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## Seminar

# Thailand's 2015 draft charter: Abusive constitution-making by an authoritarian regime

## *Dr. Michael H. Nelson*

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Date: **19 October 2015 (Monday)**

Time: **4 pm – 5:30 pm**

Venue: **B4-702, AC1, City University of Hong Kong**

### **Abstract**

On 6 September 2015, the coup group's National Reform Council rejected the draft constitution prepared by the Constitution Drafting Committee. While the drafters emphasized that their document would empower citizens against the hated politicians and drive the national reform agenda, the public almost entirely rejected it. Controversial items included the possibility of having a non-MP as prime minister, the switch from a mixed-member majoritarian to a mixed-member proportional election system, the almost entirely appointed Senate, and the great hurdles for amendments. Most controversially, the draft established an appointed strategic reform committee with comprehensive policy-making tasks, including the power to impose its decisions on the elected government. In times of crisis, this committee could have unilaterally decided to replace government and Parliament. Being unlikely that the draft would pass in the scheduled referendum, the NRC voted it down. The country now faces 180 days of constitution drafting by another military-appointed committee, with a referendum in about September 2016, and elections in April/June 2017, which would push the total time of military dictatorship to three years.

### **Short Bio**

**Michael H. Nelson** is a senior research fellow at the German-Southeast Asian Center of Excellence for Public Policy and Good Governance, Faculty of Law, Thammasat University. He published *Central Authority and Local Democratization in Thailand* (1998), and co-authored (with Jürgen Rüland, Clemens Jürgenmeyer, and Patrick Ziegenhain) *Parliaments and Political Change in Asia* (2005). He is the editor of *Thailand's New Politics* (2002), and *Thai Politics: Global and Local Perspectives* (2005). His current research interests concern the development and operation of Thailand's system of political representation (political parties, politicians, elections, and voting behavior), constitutionalism, varieties of contemporary Thai political culture, and provincial-level political and administrative structures. His latest publication, "Constitutional Contestation over Thailand's Senate, 1997 to 2014," appeared in *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 36, 1 (2014), pp. 51-76.

All are welcome.  
Language: English

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