

FA 391 THE POLITICS, HISTORY OF THE VIET NAM WAR

Instructors: Dr. James J. Brask, (199th Light Infantry Brigade, Viet Nam, 1970)
Office: CTI 372 (jbrask@barat.edu)
Office Hrs: TBA
Office Phone: 312-362-6338

Statement of Purpose

The Vietnam War was the longest and, perhaps, the most controversial of American Wars. This course will briefly examine Vietnamese society and the First Indochina War as introduction to discussing the Second Indochina War. This course has four main objectives: 1.) to examine why and how the Second Indochina War was fought; 2.) to analyze the portrayal of the war in literature and film; 3.) to analyze what has been learned, and what should have been learned, from this war and 4.) to examine how such lessons influence contemporary policy and perceptions, i.e. the significance of the Vietnam war in assessing the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the effect of the war on the decision making calculus of the media, public, and politicians.

Required Textbooks:

Ninh, Bao. The Sorrow of War: A Novel of North Vietnam. New York: Riverhead Books, 1996.

Moore Harold G. Lt. Gen. (Ret.) and Joseph L. Galloway, We Were Soldiers Once ...and Young. New York: Random House, 1992.

Sheehan, Neil. A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam. New York: Knopf, 1989.

O'Brien, Tim. The Things They Carried. New York: Broadway Books, 1990.

Examinations and Grading

Students will write two short papers on assigned books. Each paper will be worth 100 points. In addition there will be two exams: a mid-term (worth 100 points) and either a final or a class project (worth 200 points). Class participation is worth an additional 100 points..

Class Participation

Class participation grades are based on (in order of importance) : 1.) Attendance; 2.) Participation and Conduct; 3.) Content of Participation. You are allowed one absence. All absences in excess of one will be penalized.

Papers

All papers must be typed, double spaced, possess standard margins, and not be enclosed in any binder. Names should only be on a separate title page or on the back of the last page of text. All papers are due at the beginning of class. Late papers are penalized one full letter grade per hour beginning five minutes after class starts on the day papers are due.

Class Rules

- 1.) Make-up exams are a privilege not a right. If it is unavoidable that you miss an exam you must notify the instructor prior to the administration of the exam. Notification can consist of a written message in the instructor's mailbox or an e-mail message.
- 2.) Failure to notify instructor of a missed exam before the exam is a "zero" and reduction of final term grade by one full letter. Failure to turn in a paper is also a "zero" and reduction of final term grade by one letter.
- 3.) Any instance of deliberate plagiarism results in a " F " for the course. Unintentional plagiarism will result in an "F" for the assignment. Plagiarism is quoting written material without attribution, paraphrasing written material without attribution, or substituting another's ideas or thoughts as one's own ideas.

Class Schedule

Please Note: I expect to have visitors and guest speakers (speaker dates are tentative and subject to revision) throughout the term, therefore, our class schedule may be adjusted to reflect unexpected events. The assigned readings will not change regardless whether that information is discussed in class on a specific day. Any permanent changes in the reading requirements will be announced.

ANTECEDENTS TO THE SECOND INDOCHINA WAR

Ist Class: The Lessons of Munich, Containment, the Cold War, the Korean War, French Colonialism, and The First Indochina War

Reminder: Start reading **We Were Soldiers Once** immediately

2nd Class : The First Indochina War and the initial Advisory Era (1954-1960)

Read: Sheehan, Book I-II, pp 1-199.

THE EARLY STAGES OF THE SECOND INDOCHINA WAR

3rd Class: The Counterinsurgency Era (1961-1963): The Gulf of Tonkin Incident and Resolution (1964)

Reading: Sheehan, Book III, pp.201-266.

THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

4th Class: The Attrition Era (1965-1968)

Read: Sheehan, Book IV, pp. 267-386.

5th Class: The TET Offensive and My Lai Massacre

Readings: class handout and finish **We Were Soldiers Once and Young**

Note: This is date for mid-term exam

6th Class: From Tet to the Invasion of Cambodia (1968-1970)

Read: Sheehan, Book, VI, 499-586

Short Paper Due: **We Were Soldiers Once and Young**

Note: Start Reading Bao Ninh, **The Sorrow of War**

7th Class : The End of the Second Indochina War

Read: Sheehan, Book VII, pp. 587-790.

THE VIETNAM WAR IN FILM AND LITERATURE

8th Class^h: Read :class handout

Guest Speaker, Dr. Larry Johannessen, 1st Recon. Battalion, 1st Marine Division, 1966-67
Northern Illinois University, AThe Vietnam War in Film and Literature@

LESSONS OF THE WAR

9th Class: Bao Ninh, The Sorrow of War, short papers,

10th Class : Final Exam and class Projects

Select Bibliography

I. France in Vietnam and the First Indochina War

Buttinger, Joseph. Vietnam: A Political History. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968.

Duiker, William J. The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam. 2nd ed., Boulder: Westview Press, 1996.

Fall, Bernard B. Street Without Joy. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985.

Hammer, Ellen J. The Struggle for Indochina: 1940-1955. Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1955.

Marr, David G. Vietnam 1945: The Quest For Power. Berkley: University of California Press, 1995.

McAlister, John T., Jr. Vietnam: The Origins of Revolution. Garden City, New York: Doubleday Co., Inc., Anchor Books Edition, 1971.

Paret, Peter. French revolutionary Warfare from Indochina to Algeria: The Analysis of a Political and Military Doctrine. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964.

Tanham, George K. Communist Revolutionary Warfare; The Viet Minh in Indochina. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961.

Thompson, Virginia. French Indo-China. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1937.

II. The Second Indochina War

General Histories

Baritz, Loren. Backfire: A History of How American Culture Led Us Into Vietnam and Made Us Fight the Way We Did. New York: Ballantine Books, 1985.

Herring, George C. America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam. 1950-75. 2nd ed., New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986.

Karnow, Stanley. Vietnam: A History. New York: Viking Press 1983.

Olson, James S. and Randy Roberts. Where the Domino Fell: America and Vietnam. 4th ed. Maplecrest, New York: Brandywine Press, 2004

Vietnamese Perspectives

Duiker, William J. Sacred War: Nationalism and Revolution in a Divided Vietnam. New

York: Mc Graw-Hill, 1995.

Dung, Van Tien. Our Great Spring Victory: An Account of the Liberation of South Vietnam. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977.

Giap, Vo Nguyen. "Big Victory Great Task". New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968.

Giap, Vo Nguyen. People=s War People=s Army: The Viet Cong Insurrection Manual for Underdeveloped Countries. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962.

Tang, Truong Nhu. A Viet Cong Memoir: An Inside Account of the Vietnam War and Its Aftermath. New York: Vintage Books, 1985.

Tin, Bui. Following Ho Chi Minh: Memoirs of a North Vietnamese Colonel. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995.

Dung, Van Tien, General. Our Great Spring Victory: An Account of the Liberation of South Vietnam. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977.

Victory in Vietnam: The Official History of the People=s Army of Vietnam, 1945-1975. The Military History Institute of Vietnam, Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2002.

The Media

Arnett, Peter. Live From the Battlefield: From Vietnam to Baghdad 35 Years in the World=s War Zones. New York: Touchstone Books, 1994.

Emerson, Gloria. Winners & Losers: Battles, retreats, Gains, Losses and Ruins From a Long War. New York: Random House, 1976.

Hammo, William M. Reporting Vietnam: Media and Military at War. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1998.

Laurence, John. The Cat from Hue: A Vietnam War Story. New York: Public Affairs, 2002.

Prochnau, William. Once Upon a Distant War: David Halberstam, Neil Sheehan, Peter Arnett - Young Correspondents and Their Early Vietnam Battles. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

Reporting Vietnam: American Journalism, 1969-1975. Two volumes. New York: The Library of America, 1998.

Sheehan, Neil. A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam. New

York: Random House, 1988.

The U.S. Military

Krepinevich, Andrew F. Jr. The Army and Vietnam. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

Summers, Harry G., Jr. On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1981.

Spector, Ronald H. Advice and Support: The Early Years of the U.S. Army in Vietnam 1941-1960. New York: The Free Press, 1985.

Thayer, Thomas C. War Without Fronts: The American Experience in Vietnam. Boulder: Westview Press, 1986.

West, F. J. Jr. The Village. New York: Harper & Row, 1972; reprint ed., Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.

Unconventional War: Revolution, Counterinsurgency, Village Operations

Cable, Larry. Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War. New York: New York University Press, 1986.

Lansdale, Edward G. In The Midst of Wars. New York: Harper & Row, 1972.

Moyar, Mark. Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: The CIA=s Secret Campaign to Destroy the Viet Cong. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1997.

Plaster, Robert L. SOG: The Secret Wars of America=s Commandos in Vietnam. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997.

Race, Jeffrey. War Comes To Long An. Berkley: University of California Press, 1972.

Shafer, D. Michael. Deadly Paradigms: The Failure of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Shultz,, Jr., Richard. The Secret War Against Hanoi: Kennedy=s and Johnson=s Use of Spies, Saboteurs, and Covert Warriors in North Vietnam. New York: Harper Collins, 1999.

Valentine, Douglas. The Phoenix Program. New York: Avon Books, 1990.

Special Recommendations

Appy, Christian G. Working-Class War. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press,

1993.

Berman, Larry. No Peace, No Honor: Nixon, Kissinger, and Betrayal in Vietnam. New York: The free Press, 2001.

Fitzgerald, Francis. Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1972.

Kelley, Michael, P. Where We Were in Vietnam: A Comprehensive guide to the Firebases, Military Installations and Naval vessels of the Vietnam War. Central Point, Oregon: Hellgate Press, 2002.

Mueller, John. War, Presidents, and Public Opinion. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973.

Olson, James S. and Randy Roberts. My Lai: A Brief History with Documents. Boston: Bedford Books, 1998.

Wetterhahn, Ralph. The Last Battle: The Mayaguez Incident and the End of the Vietnam War. New York: Plume Book, 2002.

III. Miscellaneous Topics

The Lessons of Vietnam

Gelb, Leslie H. and Richard K. Betts. The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1979.

Grinter, Lawrence E. and Peter M. Dunn, eds. The American War in Vietnam: Lessons, Legacies, and Implications for Future Conflicts. New York; Greenwood Press, 1987.

Komer, Robert W. Bureaucracy at War: U.S. Performance in the Vietnam Conflict. Boulder: Westview Press, 1986.

Novels and Personal Narratives

Caputo, Philip. A Rumor of War. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977.

Del Vecchio, John M. The Thirteenth Valley. New York: Bantam Books, 1982.

Greene, Graham. The Quiet American. New York: Penguin Books, 1977.

Hackworth, David H. About Face: The Odyssey of an American Warrior. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989.

Herr, Michael. Dispatches. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977.

Huong, Duong Thu. Novel without a Name. New York, Penguin Books, 1995.

Huong, Duong Thu. Paradise of the Blind. New York, Penguin books, 1994.

Khue, Lee Minh. The Stars, The Earth, The River. Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1997.

Lockhart, Greg and Monique Lockhart, translators. The Light at the End of the Capital: Three Modern Vietnamese Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Mason, Robert. Chickenhawk. New York: Penguin Books, 1983.

Moore, Harold G. Lt. Gen. And Joseph L. Galloway. We Were Soldiers Once...and Young. New York: Random House, 1992.

O'Brien, Tim. Going After Cacciato. New York: Delacorte Press, 1978.

Webb, James. Fields of Fire. New York: Bantam Book, 1979.

IV. The War in Cambodia and Laos

Becker, Elizabeth. When the War Was Over: The Voices of Cambodia's Revolution and its Aftermath. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986.

Hamilton-Merritt, Jane. Tragic Mountains: The Hmong, the Americans, and the Secret Wars for Laos, 1942-1992. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1993.

Kiernan, Ben. The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.

McCoy, Alfred W. The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade. Brooklyn, New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1991.

Warner, Roger. Backfire: The CIA's Secret War in Laos and its Link to the War in Vietnam. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

V. The MIA and POW Controversy

McConnell, Malcolm. Inside Hanoi's Secret Archives: Solving the MIA Mystery. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

Jensen-Stevenson, Monika. Spite House: The Last Secret of the War in Vietnam. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997.