**Ethnic Studies 265/Hmong 265 (Section 001, 62356/62355)**  
**Hmong Americans: History, Culture and Contemporary Life**  
**Spring 2017 Syllabus**

**Instructor:** Kim Hernandez, PhD  
**Office:** Holton 387  
**Email:** hernandk@uwm.edu  
**Office Hours:** 12:30-1:30 p.m. MW (or by appointment)  
**Class meeting time:** Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.  
**Location:** Merrill Hall 316

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course explores Hmong history, culture and contemporary life. Who are the Hmong people? What caused them to migrate to the United States and how have they adjusted to life in America? In addition to discussing their history in China and Southeast Asia through the end of French colonial rule in the mid-1950s, we will examine U.S. foreign policy in the region during the Vietnam War, with an emphasis on the “Secret War in Laos” from 1961-1975, and the subsequent mass exodus of thousands of Hmong and other Southeast Asian refugees. We will investigate life in refugee camps as well as the social, cultural, economic and political transformations that have been taking place in the U.S. since the mid-1970s. Issues we will explore include identity, religion, acculturation, citizenship, gender, transnational ties, and community building.

**GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS**

This course meets the social sciences requirements as established by the College of Letters and Science. Guided by the learning goals below, the overarching aim of this class is to reflect on the study of human collectivities, institutions, and cultures and their infrastructures and interrelations, as well as examine people’s capacity for behavior acquisitions and change. As we will be focusing primarily on significant historical events that ground the life histories and life prospects of Hmong Americans (Asian Americans), including discussions on the unique perspectives and worldviews that this group uses to evaluate their life experiences over time, this class also satisfies the “minority cultural diversity in America” requirement.

**LEARNING GOALS**

Students will:  
- Understand how Hmong-U.S. relations during the Vietnam War resulted in the creation of a global Hmong diaspora;  
- Learn about the global politics, particularly the relationship between the Soviet Union, China and the United States, over the control of Southeast Asia during the Cold War;  
- Acquire knowledge of the disruptive changes that accompany the trauma of war, displacement and transitional migration and how these processes have dramatically affected family and community life;
• Increase awareness of ongoing social and cultural issues that affect the Hmong American community in Milwaukee and across the United States;
• Broaden their knowledge of the diversity of immigrant experiences by learning about the life stories of this ethnic group; and
• Be able to use the knowledge gained to assess the similarities and differences between immigrant/refugee experiences and their own family and/or personal life history.

CLASS FORMAT & POLICIES

If you need to discuss something with me, the fastest and most effective way of getting in touch with me is via email (hernandk@uwm.edu). Please make sure that your e-mail includes a proper address, such as “Dear Professor Hernandez” or “Dear Dr. Hernandez” and that you sign your name. I will do my best to answer you as soon as possible. Make certain, however, that you put either “Ethnic 265” or “Hmong 265” as your subject header: I get many emails each day, and it is easy to overlook something important. If you would like to meet with me in person, feel free to stop by during my office hours. If my office hours are not convenient for you, I am happy to set up an appointment to meet with you at a different time.

Attendance
Your attendance and participation are mandatory. Absences will reduce your overall grade and excessive absences may result in a failing grade. Attendance will be taken during each class period. Please contact me in cases of verified illness or family emergency. Punctuality is essential; tardiness will accumulate to count toward unexcused absences. Cell phones must be turned off before class begins. Laptops are allowed only for the purpose of taking notes and/or accessing your electronic readings. This privilege will be taken away if it is abused.

Computer skills and resources. Most of the course materials will be accessible through the course Desire2Learn (D2L) website. You will upload your written assignments to the appropriate dropbox folder. You can access D2L by going to the UWM homepage (http://www4.uwm.edu) and in the quick links at the top of the page select D2L and then click go. This takes you to the login screen where you will be asked to provide your Panther ID and password (these are the same as your UWM email username and password). On the login page, notice the “For Students” link that offers several help files for dealing with various aspects of D2L. These help documents are indeed very helpful, so keep them in mind if you ever get stuck. It is imperative that you have regular access to adequate, reliable technology throughout the term. A computer glitch, lost file, or any other technical problem is not an excuse for turning work in late or not turning it in at all. The computer you use must have a basic word processing package such as Word for Windows.

You will also have to be able to view PowerPoint and Adobe PDF files. If you need further assistance, contact the Information Management and Technology (IMT) Help Desk (open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week). You can visit the Help Desk in person in EMS E173A, call 414-229-4040 (toll-free at 1-877-381-3459), or send an email to help@uwm.edu.

Course requirements. Your grade will consist of participation in class discussions, quizzes, a research paper, a mid-term and a final exam. If you feel you are going to miss the deadline for handing in an assignment or taking a quiz/exam, be sure to communicate about this beforehand.
Based on your written explanation, I will determine whether or not extra time will be allowed. As a rule, you will only get extra time in exceptional cases. Due dates for all assignments are outlined in the course schedule below. Late papers will be graded down one letter per day.

- **Participation.** Your participation grade entails not only showing up for class. Everyone is expected to complete assigned readings by the day they are due, bring the reading and/or notes to class, and actively participate in discussions. In addition to coming to class each day prepared to discuss assigned readings and questions I pose, you will lead discussion once with another student (See responsibilities of discussion leaders)

- **Quizzes.** You will take four (4) quizzes during the term. Quiz dates are listed in the “Schedule of Readings and Assignments” section. Quizzes will be based on the assigned readings, lectures, films, and discussions. Each quiz covers materials from the following units:
  
  Quiz 1 (Weeks 2 and 3)
  Quiz 2 (Weeks 4, 5, and 6)
  Quiz 3 (Weeks 7, 9, and 10)
  Quiz 4 (Weeks 11, 12, and 13)

- **Exams.** You will take two exams during the semester. The exams will include short, interpretive essays, and multiple choice and true/false questions. The mid-term will cover only materials up to the examination date, and the final will include materials from the entire course, with greater emphasis on the second half. Study guides will be provided to help you prepare for the exams.

- **Research Paper.** You will choose a topic related to the themes of the course and conduct additional research to explore it further. The research paper consists of four parts: developing a research proposal, conducting secondary and primary research, writing the essay, and presenting your findings in class (Detailed project description will be provided in class and will also be posted on our course website.)

**Graded Components and Weight:**

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<td>Four Quizzes (5% each)</td>
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<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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<td>Research Project</td>
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**Grading scale**

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**Required Readings.** All assigned readings are either from the three books below, which are required for purchase, or they are available on our D2L Web site under the unit with which they are associated. The chapters and articles on the website will be marked on the syllabus with (e). You will need to download them and either print a copy or save them on your computer. In
order to succeed in this course, you must be prepared to discuss in class the assigned materials and complete related assignments.

- **Books.** The required books are available at Panther Ecampus Bookstore and also available at many online vendors.

- **Films.** Some lectures will be accompanied by video clips. There will be times when we will watch longer films. Note that everything we do in this class—lectures, readings, discussions, and films—is potential exam material.

**Academic Honesty**
I encourage you to work with your colleagues to get the most out of this course. However, any student discovered plagiarizing materials runs the risk of receiving a failing grade and facing disciplinary action that may lead to academic probation or even expulsion from the university. Plagiarism is the use of someone else’s work as your own. This is in violation of university policy and absolutely unacceptable. When you use someone else’s ideas or language, you must cite her/him using appropriate citations. When you quote a source directly, you must use quotes, attribute that quote, and provide full publishing information. When summarizing or paraphrasing, your source must also be fully cited. When in doubt, see me or refer to the Writing Center for guidance. For more information visit “Avoiding Plagiarism” at Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab (OWL): https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/

For more on UWM Academic Misconduct policy, please see: http://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/facultystaff/policies/academic-misconduct/

**UWM Writing Center**
The Writing Center is an excellent source for help at all stages of your project development: www.writingcenter.uwm.edu; (414) 229-4339

**Accessibility Resource Center**
If you work with an advisor at the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC), please bring your document(s) to me within the first two weeks of class. If you are concerned that you may have a learning disability or any issues, including mental health issues, that might make it difficult or impossible to complete the course requirements, visit the ARC office in 112 Mitchell Hall. For more information, see: http://uwm.edu/arc/ or call: (414) 229-6287

*Please see the following links for information regarding:*
Accommodations for religious observance: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm
Accommodations for military service: http://www4.uwm.edu/academics/military.cfm
Incomplete policy: https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_31_INCOMPLETE_GRADES.pdf
Discriminatory conduct policies:
SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION TO COURSE

Jan 23: Introductions
Jan 25: Overview of Hmong Diasporic Studies

WEEK 2: ORIGIN, MYTHS, AND HMONG DIASPORA IN THE WORLD

Jan 30: Hmong Historiography

Feb 1: History and Migration

WEEK 3: CULTURE AND GENDER IN THE VILLAGE CONTEXT

Feb 6: Hmong Cosmology

Feb 8: Birth, Death and Power
- Quiz #1

WEEK 4: CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

Feb 13: Life under French Colonial Rule

Feb 15: Impact of World War II
French Return” (pp. 71-105) (e)

**WEEK 5: CONTEMPORARY HISTORY-CONTINUED**

*Feb 20: Entanglement in Global Political Struggles*
- Chia Youyee Vang, “Chapter 1” pp. 17-43
- Film, “Laos: The Not So Secret War, 1970”

*Feb 22: Local Ties*
- Sarah A. Larsen and Jennifer M. Miller. 2010. “Chapter 14: Secret War” (pp. 228-244) from *Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories: Our Veterans Remember* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press) (e)
- Video, 2010. “Part II-Chapter 7: Rescue, Saving Lives” from *Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories: Our Veterans Remember*

**WEEK 6: ESCAPE AND REFUGE**

*Feb 27: Camp Life*
- Lillian Faderman. 1998. “The Escape” (pp. 43-65) and “The Camp” (pp. 66-80) from *I Begin My Life All Over: The Hmong and the American Immigrant Experience* (Boston: Beacon Press) (e)
- Yer J. Lo. 2013. “Chapter 19: The Journey Begins” (pp. 102-129) from *The Crying River* (Houston: Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co.) (e)
- **Guest Speaker: Dr. Chia Youyee Vang**

*March 1: Coming to America*
- Film, “Becoming American: Odyssey of a Refugee Family”
- Quiz #2

**WEEK 7: SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IN THE U.S.**

*March 6: Internal Migration*

*March 8: Midterm Exam*
- Due: Research project description with preliminary sources for research projects

**WEEK 8: FINALIZE RESEARCH TOPICS**

*March 13: No Class* - Individual meetings with me to discuss research proposals
*March 15: No Class* - Individual meetings with me to discuss research proposals
Spring Break, March 19-25

WEEK 9: RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

March 27: Contested Beliefs

- Video, “Grey’s Anatomy” Hmong episode

March 29:

- Film, “Split Horn”

WEEK 10: POLITICAL ACTIVISM

April 3: Participation in U.S. Political System

- Chia Youyee Vang, “Chapter 5: Political Activism”, pp. 122-150
- Film, “The Time is Right for Mee”

April 5: The Politics of Recognition

- Film segments, “Washington DC Commencement, May 14, 1997”
- Film segments, “Hunted Like Animals”
- Quiz #3

WEEK 11: FROM ORAL TO LITERATE SOCIETY

April 10: Why Write?

- In-class Writing Workshop

April 12: Why Write?

- In-class Writing Workshop

WEEK 12: CULTURAL AND IDENTITY FORMATION

April 17: Evolving Meanings of New Year Celebrations

- Chia Youyee Vang, “Chapter 4: Continuity and Reinvention of Traditions,” pp. 97-121
- Geraldine Craig, “Patterns of Change: Transitions in Hmong Textile Language.” *Hmong*

**April 19: Hmong Americanization and the Cultural Politics of Sports**


**WEEK 13: THE HMONG AND THE MEDIA**

**April 24: Rethinking Crime and Violence**


• Lillian Faderman, 1998. “Gangs” (pp. 185-209) from *I Begin My Life All Over: The Hmong and the American Immigrant Experience* (Boston: Beacon Press). (e)

• *Journal Sentinel* articles on family violence (e)


• Quiz #4

**April 26: Project presentations**

**WEEK 14: PROJECT PRESENTATIONS**

**May 1:** Project presentations

**May 3:** Project presentations

**WEEK 15: PROJECT PRESENTATIONS**

**May 8:** Project presentations

**May 10:** Review

*Final Papers DUE in Class*

Final Exam: 10:00 a.m.-12:00 noon Monday, May 15th

***I reserve the right to change the schedule at any time during the semester and will notify the class promptly***