

History 315/515: The Vietnam Wars

Spring 2016

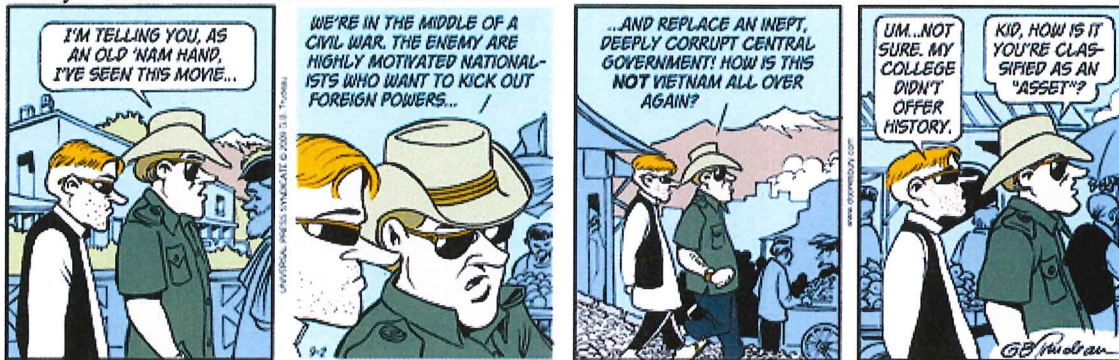
Instructor: Taylor M. Easum
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Office Hours: 11:00-12:00 MW
(Also by appointment)

Location: CCC 231
Schedule: 9:35a-10:50a MW

Overview:

This course examines the US involvement in Vietnam, commonly known as ‘the Vietnam War’. Rather than focus on the early years of American involvement, or the aftermath of WWII in Vietnam, as starting points for understanding America’s intervention and ultimate defeat in Southeast Asia, this course takes a longer view, beginning instead with the pre-colonial Vietnamese state and the French colonial period. The collapse of French rule in Indochina came in the form of the First Indochinese War, the first of several ‘Vietnam Wars’ studied in this course. France’s humiliating defeat in 1954 set the stage for America’s subsequent intervention, and for the creation of South Vietnam. We will consider the reasons for America’s political and economic support for this troubled state, and the paths to military escalation and eventual withdrawal from Southeast Asia. After examining the reasons for America’s defeat in Vietnam, the course concludes with a look at the legacies of the Vietnam War, both political and cultural, in America, in Vietnam, and throughout Southeast Asia.

Finally, with the ongoing US presence in Iraq and the continuing war in Afghanistan, it is worth reflecting on the history of American intervention in Southeast Asia:



(Source: Doonesbury, Sept. 2, 2009)

Learning Outcomes:

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said: “To finish the moment, to find the journey’s end in every step of the road, to live the greatest number of good hours, is wisdom.” Or, as Aerosmith put it in their 1993 single “Amazing”:

*Life’s a journey not a destination
And I just can’t tell just what tomorrow brings*

That being said, here are some potential destinations for our intellectual journey. At the end of this course students shall be able to:

- articulate the historical factors that led to America’s involvement in Vietnam;
- analyze and critique various arguments pertaining to the conduct and consequences of the war;
- identify diverse groups and countries that were affected by the war, both in Asia and in North America;
- participate in historical debates in a classroom environment;
- clearly articulate a research question and research plan; and
- produce a well-written, thoughtful research essay with correct formatting and academic citations.

Grading:

Students shall complete three pieces of written work. On March 16th, students shall submit a mid-term examination in lecture and via D2L. On Wednesday, April 27th, students shall submit a 3,000 word research essay with full footnotes and bibliographic references. During examination week students shall take a two-hour final examination. Final grade shall be calculated as follows:

Map Quizzes: **10% (5% each)**
 Midterm Examination: **20%**
 Research Essay: **30%**

Discussion and Participation: **30%**
 Final Examination: **20%**
 Extra Credit / Film Viewings: **3%**

For each of these assignments, there are different requirements for both the amount and form of work to be done:

- *Map Quizzes*: In Week 2 and Week 9 we will begin our Wednesday lecture with a brief map quiz. You will be given a list of place names and geographic features to study in advance of the quiz. Each quiz will be worth 5% of your total grade.
- *Midterm Examination*: Students will select two questions from a list distributed in the lecture on Wednesday, March 9th, and turn in two short essays totaling five typed pages, with full footnote or endnote citations, at the start of class on Wednesday, March 16th.
- *Research Essay*: Complete a 3,000 word research essay (with one-inch margins, 12 point Times font) on a topic selected from a list distributed in class. During Week Nine, students should submit a two-page outline with (a.) a one-paragraph abstract of the argument, (b.) an outline of the major points, and (c.) a preliminary bibliography. The completed essay should be submitted at the start of lecture on Wednesday, April 27th.
- *Discussion and Participation*: You will also earn a mark for your participation in class discussions based on your engagement with the material and your contributions to in-class and online discussion (see below).
- *Final Examination*: On the scheduled final exam date and time, students will take a blue-book exam and answer two questions selected from a longer list of essay questions.
- *Extra Credit*: For a maximum of three extra-credit points, students can sign up in the first week to commit to watching several historical films dealing with the wars in Vietnam, and write a short, three-page reflection paper. A list of films will be distributed in class during Week One.

Course Website:

Through the course website available at <https://www.uwsp.edu/d2l/Pages/default.aspx>, students can access various materials for the course, including: the Course Syllabus, Glossary of Lecture Terms, Lecture outlines, and links to relevant outside resources. The website will also include links to weekly videos and other interactive websites related to the week's content. The website will also provide an online discussion forum for students to pose questions on the week's readings, which will comprise part of your discussion and participation grade, as noted above. Finally, all written assignments will be submitted via the website, and grades and comments will be posted online.

Readings:

Reflecting the controversy surrounding the Wars in Vietnam, this course avoids reliance on any single text. Instead, the syllabus covers each topic with journal articles and book extracts, including 'optional' readings. Students should read selections from the 'required' materials *before* the relevant lecture. In preparing essays on subjects related to the lecture topics, students should consult the 'optional' readings as well. These readings are available from several sources:

Required:

Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars: 1945-1990* (1991).
 Marvin Gettleman, *Vietnam and America* (1995).

Recommended:

Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin* (2003 Edition).
 Nick Turse, *Kill Anything that Moves: The Real War in Vietnam* (2013).

COURSE OUTLINE

(Jan 25-27) Week 1: The Pre-colonial Vietnamese State

David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971, pp. 7-21.

Edward Miller, "War Stories: The Taylor-Buzzanco Debate and the Future of the Vietnam War Studies," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 1, no. 1 (August 2006), pp. 453-84.

Nicholas Tarling, *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia: From Early Times to C. 1500*. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 137-163.

Optional Reading:

Victor B. Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, C. 800-1830: Volume 1, Integration on the Mainland*. Studies in Comparative World History. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 372-435, 440-456.

Web Link:

Complex of Huế Monuments – UNSECO World Heritage Site (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/678>).

(Feb 1-3) Week 2: The French Conquest

Pierre Brocheux, *The Mekong Delta: Ecology, Economy, and Revolution, 1860-1960* (1995), pp. 1-50.

David Biggs, *Quagmire: Nation-Building and Nature in the Mekong Delta* (Weyerhaeuser Environmental Books). University of Washington Press, 2012, pp. 53-90.

Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism*, pp. 22-43.

In Search of Southeast Asia: A Modern History. Revised edition. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987, pp. 186-192.

Shawn F. McHale, *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism, and Buddhism in the Making of Modern Vietnam*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008, pp.39-60.

[Map Quiz – Wednesday]

(Feb 8-10) Week 3: Vietnamese Nationalism

Ngo Vinh Long, "Vietnam's Revolutionary Tradition," in Gettleman, *Vietnam and America*, pp. 4-18.

David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-45*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982, pp. 15-53.

Hue-Tam Ho Tai, *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution*. 1st edition. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996, pp. 10-56.

McHale, *Print and Power*, pp. 3-38.

Film:

Indochine (available on e-reserve)

(Feb 15-17) Week 4: The Rise of the Communist Party

Marilyn Young, *Vietnam Wars 1945-1990*. Reprint edition. New York: Harper Perennial, 1991, pp. 1-19.

David Marr, "World War II and the Vietnamese Revolution," in A.W. McCoy, ed., *Southeast Asia under Japanese Occupation* (1980), pp. 104-131.

Mark P. Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam & America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950* (2000), pp. 73-106.

Optional Reading:

Duiker, William J. *Ho Chi Minh: A Life*. 1st edition. New York: Hachette Books, 2000, pp. 46-104.

Minh, Ho Chi. *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-66*. Edited by Bernard Fall. Signet, 1968, pp. 21-50, 129-143.

McHale, *Print and Power*, pp. 102-142.

Web Video:

American propaganda film – "Communism" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ss0yaO6VjvU>)

(Feb 22-24) Week 5: The First Indochina War 1946-1954

Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, pp. 20-36.

Michael Schaller, "Securing the Great Crescent: Occupied Japan and the Origins of Containment in Southeast Asia," *Journal of American History* 69:2 (September, 1982), pp. 392-414.

Mark P. Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam & America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950* (2000), pp. 146-176.

Optional Reading:

Documents on Geneva, in Gettleman, *Vietnam and America*, pp. 65-80.

Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap, "Vietnamese Victory: Dien Bien Phu, 1954," in Gettleman, *Vietnam and America*, pp. 53-62.

Web Video:

Dien Bien Phu (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TJ1KJJuJ3M>).

Film:

The Quiet American (available on e-reserve)

[Library Visit – Wednesday]

(Feb 29-Mar 2) Week 6: Origins of the Saigon Regime

Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, pp. 37-88.

Seth Jacobs, *Cold War Mandarin: Ngo Dinh Diem and the Origins of America's War in Vietnam, 1950-1963* (2006), pp 59-107.

Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin* (2003), pp. 127-161.

Optional Reading:

Frances Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake* (1972), pp. 90-151.

Articles by E.G. Lansdale, W.R. Fishel, & R. Scheer, in Gettleman, *Vietnam and America*, pp. 81-164.

Pierre Brocheux, *The Mekong Delta*, pp. 173-207.

[Archive Visit/Appointments – TBD]

(Mar 7-9) Week 7: Disintegration of the South Vietnamese State

George Kahin, *Intervention* (1986), pp. 122-181.

Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin* (2003), pp. 193-248.

Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, pp. 89-104.

David Marr, "The Rise and Fall of 'Counterinsurgency': 1961-1964," in, Gettleman, *Vietnam and America*, pp. 204-214.

Optional Reading:

George Kahin, *Intervention* (1986), pp. 93-121.

[Midterm Exam Distributed in Lecture – Wednesday]

(Mar 14-18) Week 8: War on North Vietnam

Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, pp. 105-149.

George Kahin, *Intervention* (1986), pp. 306-331.

Documents on the Gulf of Tonkin Incident (1964) and the State Department White Paper of 1965, in Gettleman, *Vietnam and America*, pp. 248-273.

Web Video:

Lyndon Johnson addresses the nation following the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, August 4, 1964

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dx8-ffiYyZA>).

Film:

The Fog of War (available on e-reserve)

[Midterm Exam Due – Wednesday]

(Mar 21-25): Spring Recess**(Mar 29-30) Week 9: Intervention – US Forces and Their Allies**

Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, pp. 150-171.

Harry Maurer, *On Strange Ground: An Oral History of Americans in Vietnam, 1945-1975* (1989), pp. 148-157, 171-186.

Richard A. Ruth, *In Buddha's Company: Thai Soldiers in the Vietnam War* (2010), pp. 1-16; 21-52.

Optional Reading:

George Kahin, *Intervention*, pp. 332-401.

Marc Levinson, *The Box: How the Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger*, (2006), pp. 171-188 (chapter 9: Vietnam).

Web Video:

“Showdown in Vietnam” – Newsreel report on attack on Pleiku, February 8, 1965:

(http://www.archive.org/details/1965-02-08_Showdown_in_Vietnam).

[Map Quiz – Wednesday]

[Essay Outlines Due]

(Apr 4-6) Week 10: US Troops in the Villages of Vietnam

Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, pp. 172-191.

James William Gibson, *The Perfect War*, pp. 93-154.

Seymour M. Hersh, “My Lai,” in Gettleman, *Vietnam and America*, pp. 410-424.

Michael D. Sallah and Mitch Weiss, “Buried Secrets, Brutal Truths—Tiger Force,” *Toledo Blade*, October, 2003. [<http://www.toledoblade.com/special-tiger-force>]

Nick Turse and Deborah Nelson, “Civilian Killings Went Unpunished,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 6, 2006 [http://www.latimes.com/news/la-na-vietnam6aug06_0_2056752.story]

Nick Turse “A My Lai a Month,” *The Nation* (New York), November 18, 2008.

[<http://www.thenation.com/article/my-lai-month>]

Film:

Apocalypse Now (available on e-reserve)

(Apr 11-13) Week 11: The Tet Offensive & The War at Home

Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, pp. 192-253.

Paul Joseph, “Direct and Indirect Effects of the Movement Against the Vietnam War,” in J. Werner and L.D. Huynh, eds., *The Vietnam War* (1993), pp. 165-184.

Documents on the Anti-War Movement, in Gettleman, *Vietnam and America*, pp. 295-338, 455-462.

Web Audio/Video:

NBC Special Report on Tet, 1968 (available on YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wA8nI14eYXc>).

The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, Resources on April 30, 1975:

(<http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/resources/tet/>)

Martin Luther King, Jr. on Vietnam, April 4, 1967: (http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/documentsentry/doc_beyond_vietnam/).

Link:

“Vietnam – Pointing Their Pens: Herblock and Fellow Cartoonists Confront the Issues | Exhibitions – Library of Congress,” March 21, 2015. <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/pointing-their-pens-editorial-cartoons/vietnam.html>.

(Apr 18-20) Week 12: Withdrawal and “Vietnamization”

Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, pp. 254-280.

Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin* (2003), pp. 254-261.

Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam* (1978), pp. 343-373.

Noam Chomsky, "On the Aggression of South Vietnamese Peasants Against the United States," in, Noam Chomsky, *Towards a New Cold War* (1982), pp. 154-165.
The Winter Soldier Investigation: An Inquiry into American War Crimes (1972), pp. xiii-xv, 5-11, 101-107, 149-55, 173, 181.

Web Video:

Nixon on withdrawal and Vietnamization, April 1971 (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NVRjlp_qAcY).

Film:

Hearts and Minds (available on e-reserve)

(Apr 25-27) Week 13: The U.S. Bombing of Laos and Cambodia

Fred Branfman, *Voices from the Plain of Jars: Life under an Air War* (1972), pp. 3-29, 62-77.

Seymour M. Hersh, "An American who once picked the targets tells How we ran the secret air war in Laos," *The New York Times Sunday Magazine* October 29, 1972.

Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin* (2003), pp. 305-331.

Ben Kiernan, "The Impact on Cambodia of the U.S. Intervention in Vietnam," in J. Werner and L.D. Huynh, eds., *The Vietnam War* (1993), pp. 216-229.

William Shawcross, *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia* (1979), pp. 19-35, 112-160.

Film:

The Most Secret Place on Earth (available on e-reserve) –OR– *Bombies* (available on e-reserve)

Enemies of the People (available on e-reserve)

[Research Essay Due – Wednesday]

(May 2-4) Week 14: Defeat in Indochina

Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, pp. 281-299.

Documents in Gettleman, *Vietnam and America*, pp. 471-515.

Web Resources:

The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University, Resources on April 30, 1975:

(<http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/resources/saigon/>)

Film:

American Experience - Last Days in Vietnam (available on e-reserve)

(May 9-11) Week 15: The Legacy of the Vietnam War

Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, pp. 300-330.

Arnold R. Isaacs, "American Perspectives: 'We've All Been There'--The War and American Memory," in Stanley Kutler, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War* (1996), pp. 10-24.

Ngo Vinh Long, "Vietnamese Perspectives," in Stanley Kutler, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War* (1996), pp. 591-611.

Melvin R. Laird, "Iraq: Learning the Lessons of Vietnam," *Foreign Affairs* (Nov/Dec 2005) 84, no. 6, pp. 22 ff.

Nick Turse, "Wars of Attrition from Vietnam to Afghanistan," *The Nation* (New York), April 24, 2012.

(<http://www.thenation.com/article/167531/wars-attrition-vietnam-afghanistan#>)

Alfred W. McCoy, "Torture in the Crucible of Counterinsurgency," in Lloyd C. Gardner and Marilyn Young, eds., *Iraq and the Lessons of Vietnam: Or, How Not to Learn from the Past* (2007), pp. 230-62, 297-302.

Ruth, *In Buddha's Company*, pp. 213-226.

David Marr, "Vietnam Strives to Catch Up," *Asian Update* (1995), pp. 4-21.

Marita Sturken, "The Wall, the Screen, and the Image: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial," *Representations*, no. 35 (1991): 118-42.

(May 16-20): FINAL EXAM WEEK

[Final Exam Group 14: Thursday, May 19, 10:15a-12:15p]