

History 3362
The Vietnam Wars
Spring 2020

Instructor	Benjamin C. Montoya, Ph.D.	Office hours	Monday and Wednesday, 2.30pm to 4.00pm; Tuesday and Thursday, 3.00 to 4.00pm
Credits	3	Section Number	001
Meets	Tuesday and Thursday, 1.40 to 2.55 pm, Weir 212	E-mail	bmontoya@schreiner.edu

Welcome to History 3362! This course provides a detailed analysis of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia from the 1940s to 1970s. We will discuss various topics during our semester: the origins of Vietnamese nationalism, how the First Indochina War fit within a larger context of decolonization after World War II, why Cold War diplomacy determined a U.S. commitment to contain the spread of Communism in Vietnam, and the reasons why the United States engaged in an all-out war in Vietnam by 1965. We will discuss how the U.S. military strategy of containment contrasted with the Vietnamese nationalists' struggle for self-determination. Also, we will analyze how the Vietnam War eroded the Cold War consensus in U.S. society. Finally, we will study how the United States' loss of the Vietnam War showed the shortcomings of U.S. power, left a powerful and bitter legacy for Americans, and influenced the practice of U.S. foreign policy for decades to follow.

Goals:

- ∂ To think critically about the history of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia and the various peoples affected by American actions there between the 1940s and 1970s.
- ∂ To analyze how the Vietnam War affected U.S. society.
- ∂ To study the diplomatic reasons why the U.S. committed itself to protecting South Vietnam, and to study the reasons why such efforts eventually failed.
- ∂ To expand skills in reading, critical evaluation and synthesis of information within the framework of history.
- ∂ To gain an understanding of major historical concepts, perspectives and vocabulary of the period under study.
- ∂ To develop your knowledge on presenting ideas and arguments clearly and logically in written form.
- ∂ To practice skills in leading peers through educational activities.

Required Texts:

- ∂ Philip Caputo, *A Rumor of War* (ISBN 978-0-8050-4695-3)
- ∂ George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 5th edition (ISBN 978-0-312-07351325-6)
- ∂ Robert J. McMahan, ed., *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War*, 4th edition (ISBN 978-0-618-74937-9)

Class Time=Special Time: Every class meeting is a special time. It is when we will meet to study important issues relevant to the history of the Vietnam War. You should think of our class time as *special time*, during which you are expected to engage in the lectures and participate in discussions, free from external distraction. Therefore, electronic devices are allowed only for notetaking purposes. If I find that your use of electronics is distracting to students seated around you, I will ask you to refrain from using your device. And if the problem persists, I will excuse you from the classroom. Also, please be punctual to class. Habitual tardiness will negatively affect your overall grade.

Communication (personal and virtual): It is important that you are clear in your communication via email, since it is a dominant mode of communication. Unless I indicate otherwise address me as “Dr. Montoya,” both in person and in emails. In your email correspondence to me always signoff with your name, proofread your email before sending it, and do not ask questions on matters you can resolve yourself by looking at the course materials. I will not respond to emails that are unclear due to typographical errors, do not address me by name at the beginning of the message, and/or do not provide the name of the addresser (email writer).

Course Evaluations & Assessments: Percentage of Total Course Grade

- ∂ Attendance, 5%
- ∂ Two In-Class Discussion Facilitations, 5% each
- ∂ In-Class Discussion Participation, 25%
- ∂ Two Position Papers, 10% each
- ∂ *A Rumor of War* Poster Presentation, 10%
- ∂ Exams, 30%: Mid-Term (15%) & Final (15%)

Assessment

It is important you remain accountable to the coursework; therefore, be sure you keep up with all the work. You will be confronted with a lot of material and information during the term. It is very difficult to catch up if you get behind or procrastinate.

Regular participation in In-Class Discussions (see below for details) is expected as a sign of your intellectual curiosity and commitment to the learning process. Students are expected to participate fully in all interactive learning experiences and to demonstrate critical thinking and synthesis skills in class discussions, critical reading, and peer review.

Readings: Pages indicated with “ALW” are from Herring, *America's Longest War*. Pages indicated with “MP” are from McMahan, ed., *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War*. Reading assignments are due by the corresponding date shown on the course schedule.

In-Class Discussions: This course will have an intensive in-class discussion component. Every student will be expected to contribute to our conversations about U.S. foreign policy in Southeast Asia. There will be eleven discussion sessions in all, during which students will share their *critical* thoughts (based in facts, not just opinions) about the readings with classmates. Each student will take turns *facilitating* in-class discussions. All students should also be prepared each discussion day to comment upon the readings and comment upon their classmates' insights about the readings.

All discussions will be based on the primary documents found in *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War* (MP). See the course schedule below for exact reading assignments each week. Specific instructions on how to sign up for and how to facilitate small-group discussions can be found on our Canvas site under *In-Class Discussions*.

Position Papers: During the semester each student will write two essays based on class readings from *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War* (MP). Every chapter in the book has an assortment of primary documents and two to three scholarly articles which consider significant flashpoint moments in the history of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia from the 1940s to the 1970s. Most of the chapters ask a set of questions that address the main dilemmas—or, *major problems*—U.S. leaders, soldiers, and civilians faced during America's involvement in Vietnam. The scholarly articles found in each chapter demonstrate how historians debate the nature of U.S. escalation in Vietnam, the diplomatic logic for war, and the reasons why the United States lost the Vietnam War.

Each student will participate in these debates by analyzing the major problems of the Vietnam War. After choosing a chapter and reading the documents and articles therein, each student will compose a 1,000-1,250 word position paper which answers the questions asked by that chapter. Students have a choice upon which chapters they choose to write and are required to complete two essays during the term. They should ensure that both of their two essays are submitted by the essay deadlines, which are listed along the right column of the *Course Schedule* below. Papers should be submitted in hardcopy form on the appointed deadline date.

Some examples of the questions you will consider include the following: What were the domestic and international forces during the 1950s that catapulted Vietnam to a position of prominence for the United States? How did the Johnson administration reach its decision to enter war with Vietnam? Could the United States have won the Vietnam War? Why did significant portions of the American population come to oppose the war? What role did the United States play in the collapse of South Vietnam? What have been the war's consequences? And why do Americans remain divided over how to remember the Vietnam experience?

Further assignment directions can be found on Canvas under *Position Papers*.

A Rumor of War Poster Presentation:

A Rumor of War is one of the most famous memoirs written about the Vietnam War. Each student will develop a poster presentation for the Academic Showcase on April 16, 2020, that will highlight an aspect of the author's experience of war in Vietnam. More directions to follow.

Examinations: Two exams will be given during the semester, one at the midterm and the other on the final day of class. These exams will assess your command of the historical topics we will have discussed in class. The midterm exam will test you on the material from the lectures and chapters 1-4 of the ALW book; the final exam will test you on the material from the lectures and chapters 5-8 of the ALW book. The final exam is *not* cumulative.

Note on Course Lessons: All lectures are in PowerPoint form and will be made available on Canvas, under *Lectures*, after they are given in class.

Grading Scale

Your total course grade will be determined on a 1 to 100 point scale. The percentages above reflect point values, totaling to 100 points. Depending on how well you complete the different course assignments, the total points earned will determine the final percentage and GPA of your course grade.

Feedback

I provide regular feedback on assignments so students are able to gauge their progress throughout the quarter, with exception to class participation, which I tally on a rolling basis. Contact me if you have questions on the quality of your participation.

Final Grades for the course depend on the percentage of the total 100 points you earned during the quarter.

Below you will find a percentage-to-GPA chart.

A = 93-100%; A- = 90-92%; B+ = 88-89%; B = 83-87%; B- = 80-82%; C+ = 78-79%;

C = 73-77%; C- = 70-72%; D+ = 68-69%; D = 63-67%; D- = 60-62%; F = 0-59%

Tips for Success

- ∂ Take good notes during lecture.
- ∂ Take notes on the PowerPoint lessons after class.
- ∂ Take notes on your reading.
- ∂ Refer to your textbook regularly.
- ∂ Set up a notebook or binder to keep handouts, syllabus and your scores, etc.
- ∂ Keep in regular contact with your instructor, especially if you have questions or concerns about the course.
- ∂ Keep in touch with other students. Collaborative studying and peer discussions will further your knowledge and give you a different perspective.
- ∂ Always follow instructions.

Expectations from You:

- ∂ Prepared for class.
- ∂ Respect for other students, me and our work.
- ∂ Participate in class appropriately.
- ∂ Feel free to ask many questions.

Expectations from Me:

- ∂ Prepared for class.
- ∂ Keep meeting hours and respond to emails in a timely manner.
- ∂ Display respect for students and our work.
- ∂ Answer questions when I can; find answers, resources and provide guidance when I cannot.
- ∂ Have a clear expectation to be FAIR to all students.
- ∂ To be an awesome instructor.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Required Reading
Week I	Week I	Week I
Tuesday, Jan 14	The French Colonial Period; From Nationalism to Revolution	-----
Thursday, Jan 16	The Roots of American Commitment to Indochina, late 1940s and early 1950s	ALW: 3-26 MP: 2-14
Week II	Week II	Week II
Tuesday, Jan 21	Dien Bien Phu and the Geneva Accords, mid-1950s	ALW: 26-52
Thursday, Jan 23	In-Class Discussion: <i>The Roots of American Commitment</i>	MP: 47-58
Week III	Week III	Week III
Tuesday, Jan 28	After Geneva: Going with Diem, mid to late 1950s	ALW: 52-72 MP: 93-118
Thursday, Jan 30	Origins of an Insurgency in South Vietnam, late 1950s	ALW: 72-79

Week IV	Week IV	Week IV
Tuesday, Feb 4	In-Class Discussion: <i>Dwight D. Eisenhower, Ngo Dinh Diem, and the Deepening U.S. Commitment</i>	MP: 81-93
Thursday, Feb 6	Kennedy's Cautious Commitment to South Vietnam, early 1960s	ALW: 81-105
Week V	Week V	Week V
Tuesday, Feb 11	Sinking with Diem, 1962 to 1963; No Turning Back, 1963	ALW: 105-119 MP: 135-153
Thursday, Feb 13	In-Class Discussion: <i>John F. Kennedy and Vietnam: Incremental Escalation</i>	MP: 120-135
Week VI	Week VI	Week VI
Tuesday, Feb 18	Deepening the Burden, 1963-1964	ALW: 121-141
Thursday, Feb 20	Entering the Fray, 1964-1965	ALW: 141-157 MP: 171-196
Week VII	Week VII	Week VII
Tuesday, Feb 25	In-Class Discussion: <i>Lyndon B. Johnson's Decisions for War</i>	MP: 155-171
Thursday, Feb 27	Second Indochina War: U.S. Military Strategy	ALW: 159-178; MP: 212-234
Week VIII	Week VIII	Week VIII
Tuesday, Mar 3	Midterm Exam	Study Hard!
Thursday, Mar 5	The American Soldier in Vietnam: Demographics and Experiences	ALW: 178-182 MP: 251-272
Week IX	Week IX	Week IX
Tuesday, Mar 10	In-Class Discussion: <i>U.S. Military Strategy</i>	MP: 198-212
Thursday, Mar 12	In-Class Discussion: <i>Americans in Combat</i>	MP: 236-251 <u>Position Paper #1</u> Deadline: Due at start of class in hardcopy form
Tuesday, Mar 17	<i>Spring Break</i>	No Class
Thursday, Mar 19	<i>Spring Break</i>	No Class
Week X	Week X	Week X
Tuesday, Mar 24	"Charlie": Vietcong and the National Liberation Front	MP: 293-313
Thursday, Mar 26	In-Class Discussion: <i>The Enemy: North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front</i>	MP: 274-293

Week XI	Week XI	Week XI
Tuesday, Mar 31	The Tet Offensive, winter 1968	ALW: 203-241 MP: 336-355
Thursday, Apr 2	In-Class Discussion: <i>The Tet Offensive</i>	MP: 315-336
Week XII	Week XII	Week XII
Tuesday, Apr 7	Challenging the Cold War Consensus: Students, African Americans, Women, and Labor Unions	ALW: 186-201 MP: 416-435
Thursday, Apr 9	In-Class Discussion: <i>The Antiwar Movement and Public Opinion</i>	MP: 401-416
Week XIII	Week XIII	Week XIII
Tuesday, Apr 14	Winding Down the War, late 1960s to early 1970s	ALW: 243-283
Thursday, Apr 16	Academic Showcase: Presentation of A Rumor of War Posters	-----
Week XIV	Week XIV	Week XIV
Tuesday, Apr 21	In-Class Discussion: <i>Richard M. Nixon's Strategy for Withdrawal</i>	MP: 357-379 + 493-501
Thursday, Apr 23	In-Class Discussion: <i>The Paris Peace Accords of 1973 and the Fall of South Vietnam</i>	MP: 437-455 <u>Position Paper #2</u> <u>Deadline:</u> Due at start of class in hardcopy form
Week XV	Week XV	Week XV
Tuesday, Apr 28	Memories and Legacies of the War; In-Class Discussion: <i>Legacies and Memories of a War</i>	ALW: 285-321; MP: 512-539
Week XVI	Week XVI	Week XVI
Tuesday, 05/05, 10:30am to 12:30pm (in our classroom)	Final Exam	Examination

***Note on Course Schedule:** The course schedule is subject to change according to class pace, student needs, Schreiner scheduling needs, etc. I will update you when changes are made, as well as provide an updated syllabus to the Canvas page. The pace of the course will be brisk and it is essential that you keep up.