HISTORY 287: THE VIETNAM WAR (ONLINE)
FALL 2017 SYLLABUS

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Teaching Assistant: TBD

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Why did the United States become involved in Vietnam for a quarter of a century? This course explores why today policymakers continue to debate the “lessons of Vietnam” and ordinary Americans, Vietnamese and other Southeast Asians, both in the United States and in Southeast Asia, are still learning to come to terms with the impact of the war on their lives. The availability of government data in recent years clearly show that the American war in Vietnam was an extremely complex phenomenon in which a struggle for decolonization and social revolution became enmeshed in Cold War politics. As U.S. relations with the Soviet Union and China changed, so did the rationale for continued American involvement in the war, from the containment of communism to the pursuit of credibility. The causes of the communist insurgency in Vietnam were similarly complex and changing. The use of powerful new technology by one side and of guerrilla warfare by the other raised serious ethical questions. In addition, the nature of the war coincided with domestic turmoil in the U.S. and, in Vietnam, led to the displacement of huge numbers of people and strained the social fabric of Vietnamese society.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

• Gain a better understanding of the role Vietnamese struggle for independence played in the outcome of the war;
• Understand the organizational and institutional structures that placed the former Indochinese colonies as a crucial battleground during the Cold War;
• Be able to critically analyze the various dimensions of the conflict with respect to the organizations, individuals and institutions relevant to that period; and
• Be able to understand the global impact of the war through exploring the experiences of many involved that have been excluded from narratives of the Vietnam War era

READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

All assigned readings are either from the three books below, which are required for purchase, or they are available on our D2L website under the unit with which they are associated. The
chapters and articles not from the books are marked on the syllabus with (e). They can be downloaded from our website. The following three books are required for purchase. They are available at http://uwm.ecampus.com/. Once you are on the homepage, follow these steps to order your books: 1) Click on “Order Your Textbooks” on the upper left corner; 2) Choose “Summer 2017” when asked to select a semester; 3) Choose “HIST” when asked to select a subject; 4) Choose “287” when asked to select a catalog; 5) Click on “201” when asked to select a section; 6) Click on “HIST 287 201 66244 The Vietnam War Vang” when asked to select your course.


James S. Olson and Randy Roberts. 1998. My Lai: A Brief History with Documents (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s)


Quizzes. You will take 4 timed quizzes during the session. Each quiz will be worth 5%. Together they will make up 20% of the final grade. Once you begin the quiz you will only have 20 minutes to complete it so DO NOT begin the quiz until you are caught up with the readings, lectures, and films. You are allowed only one attempt. NOTE: If you misspell words or provide a response that is correct but not written exactly as listed on the answer key, the system will mark it wrong. For example, the correct response to a question is “United States” and your answer is “U.S.” Do not panic. I will manually review the quizzes and give you credit. Quiz dates and units covered are listed in the “Schedule of Readings and Assignments” below.

Exams. You will take a mid-term and a final exam. 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 exam will include materials from the entire course, with greater emphasis on the second half. Study guides will be available to you before the exams. You will have 50 minutes for the mid-term and 120 minutes for the final exam. (Exams are under the “Quizzes” area). The essay questions will need to be graded manually so you will not receive points immediately upon completion.

Essays. You will write two 4-5 page essays. The dates by which these must be uploaded onto the D2L dropbox are listed in the “Schedule of Readings and Assignments.” Detailed directions are available on our D2L site. These two papers will constitute 20% of your grade and will be evaluated for both content and clarity. Late papers will be accepted but they will be penalized a grade for each day that they are late. Comments will be posted in the respective dropbox. Please submit essays as Word files (.doc or .docx).

Discussions. You will be asked to participate in four online discussions during the session. The dates for the discussions are listed in the schedule below. Make sure you allow for time to view films and do the readings before posting to the discussion board. You will be asked to respond to
specific questions I pose AND to your classmates’ responses. There are 85 students in the class. To make it manageable, I have created 4 groups so that you will only be engaging in discussions with about 20 other students. Your posts will be graded for thoughtfulness, clarity, and the degree to which it integrates class materials. You need to cite at least one source (assigned readings, lectures, films, etc…) in your initial post. You should put forth the same amount of effort in your response to your classmates’ posts as in your initial post. You may post as often as you wish, but only the first posting and first response to a classmate will be graded.

Course Evaluations. Student feedback is important for course improvement. Although you will have to logon to our course website to complete the mid-session assessment and course evaluation, they are designed to ensure that your responses will not be associated with your name. Since I will not know who has completed the surveys, the number of points added to everyone’s final grade will depend on how many students participate. Up to 4 points can be added to final grades, which can make a significant difference. All students are encouraged to complete course evaluations so that the maximum credit can be provided. Points per assessment will be provided according to the following participation rates:

- 90-100% will generate 2 points for everyone;
- 80-89% will generate 1.5 points;
- 70-79% will generate 1 point; and
- 60-69% will generate .5 point.

No points will be given if less than 60% participate.

Grades. Grades will be calculated according to the following components:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>4 Quizzes (5% each)</td>
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<td>4 Discussion Posts (6% each)</td>
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<td>2 Short Essays (10% each)</td>
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<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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Grading Scale.

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SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

This online course will take advantage of the flexibility that the virtual classroom provides; at the same time, it is designed with the assumption that you will devote a certain amount of time each week to the course. The following class schedule gives you the unit assignments as well as the suggested order in which they should be completed. For each unit, there will be some combination of readings, films, power point lectures, papers, and quizzes. In most cases, you will
have a week to complete the assignments. It is up to you to decide when to allocate your time to work on the class. For your convenience, you will have access to all course materials for the entire session when the class begins. You may work ahead but assignments turned in after the due date will be penalized. Read the dates and assignments for each unit carefully. If you need an extension for any assignments, communicate with me AND your TA before the due date.

WEEK 1: THE VIETNAMESE AND THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH FOREIGN INVASIONS

Tuesday, Sept. 5

- Read the syllabus and “Intro to History 287” documents thoroughly.
- Submit a brief introduction of yourself to the Discussion forum entitled “Introduce Yourself!” by 11:59pm. In addition to your major(s) and interests, please share why you are taking this class. If you wish, you may attach a picture of yourself to this posting.
- Review the following powerpoint lectures:
  - “Introduction”
  - “Vietnamese History Prior to European Imperialism”
  - “French Colonial Rule and the Rise of Vietnamese Nationalism.” Powerpoint slides have no voice component. Only images and texts. These lectures will provide you with important background information about Vietnamese history before we begin to discuss U.S. involvement.
- Read the following articles/chapters:
  - Robert J. McMahon, Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War, pp. 16-46
  - Read “Vietnam’s Revolutionary Tradition” by Ngo Vinh Long, pp. 4-18 (e).
  (Remember that all readings marked with (e) are available on the course website)

WEEK 2: THE FIRST INDOCHINA WAR, 1946-1954

Monday, Sept. 11

- Review the powerpoint lecture “First Indochina War, 1946-1954”
- Read Robert J. McMahon, Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War, pp. 47-80
- Watch film, “Roots of a War.” (Remember that all videos can be found on the D2L course website under that unit.)
- Take Quiz #1 by 11:59pm on Wednesday, Sept. 13 (Units 1 and 2).
- Submit your first posting to Discussion #1 by 11:59pm on Thursday, Sept. 14. Respond to another student’s post by 11:59pm on Friday, Sept. 15.

Question 1: Vietnamese nationalists, including Ho Chi Minh, had hoped for U.S. support of Vietnamese independence from France. What factors contributed to U.S. policies toward Vietnam following World War II?
WEEK 3: COLD WAR GEOPOLITICS
Monday, Sept. 18

- Review the following powerpoint lectures:
  - “Post-Colonial Political Struggles in Vietnam”
- Read the following articles/chapters:
  - Frederik Logevall, “The Diem Experiment” from The Origins of the Vietnam War, pp. 25-38 (e)
  - Robert J. McMahon, Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War, pp. 80-119

WEEK 4: KENNEDY AND INCREASED U.S. INVOLVEMENT, 1961-1963
Monday, Sept. 25

- Review the powerpoint lecture “Kennedy & Increased U.S. Involvement, 1961-1963”
- Read Robert J. McMahon, Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War pp. 120-154
- Watch film, “America’s Mandarin”
- Take Quiz #2 by 11:59 pm on Wednesday, Sept. 27 (Units 3 and 4).

WEEK 5: JOHNSON, GULF OF TONKIN, AND DECISION FOR WAR, 1964-1965
Monday, Oct. 2

- Review the powerpoint lecture “LBJ, Gulf of Tonkin & Decision for War, 1964-65”
- Watch the film, “LBJ Goes to War, 1964-65”
- Submit your first posting to Discussion #2 by 11:59 pm on Thursday, Oct. 5.
- Respond to another student’s posting by 11:59 pm on Friday, Oct. 6.

Question 2: The events that unfolded in the Gulf of Tonkin during late July/early August 1964 resulted in Congress passing the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. What significance did this congressional action have on U.S. commitment in Vietnam? Based on the information from readings and the film, do you think President Johnson and Congress could have taken a different route? Why or why not?
Monday, Oct. 9

- Read Robert J. McMahon, Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War, pp. 198-235
- Take midterm exam by 11:59pm on Wednesday, Oct. 11.

WEEK 7: RACE, CLASS, AND THE DRAFT
Monday, Oct. 16

- Complete Mid-Session Assessment by 11:5pm. To access the mid-session assessment, click on “Surveys” in the upper right on the homepage.
- Review the powerpoint lecture “Race, Class and the Draft”
- Read the following articles/chapters:
- Watch film excerpts from “Wisconsin Vietnam War Stories”

WEEK 8: NORTH VIETNAM AND THE TET OFFENSIVE
Monday, Oct. 23

- Review the powerpoint lecture “North Vietnam & the Tet Offensive”
- Read Robert J. McMahon, Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War, pp. 274-355
- Watch the film, “Tet 1968”
- Take Quiz #3 by 11:59pm on Wednesday, Oct. 25 (Units 7 and 8)

WEEK 9: MY LAI MASSACRE AND WAR CRIMES
Monday, October 30

- Read James S. Olson and Randy Roberts, My Lai: A Brief History with Documents
- Review the powerpoint lecture “My Lai Massacre and War Crimes”
- Read “My Lai Essay Directions”
- Watch film, “My Lai”
- Upload your paper on the My Lai massacre to the D2L dropbox “My Lai Paper” by 11:59pm on Thursday, Nov. 2.
WEEK 10: NIXON’S WARS
Monday, Nov. 6

- Review the powerpoint lecture, “Nixon’s Wars”
- Read Robert J. McMahon, Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War, pp. 357-400
- Watch film, “Cambodia and Laos”
- Submit your first posting to Discussion #3 by 11:59pm on Thursday, Nov. 9. Respond to another student’s posting by 11:59pm on Friday, Nov. 10.

_**Question 3:** How and why were Cambodia and Laos pulled into the Vietnam War? (Could they have avoided becoming entangled in this conflict? Why or why not?)_

WEEK 11: THE DIVIDED HOMEFRONT
Monday, Nov. 13

- Review the powerpoint lecture “The Divided Homefront”
- Read Robert J. McMahon, Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War, pp. 401-436
- Watch film, “Homefront USA”
- Take Quiz #4 by 11:59pm on Wednesday, Nov. 15 (Units 9, 10, and 11)

WEEK 12: PEACE TALKS: CRISIS AND STALEMATE
Monday, Nov. 20

- Review the powerpoint lecture “Peace talks: Crisis and Stalemate”
- Read Robert J. McMahon, Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War, pp. 437-475
- Watch film, “The End of the Tunnel”

***THANKSGIVING RECESS NOVEMBER 22-26***

WEEK 13: REASSESSING WAR
Monday, Nov. 27

- Review the powerpoint lecture “Lessons Learned: Reassessing War”
- Read Robert J. McMahon, Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War, pp. 476-540
- Watch excerpts from film, “Fog of War”
- Submit your first posting to Discussion #4 by 11:59pm Thursday, Nov. 30. Respond to another student’s posting by 11:59pm on Friday, Dec. 1.

_**Question 4:** Throughout the session, we have covered the various dimensions of the war in Vietnam. This final discussion asks you to reflect on McNamara's 11 lessons_
from the Vietnam War (last page of the powerpoint lecture) and the film "Fog of War". In your opinion, has the U.S. learned from these lessons? If so, in what ways? If not, why do you think we have not learned? Feel free to give specific examples and make sure you cite sources.

WEEK 14: MAKING SENSE OF THE WAR AND ITS LEGACIES
Monday, Dec. 4

- Review the powerpoint lecture, “Making Sense of the War and Its Legacies”
- Watch film, “Regret to Inform”
- Begin reading Andrew Pham, *Catfish and Mandala* (You may of course begin reading earlier!)
- Read “Catfish and Mandala Paper Directions”

WEEK 15: WAR AND MEMORY
Monday, Dec. 11

- Review the following powerpoint lectures:
  - “American Memory of the Vietnam War”
  - “Vietnamese Memory of the American War”

Monday, December 18

- Take final exam by 11:59pm

Wednesday, December 20

- Upload *Catfish and Mandala* essay to D2L dropbox “Catfish and Mandala” by 11:59pm.

Thursday, December 21

- Complete course evaluation by 11:59pm. To access the course evaluation, click on “Surveys” in the upper right on the homepage.

*I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus and will notify the class promptly.*