

HSTAA 338: The US and Vietnam Summer 2005

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Tuesday 1-2:30 PM and by appointment

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“Levitating” the Pentagon, 1967

From 1945 until the late 1970s, the United States was engaged either directly or indirectly in warfare in Vietnam and the surrounding countries. The fighting devastated Vietnam, much of Cambodia and Laos. The war exacerbated major social and political divisions in the United States, cast a long shadow over America’s foreign policy for the rest of the 20th century, and transformed the nature of American nationalism and self-identity.

This course will examine American involvement in Vietnam and the Indochina region in the second half of the 20th century. Although some time will be spent on battles, the majority of the course will examine the global context of American involvement in Vietnam, and that involvement’s impact on American politics, economy, society and culture, as well as on foreign policy. Our readings will emphasize primary sources, as well as literary accounts of the period based on the authors’ personal experiences of Vietnam. Together with lectures these will help you understand both the impact of the war on people involved in it as well as how the memory of that experience has been constructed over the years.

As you well know, the Vietnam War and its impact on the United States was and still remains extremely controversial. While I respect your individual opinions, I also expect you each to keep an open mind, and rely on concrete historical evidence to support your claims. I insist that you act respectfully and courteously towards myself and your fellow students. You can do that by not coming in late or leaving early, by turning off all cell phones and pagers, and by making an honest effort to engage the ideas myself and other students.

Course Readings (available at the University Bookstore):

Graham Greene, *The Quiet American*

Le Ly Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*

Tim O’Brien, *The Things They Carried*

Marvin Gettleman, et. al., *Vietnam and America*

Optional Textbook: Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*

There will be additional documents that will be linked online through the course website.

The Instructor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus during the quarter. Any changes will be announced in class and on the course website.

Assignments and Grading

There will be one essay, a midterm, an oral history paper, and a final for this course.

The first essay of **3-4 pages** will be due in class on **Friday, July 8**. You will receive the paper topic at the beginning of the second week. Be thinking about this as you do the reading and hear the lectures. This assignment is worth 15% of your overall course grade.

The second essay is a **5-6 page** paper based on an oral history that you will have conducted on your own of one individual's experience during the Vietnam War era. It will be due in class on **Friday, August 5** and is worth 20% of the course grade. I will be asking you to have an interviewee selected and to tell me what you plan to interview them about in a prospectus, which is due on **Tuesday, July 19**.

The oral history paper is meant to give you the opportunity to learn the methods of historical research and analysis. You will do more than interview an individual about their experience during the war, you will place that experience in a historical context and suggest ways in which this primary source you have just created can help historians better understand the Vietnam War era. Your subject does not have to have been a veteran, but they do need to have been consciously aware of the war and able to have remembered it and formed an opinion on it during the time.

All paper assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late papers will be penalized **0.2** points per day late, in order to ensure mastery of the material in a timely and skillful fashion. If you know in advance that you will not be able to make a deadline, it is to your advantage to let me know about it as soon as possible.

Participation grade: This constitutes 15% of your overall course grade, and is based on the Friday discussions. Discussion questions will be handed out on Friday for the following week's reading.

Plagiarism: The History Department defines the inclusion in part or in whole of any other person's work in your own paper without properly citing that source as someone else's work. If you are unsure what this means, see the attached page, or contact me. All cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the University Committee on Academic Conduct, and you will not receive a grade for that assignment.

In order to pass this class, you must pass each assignment (papers, exams, and participation).

Be aware: Lecture notes will NOT be made available online. I will post my outlines from each day's lecture, but that's it. If you miss a lecture, contact another student in the class about getting their notes. The optional textbook will only touch on some of the things I raise in lecture, and you should not consider it a substitute for my lectures.

Quick guide:

1 st essay:	Fri. 7/8	15%
Midterm:	Fri. 7/15	20%
Prospectus:	Tu. 7/19	
Oral History:	Fri. 8/5	20%
Final:	Fri. 8/19	30%
Participation:		15%

Note: For Readings, “Docs” refers to the Gettleman volume, *Vietnam and America*. “Online” refers to the course website. All readings will be discussed that Friday.

Week 1 (June 20): Backstories

- I. Introduction
- II. Vietnam and French Colonialism
- III. The US in Asia 1853-1918
- IV. World War II
- V. Discussion

Reading:

Docs 2-6, 8-10
Greene, *Quiet American*, 1-59 (Part One)
Atlantic Charter, online

Week 2 (June 27): The Cold War, French Defeat

- I. Cold War Anti-Communism
- II. The American War Story
- III. Decolonization
- IV. Backing the French
- V. Discussion

Reading:

Docs 11-12, 14-16
Greene, *Quiet American*, finish

Week 3 (July 4): Partition and the South

- I. July 4 HOLIDAY
- II. Dien Bien Phu and Geneva
- III. Creating the North and South
- IV. The NLF
- V. Discussion; **FIRST PAPER DUE**

Reading:

Docs 20-21, 24-25, 27-28
Hayslip, *When Heaven...*, 1-62

Week 4 (July 11): Americanization

- I. JFK and Vietnam
- II. Gulf of Tonkin
- III. LBJ and the Theory of War
- IV. Discussion
- V. **MIDTERM**

Reading:

Docs 29-34, 37-39
Hayslip, 63-194

Week 5 (July 18): Escalation

- I. Film: “The Fog of War”
- II. Finish “Fog of War” and Discuss
PROSPECTUS DUE
- III. The Draft
- IV. The First Televised War
- V. Discussion

Reading:

McNamara, “In Retrospect,” online
Alterman, “Century of the Son of a Bitch,”
online
Docs 40-41
Fallows, “Class War,” online
O’Brien, *Things They Carried*, 1-85

Week 6 (July 25): The Wartime Experience

- I. Grunts and Officers
- II. The Color of War
- III. Search and Destroy
- IV. Four Hours At My Lai
- V. Discussion

Reading:

Document 54
O’Brien, finish

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Week 7 (August 1): The Antiwar Movement

- I. Antiwar Movement I (1960-68)
- II. Antiwar Movement II (1968-73)
- III. Pro-war Movement
- IV. Documentary Film clips
- V. Discussion; **SECOND PAPER DUE**

Reading:

Docs 42-49, 59
Port Huron Statement, online
Weatherman Manifesto, online
“Black Man’s Stake in Vietnam,” online
Schrag, “Forgotten American,” online

Week 8 (August 8): Vietnamization

- I. Economic Impact of War
- II. Tet, Paris, and LBJ
- III. Vietnamization
- IV. The Fall of Saigon
- V. Discussion

Reading:

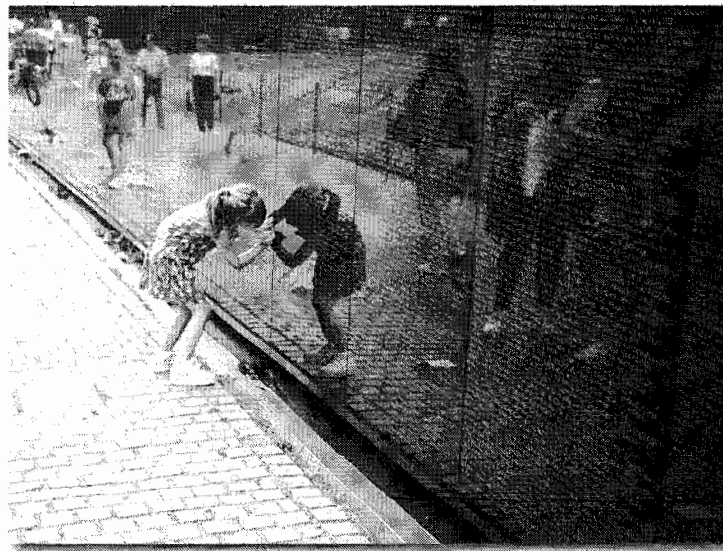
Docs 52-53, 56, 58, 63
Hayslip, finish

Week 9 (August 15): Remembering Vietnam

- I. The Vietnam Syndrome: Foreign Policy
- II. The Vietnam Syndrome: Veterans
- III. The War in Film
- IV. The Vietnam War in the 21st Century
- V. **FINAL EXAM**

Reading:

PNAC Statement of Principles, online
Huntington, “Democratic Distemper,” online



Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington DC