murray Hiebert, *Chasing the Tigers: A Portrait of the New Vietnam*  
Neil Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam*  
Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*  
Mark McLeod, *Culture and Customs of Vietnam*  
Truong Buu Lam, *Borrowings and Adaptations in Vietnamese Culture*

### **Malaysia**

Barbara Watson Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*  
Robert Dentan, *Malaysia and the "Original People": A Case Study of the Impact of Development on Indigenous Peoples*

### **Indonesia**

Richard W. Baker, *Indonesia: The Challenge of Change*  
Bruce Grant, *Indonesia* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)  
Angela Hobart, Urs Ramseyer, and Albert Leemann, *The Peoples of Bali*  
Victor T. King, *The Peoples of Borneo*  
Christian Pelras, *The Bugis*  
M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c. 1300*  
Sir Richard Olof Winstedt, *The Malays, A Cultural History*

### **Philippines**

Fenella Cannell, *Power and Intimacy in the Christian Philippines*

Stanley Karnow, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines*

Vicente Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society Under Early Spanish Rule*

David Joel Steinberg, *The Philippines: A Singular and a Plural Place* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

### **Singapore**

Ah Eng Lai, *Meanings of Multiethnicity: A Case Study of Ethnicity and Ethnic Relations in Singapore*

Tania Li, *Malays in Singapore: Culture, Economy, and Ideology*

Geoffrey Murray, *Singapore: The Global City-State*

Joseph B. Tamney, *The Struggle Over Singapore's Soul: Western Modernization and Asian Culture*

### **Works on Sub-National Groups**

*Southeast Asian Tribal Groups and Ethnic Minorities*

Don McCaskill and Ken Kampe (eds.), *Development or Domestication?: Indigenous Peoples of Southeast Asia*

Leslie Sponsel (ed.), *Endangered Peoples of Southeast and East Asia*

Gehan Wijeyewardene, *Ethnic Groups Across National Boundaries in Mainland Southeast Asia*