Hmong 265/Ethnic Studies 265 (Section 001, 52715/52716)
Hmong Americans: History, Culture and Contemporary Life
Spring 2018 Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Kimberly Hernandez
Office: Holton 383
Email: hernandk@uwm.edu
Office Hours: 12:30-1:30 p.m. MW (or by appointment)
Class meeting time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:00a.m.-12:15p.m.
Location: Holton Hall 180

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**

Email is my only contact: hernandk@uwm.edu; I do not have an office phone. 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.

**Format.** Most class meetings will consist of a lecture and discussion of materials assigned for that day. 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.

**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 papers to the Dropbox. If you have used a D2L website before, you will find that our website is similar to what you have already experienced. If not, you can access D2L by going to the UWM homepage (http://www4.uwm.edu). Click on the dropdown “Current Students” and then select “D2L”. 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, many help files for dealing with various aspects of D2L are available. Click on “D2L Made Easy for Students” on the bottom left to access the documents. If you need further assistance, contact the UWM Help Desk. You can visit the Help Desk in person in Bolton 225 and Library Learning Commons, call 414-229-4040 (toll-free at 1-877-381-3459), or send an email to help@uwm.edu. You must have access to a reliable computer and a high-speed internet connection to take this course.

**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 in small groups twice with another student.

- **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 1, 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.

- **Oral History/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.

**Graded Components and Weight:**

- Participation (10%-discussion leader) 15%
- Four Quizzes (5% each) 20%
- Midterm Exam 20%
- Final Exam 20%
- Oral History/Research Project 25%

**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.
  
  

  *Additional Readings posted to D2L*

- **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/](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/](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](http://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/](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](http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm)
- Accommodations for military service: [http://www4.uwm.edu/academics/military.cfm](http://www4.uwm.edu/academics/military.cfm)
- Incomplete policy: [https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_31_INCOMPLETE_GRADES.pdf](https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_31_INCOMPLETE_GRADES.pdf)
- Disciminatory conduct policies: [https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_47_Discrimina_duct_Policy.pdf](https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_47_Discrimina_duct_Policy.pdf)
- Grade appeal procedures:
SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION TO COURSE

Jan 22: Introductions
Jan 24: Overview of Hmong Diasporic Studies

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

Jan 29: Historiography and Identity

Jan 31: Global Migration

WEEK 3: CULTURE AND GENDER IN THE VILLAGE CONTEXT

Feb 5: Hmong Cosmology

Feb 7: Birth, Death and Power
- Quiz #1

WEEK 4: CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

Feb 12: Life under French Colonial Rule

Feb 14: Impact of World War II
WEEK 5: CONTEMPORARY HISTORY-CONTINUED

Feb 19: Entanglement in Global Political Struggles
- Chia Youyee Vang, “Chapter 1” pp. 17-43

Feb 21: 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)
- Film, “Laos: The Not So Secret War, 1970”

WEEK 6: ESCAPE AND REFUGE

Feb 26: 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: Dao Vang

Feb 28: Coming to America
- Film, “Becoming American: Odyssey of a Refugee Family”
- Quiz #2

WEEK 7: SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IN THE U.S.

March 5: Internal Migration

March 7: Midterm Exam
- Due: Research project description with preliminary sources for research projects

WEEK 8: ORAL HISTORY/RESEARCH TOPICS

March 12: Choosing topics, finding sources, preparing research proposal
- Upload research proposal to dropbox before 11:00 am, Wednesday, March 14

March 14: Discussing research proposals
- Bring TWO copies of your research proposal to class
Spring Break, March 18-25

WEEK 9: RELIGION

March 26: Contested Beliefs

March 28: Religious Practices
- Film, “Split Horn”

WEEK 10: POLITICAL ACTIVISM

April 2: Participation in U.S. Political System
- Chia Youyee Vang, “Chapter 5: Political Activism”, pp. 122-150
- Film, “The Time is Right for Mee”

April 4: The Politics of Recognition
- Film segments, “Washington DC Commencement, May 14, 1997”
- Quiz #3

WEEK 11: FROM ORAL TO LITERATE SOCIETY


April 11: Excerpts from Soul Vang. 2014. To Live Here (Pittsburgh: Imaginary Friend Press) (e)
- Film: Tou SaiKo Lee and Justin Schell Travel in Spirals

WEEK 12: CULTURAL AND IDENTITY FORMATION IN THE UNITED STATES

April 16: Evolving Meanings of New Year Celebrations
- Chia Youyee Vang, “Chapter 4: Continuity and Reinvention of Traditions,” pp. 97-121
April 18: Hmong Americanization and the Cultural Politics of Sports

WEEK 13: GENDER, IDENTITY, AND THE MEDIA

April 23: Rethinking Crime and Violence
- Journal Sentinel articles on family violence (e)

April 25: Identity and Belonging
- Quiz #4

WEEK 14: PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

April 30: Project presentations
May 2: Project presentations

WEEK 15: PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

May 7: Project presentations
May 9: Project presentations

Final Papers Uploaded to Dropbox by 12:00 noon, Monday, May 14th

Final Exam 12:30-2:30, Friday, May 18th

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