

History 570 (old 153a)
Peace, War, and Defense 570 (old 117)
Asia 570 (old 153)

THE VIETNAM WAR

Spring 2007

Instructor: Michael H. Hunt
Office: 460 Hamilton; 962-2384
Office hours: Mon., 1:15-3; Wed., 1:15-3;
available at other times by appointment
Email: mhhunt@email.unc.edu

Lectures: Mon. and Wed., 12-12:50, Chapman Hall 201
Recitations: Fri., 10-10:50; 11-11:50; 12-12:50
Teaching assistants:
David Cline <dpcline@email.unc.edu>
Rosalie Genova <rgenova@email.unc.edu>
Bethany Keenan <bkeenan@email.unc.edu>
Apprentice teacher:
Edward Geist <egeist@email.unc.edu>

Course website: <http://www.unc.edu/courses/2007spring/hist/152/001>

Goals

The Vietnam War, the longest Americans have known, still haunts us. But the passage of time, the accumulation of documentation, and an impressive body of scholarship make it possible to confront the ghosts of that painful conflict with ever greater detachment and confidence.

This course is guided above all by a concern with setting the Vietnam War in a broad context. The course will trace origins – for Vietnamese patriots and peasants going back to the nineteenth century and earlier and for American cold warriors beginning with the immediate post-1945 period. The course will also encompass a wide range of groups – from the leaders in Washington, Saigon, Hanoi, and Beijing who directed the conflict, to the soldiers who fought it, to the non-combatants who lived with its consequences. The course will finally follow the war's legacies for each of the countries involved.

There are no formal prerequisites, though it will help to have a basic command of U.S. history at the college level as well as some exposure either to U.S. military history, the post-1945 world, modern Southeast Asia, or U.S. foreign relations. Anyone in doubt about preparation should consult me at the beginning of the term.

Readings

You will be reading a mix of assignments averaging about ninety pages a week over the term. They include some documents that will require more time and attention than a conventional historical account. They also include some oral history and fiction that will be faster reading.

The following books are available in the textbook department of the Student Stores as well as on UL Reserve :

- Michael H. Hunt, Lyndon Johnson's War: America's Cold War Crusade in Vietnam, 1945-1968 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996);
Al Santoli, Everything We Had: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Thirty-three American Soldiers Who Fought It (New York: Random House, 1981; Ballantine, 1982);
Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, Peace Now! American Society and the Ending of the Vietnam War (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999);
Bao Ninh, The Sorrows of War (New York: Riverhead, 1996; or London: Minerva, 1994).

Other shorter assigned readings can be found on e-reserve (noted in the class schedule as "er") and on the course website ("cw") listed above. Finally, three designated films are part of the assignment mix.

Organization and assignments

The course is organized around lectures on Monday and Wednesday and recitations on Friday.

- The lectures will provide an overview of the topic under consideration, supplementary information on reading and paper assignments, and a chance to view and discuss videos.

Please read the assigned material before coming to lecture. You can help make the lecture hour more interactive by noting questions and concerns prompted by reading that material. For example:

- Are you clear about the main point that the author wanted to make?
- What points confused you or challenged your preconceptions?
- What about the reading did you like and what did you dislike?

Jot your reactions somewhere that you can easily refer to once in class. This sort of dialogue between you and the assigned work will set the stage for an in-class dialogue and generally deepen your mastery of and interest in the course material.

- The recitations provide a forum for dealing with questions raised by the readings and the lectures and for preparing for papers and exams. You should register online for a Friday recitation group.

Recitation attendance is a required, not an optional part of the course. Reflecting the importance of recitation, a substantial part of the course grade will be assigned on the basis of attendance and participation. For each session, you will get maximum credit (two point) if you contribute thoughtfully to the discussion and respond to the observations of others. It is better to attend even though not prepared (and get one point) than to miss it altogether. The worst choice is to not attend at all (no points). If for some reason beyond your control (e.g., a personal medical problem or a family emergency) you must miss one of the recitations, be certain to let your recitation leader know so that session can be counted as an excused absence (one point).

Participating in a group discussion is important both as a skill and as a learning opportunity. However, not all students are equally comfortable with the process. Those feeling ill at ease should at the very beginning of the term ask about techniques for getting into the flow. Active participation in all recitations will earn an "A". Conversely sitting regularly on the sidelines or getting several unexcused absences or even accumulating a bunch of excused absences will lower the participation grade, potentially even into the "F" range.

Suggestions on lectures and recitations: You can make the most of class time by keeping up with the daily assignments listed in the syllabus and leaving any sleeping, newspaper reading, telephoning, computer games, online surfing, and chatting for non-class times. Above all, feel free to ask about any aspects of the class that are not clear. Others will likely have the same questions, so you'll be doing everyone a favor by asking for more information.

- **Writing exercises** come in three types: First, there are the exams (a midterm and a cumulative final). Both will be based on study questions provided a week in advance of the exam. Second, there are two short papers developing an interpretation based on assigned documents. Finally, there are three single paragraph response papers which will be graded on the same basis as recitation and will be included in the participation grade.

Grading

The course assignments will carry the following weight in the final, overall grade:

first paper	10%	final exam	25%
second paper	20	recitation participation and three response paragraphs	30
midterm exam	15		

Letter grades on papers and exams will be assigned after discussion by the staff and under the instructor's close supervision. Evaluations will be based on three major, closely related criteria:

- command of the relevant class material (**evidence**);
- development of an argument or point of view that is pertinent to the issue at hand and that has breadth, coherence, and insight (**interpretation**); and
- expression of ideas in a clear, concise, even engaging prose (**presentation or style**).

These criteria will translate into grades as follows:

- A—**excellent**. Outstanding in all three areas. Offers integrated, insightful coverage based on ample, sound evidence. (A=93-100; A-=90-92)
- B—**good**. Strong in all three areas or notable strengths in one balanced by significant weakness in another. (B+=87-89; B=83-86; B-=80-82)
- C—**average**. Adequate performance in one or more areas offset by serious weakness in others that leaves the presentation fragmented, murky, or narrow. (C+=77-79; C=73-76; C-=70-72)
- D—**poor**. Notable problems in all three areas. Remedial work needed to improve substantive understanding or basic communication. (D+=67-69; D=63-66; D-=60-62)
- F—**unacceptable**. Serious flaws in all three areas. No evident engagement in the assignment. (F=0-59)

Honor code

Papers, quizzes, and exams must bear either the full honor code pledge (“On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment.”) or the word “Pledge” followed by your name as a short-hand way of communicating your adherence. Otherwise, no grade will be recorded. This requirement reflects my strong feelings about the importance of the honor code. Cheating undermines the sense of mutual trust essential to a community of learning and places at a comparative disadvantage students who play by the rules.

By signing the pledge you are indicating that the work that bears your name is indeed yours. The pledge is meant to exclude plagiarism – that is, lifting without credit from something someone else has written such as a published book or article or even a student paper. The pledge is also meant to exclude such other more obvious violations as turning in a ghost-written paper, putting notes in your exam blue book, or offering or receiving whispered, signaled, or other assistance during an exam or quiz. Working with others in exam study groups or in the paper drafting process is not only acceptable but encouraged as long as you are refining ideas that are essentially yours. Don’t hesitate to raise any questions you may have about what is covered by the honor code or what constitutes a violation. More information is also available at <http://instrument.unc.edu> and at <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/plagiarism.html>.

Class schedule

I. Introduction		
Wed. 10 Jan.	Course overview.	chronology, list of abbreviations, and map (cw).
Fri. 12 Jan.	No Recitation.	View the Hollywood movie on the Vietnam War selected by your recitation leader (listed in “Film assignments” on cw). All films on reserve at MRC and available at video rental stores. Prepare a one paragraph response (due Wed.) on what the film conveys about the war. Possible angles: How does your film define the general nature of the conflict? In what role does it cast the Americans? How does it depict Vietnam and the Vietnamese? See “Guidance on Response Paragraph” and “General Tips on Good Writing” (both cw).
II. The U.S. Cold War Crusade		
Mon. 15 Jan.	MLK holiday	
Wed. 17 Jan.	Origins of a commitment, 1945-1960.	Hunt, <u>Lyndon Johnson’s War</u> , chap. 1.
Fri. 19 Jan.	Recitation 1.	Documents on “U.S. Decision-making and the Vietnam War” (cw), Part 1; discuss film and return paragraphs.
Mon. 22 Jan.	Nation-building in the South, 1961-1963.	Hunt, chap. 3 (skip chap. 2 for now).
Wed. 24 Jan.	Decision for war, 1964-1965.	Hunt, chap. 4; Harold Ford, “Why CIA Analysts Were So Doubtful about Vietnam” (cw).
Fri. 26 Jan.	Recitation 2.	“U.S. Decision-making,” Part 2.

Mon. 29 Jan.	Confronting failure, 1966-1968.	Hunt, chap. 5.
Wed. 31 Jan.	Nixon and the long road out, 1969-1975.	Gary Hess, "To the Fall of Saigon" (er).
Fri. 2 Feb.	Recitation 3.	"U.S. Decision-making," Part 3; First Paper (<i>due Mon.</i>) responding to one of the study questions identified by your recitation leader. This paper is to be fairly brief (750 words maximum, equivalent to about 3 standard, double-spaced, tightly-argued pages). See "Guidelines for Short Papers" and "General Tips on Good Writing" (both cw).
III. The Vietnamese Revolution		
Mon. 5 Feb.	The roots of a revolution.	Neil Jamieson, "Confrontation with the West, 1858-1930" (er).
Wed. 7 Feb.	Ho Chi Minh.	Hunt, chap. 2 (pp. 19-30).
Fri. 9 Feb.	Recitation 4.	Documents on "Vietnamese Perspectives on the Vietnam War" (cw), Parts 1 and 2.
Mon. 12 Feb.	The struggle against France, 1946-1954.	Hunt, chap. 2 (pp. 30-41).
Wed. 14 Feb.	The problem of the South, 1954-1963.	
Fri. 16 Feb.	Recitation 5.	"Vietnamese Perspectives," Part 3 and 4.
Mon. 19 Feb.	Taking on the Americans, 1964-1973.	Stein Tønnesson, "Tracking Multi-Directional Dominoes" (cw); midterm exam study questions (cw).
Wed. 21 Feb.	Endgame, 1973-1975.	
Fri. 23 Feb.	Recitation 6.	"Vietnamese Perspectives," Parts 5 and 6; review for exam.
Mon. 26 Feb.	Midterm exam.	
IV. The Experience of War		
Wed. 28 Feb.	Which Americans went to war?	
Fri. 2 Mar.	Recitation 7.	Santoli, <u>Everything We Had</u> , thru pt. 4.
Mon. 5 Mar.	Seasons of American soldiering.	
Wed. 7 Mar.	Americans and the village war.	David Anderson, "What Really Happened [at My Lai]?" (er).
Fri. 9 Mar.	Open	View a documentary on American forces selected by your recitation leader (cw). Prepare a one-paragraph response (<i>due Mon. following Spring break</i>) on how the documentary alters the impression conveyed by your Hollywood film.
10-18 Mar.	Spring break	
Mon. 19 Mar.	The NLF's village war.	Duong Van Mai Elliott, "Just Cause" (er).
Wed. 21 Mar.	Vietnamese combatants.	
Fri. 23 Mar.	Recitation 8.	"Fighting for the Revolution: Two Perspectives" (cw). Second paper (<i>due Monday</i>) dealing with the experience of war from the perspective of American soldiers and Vietnamese combatants. Here we would like you to think comparatively. How did their perspectives differ? What accounts for those different perspectives? What does seeing the war from ground level add to your general understanding? This paper follows the format of the first paper.

V. The War Comes Home		
Mon. 26 Mar.	The sixties setting.	Jeffreys-Jones, <u>Peace Now!</u> chaps 1-2.
Wed. 28 Mar.	The antiwar movement.	Jeffreys-Jones, chap. 3; "Voices from the Anti-War Movement" (cw).
Fri. 30 Mar.	Open	View a documentary on the war at home selected by your recitation leader (cw). Prepare a one-paragraph response (<i>due Mon.</i>) on how the documentary alters or adds to the impressions conveyed by your Hollywood film and other class material.
Mon. 2 Apr.	Public opinion.	graph on "Trends in support for the war in Vietnam" (cw).
Wed. 4 Apr.	The role of the media: betrayal?	Jeffreys-Jones, chaps. 4-7.
Fri. 6 Apr.	Good Friday holiday	
VI. Aftermath		
Mon. 9 Apr.	The United States: coping with defeat.	George Herring, "Preparing <i>Not</i> to Refight the Last War" (er); Weinberger doctrine (cw).
Wed. 11 Apr.	Revisiting Hollywood's Vietnam.	
Fri. 13 Apr.	Recitation 9.	Drawing military lessons (all readings on er): Harry Summers, "Tactics, Grand Tactics, and Strategy" (1982); Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., "A Strategy of Tactics" (1986); and H. R. McMaster, "Epilogue" to <u>Dereliction of Duty</u> (1997).
Mon. 16 Apr.	Vietnam: out from the shadow of war.	
Wed. 18 Apr.	Vietnam: on the profane consequences of a sacred war.	
Fri. 20 Apr.	Recitation 10.	Bao Ninh, <u>The Sorrow of War</u> (read in full).
Mon. 23 Apr.	Cambodia convulsed.	Ben Kiernan, "Pol Pot's Rise to Power" and "U.S. Intervention" (er); final exam study questions (cw).
Wed. 25 Apr.	What have we learned?	Course evaluation.
Fri. 27 Apr.	Recitation 11.	Recitation evaluations; final exam review.
Mon. 7 May (noon)	Final exam.	