HISTORY 319—THE VIETNAM WARS

Fall 2008 Mr. McCoy

I. COURSE PROCEDURES:

Class Meetings: Lectures are given in Humanities 2650 by Mr. McCoy on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 2:30 to 3:45 p.m. In addition, students will attend a one-hour discussion section each week conducted by the Teaching Assistants (TAs) for this course.

Office Hours:
--For Ruth de Llobet, Humanities Room 4268, at Tuesdays 5:30 pm-6:30 pm and Wednesday from 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm or other hours by appointment (TEL: 263-1867). Messages may be left in Mailbox No. 4095 Humanities, or sent via e-mail to: <rdellobet@wisc.edu>
--For Brian Wiley, Humanities Room 4268, on Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00 am-12:00 p.m. or other hours by appointment (TEL: 263-1867). Messages may be left in Mailbox No. 4106, or sent via e-mail to: <bswiley@wisc.edu>
--For Alfred W. McCoy, in Room 5131 Humanities, Thursdays, 12:00-2:00 p.m. and other hours by appointment (TEL: 263-1855). Messages may be left in mailbox No. 5026, or sent via e-mail to: <awmccoy@wisc.edu>

Grading: Students shall complete three pieces of written work. On October 16, students shall take a mid term examination. On November 25, students shall submit a 5,000 word research essay with full footnotes and bibliographic references. During examination week on December 16, students shall take a two-hour final examination. Final grade shall be computed as follows:

- mid term take-home examination: 20%
- research essay: 30%
- discussion section mark: 30%
- final examination: 20%
- extra credit/film viewings: 3%

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

a.) Mid term take-home examination: Select two questions from a list distributed in the lecture on Thursday, October 16, and turn in two short essays totaling five typed pages, with full endnote citations, at the start of class on Tuesday, October 21.

b.) Research Essay: Following format instructions under Paragraph VIII below, complete a 12 page research essay (with one-inch margins, 12 point Times font) on one of the topics listed in Paragraph VI. During the week of November 6th, students should submit to their TAs a two-page outline with (a.) a one-paragraph abstract of the argument, (b.) an outline of the major points, and (c.) a bibliography. All essays must have: (1.) a minimum of 6 references to journal articles (at least two not found on the syllabus), (2.) at least 12 articles from the New York Times, (3.) two extended quotations, if relevant, from the "Pentagon Papers," and, if not, from other official documents, (4.) two extended quotations with full citations from US Congressional reports on the war. The completed essay should be submitted in the lecture hall at 2:25 p.m., on Tuesday, November 25.

--NB: For the New York Times, see <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.web/proquesthn>
c.) Discussion Section Mark: Based on your attendance and participation, the teaching assistant will assign you a mark for your performance in the discussion section. Repeated absences will result in a loss of all marks for the section.

d.) Final Examination: In the space of two hours starting at, December 16, at 10:05 am students will sit a blue-book exam and answer two questions selected from a longer list of essay questions.

e.) Extra Credit: For a maximum of three extra-credit points, students can sign up in the first discussion section to attend five film showings, one feature and four documentary, at the Veterans’ Museum, and write a short, three-page reflection paper. See Section IV below for details of films and their showings.

Readings: Reflecting the controversy surrounding the subject, there is no single text for the study of the Vietnam Wars. Instead, the syllabus covers each topic with journal articles and book extracts, divided into "Required" and "Background" readings. To follow the lectures and their unfamiliar material, students should read selections from the "required" materials before the relevant lecture. In preparing essays on subjects related to the lecture topics, consult the "background" readings for bibliographic references. These readings are available from several sources:

Required Texts [Sold at University Bookstore]:

Optional Texts [Sold at University Bookstore]:

Reference Works [College Library, H.C. White Building]:

Learn@UW [Available On-Line]: Through “Learn@UW”, available at <https://learnuw.wisc.edu/> or via the UW-Madison home page, students can access various materials for the course, including: the Course Syllabus, Glossary of Lecture Terms, Lecture outlines, and links to relevant outside resources.

Required Readings [Available at Campus Libraries]:
E-Reserve at the College Library holds all the Required Readings (articles and excerpts from books) marked below with an asterisk (*). The procedure for accessing e-reserves for our course is as follows: (1.) Students log-on to “MyUW”; (2.) go to the “Academic” tab; and, (3.) next to the courses that students are registered for, go to “Library/Reserves' link” and click on the link beside History 319.

The Reserve Room in *H.C. White Library* has most of the required and many of the background readings on reserve.

The *Memorial Library* has, with few exceptions, all the books and journal articles cited in the syllabus.
II. REQUIRED WEEKLY READINGS [Readings on e-Reserve are marked *]:

Week One (September 2): The Pre-colonial Vietnamese State

Week Two (September 9): The French Conquest

Week Three (September 16): Vietnamese Nationalism

Week Four (September 23): The Rise of the Communist Party

**Recommended (Optional) Reading:**

Week Five (September 30): The First Indochina War 1946-1954

**Recommended (Optional) Reading:**

Week Six (October 7): Origins of the Saigon Regime
**Recommended (Optional) Reading:**

**Week Seven (October 14): Disintegration of the South Vietnamese State**
Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, pp. 89-104.
**Recommended (Optional) Reading:**

[Midterm Exam Distributed in Lecture: Thursday, October 16]

**Week Eight (October 21): War on North Vietnam**
Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, pp. 105-149.

[Midterm Exam Due, Start of Lecture: Tuesday, October 21]

**Week Nine (October 28): Intervention by US Forces**

[Week of November 3: Consultation with TAs Re. Essay Outlines]

**Week 10 (November 4): US Troops in the Villages of Vietnam**

**Week 11 (November 11): The Tet Offensive & The War at Home**

**Week 12 (November 18): Withdrawal and “Vietnamization”**


[Research Essay Due, Start of Lecture: Tuesday, November 25]

**Week 13 (November 25): 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.


**Week 14 (December 2): Defeat in Indochina**

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


**Week 15 (December 9): The Legacy of the Vietnam War**


**Recommended (Optional) Reading:**


[Final Exam, Tuesday, December 16, at 10:05 am, place T.B.A.]

**III. BACKGROUND READINGS**

**WEEK 1: The Pre-colonial Vietnamese State**


**WEEK 2: The French Conquest**


Truong Buu Lam. *Patterns of Vietnamese Response to Foreign Intervention: 1858-1900* (New Haven: Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies, 1967), pp. 1-34.

**WEEK 3: Vietnamese Nationalism**

**Background Readings—Colonialism:**


**Background Readings—Nationalism:**


WEEK 4: The Rise of the Communist Party

Background Readings—Communist Party:


Background Readings—World War II:


Marr, David G. Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power (Berkeley: University of California, 1995).


Patti, Archimedes. Why Vietnam?: Prelude to America's Albatross (Berkeley: University of California, 1980).


Truong Buu Lam. "Japan and the Disruption of the Vietnamese Nationalist


WEEK 5: The First Indochina War, 1946-1954


Hue-Tam Ho Tai. Millenarianism and Peasant Politics in Vietnam (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1983), chaps. 8, 9, 10.


WEEK 6: Consolidating a South Vietnamese State


Background Reading—Ethnic Conflict in the Central Highlands


Background Reading—North Vietnam’s Social Revolution:


WEEK 7: The Disintegration of the South Vietnamese State


WEEK 8: Beginning the War on North Vietnam to Save the South


WEEK 9: The Introduction of US Ground Troops


Charlton, Michael & Moncrieff, Anthony. *Many Reasons Why: The American*


Herring, George C. LBJ and Vietnam: A Different Kind of War  (Austin: University of Texas, 1994).


WEEK 10: US Troops in the Villages of Vietnam


Herrington, Stuart. Silence was a Weapon: The Vietnam War in the Villages  (Novato: Presidio Press, 1982).


Nguyen Thi Dinh. *No Other Road To Take* (Ithaca: Data Paper #102, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1972).


Race, Jeffrey. *War Comes to Long An: Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province* (Berkeley: University of California, 1972), pp. 3-43.


**WEEK 11: The Tet Offensive & the War at Home**

*Background Reading—The Tet Offensive:*


Race, Jeffrey. *War Comes to Long An: Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province* (Berkeley: University of California, 1972), pp. 105-140.


**Background Reading—The War at Home:**


**WEEK 12: Towards Withdrawal and Vietnamization**


**Background Reading—International Law and the Question of War Crimes:**


WEEK 13: The U.S. Bombing of Laos and Cambodia

Background Reading—Laos:


Background Reading—Cambodia:


WEEK 14: Defeat in Indochina


**WEEK 15: The Legacy of Vietnam**

*Background Reading—The Veterans' Experience:*


**Background Reading—The Vietnam Syndrome in American Foreign Policy:**


**Background Reading—The Crisis of Socialism in Postwar Indochina:**


--For additional background readings on the above topics, consult Edwin Moise’s exhaustive bibliography posted on the website: http://hubcap.clemson.edu/~eemoise/

IV. FILM VIEWING – Extra-Credit Sessions & Suggested Titles:

--Extra-Credit Cinema Program: For a maximum of three extra-credit points, students can sign up in the first discussion section to attend five film showings, two features and three documentary, at the Veterans’ Museum, 30 West Mifflin Street (at the end of State Street on the Capitol Square; TEL 267-1799). To receive credit, students shall view all films and write a single, three-page reflection paper on a topic assigned by the TA. The films will be shown at these times and dates:

1.) “The Quiet American” (Week 6, Thursday, October 9, 4:15 pm)
2.) “Apocalypse Now” (Week 8, Thursday, October 23, 4:15 pm)
3.) “Two Days in October” (Week 9, Thursday, November 6, 4:15 pm)
4.) “Bombies” (Week 10, Thursday, **November 20**, 4:15 pm)
5.) “The Fog of War” (Week 11, Thursday, **December 4**, 4:15 pm)

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**Discussion Section Film Selections:** Selections from the following documentary films, running no more than 15 minutes, will be shown in sections to stimulate discussion.

1.) “The Weather Underground” (Bullfrog Productions)
2.) “Memories of a Massacre” (“60 Minutes,” CBS Television).
3.) “The Trial of Henry Kissinger”
4.) “Winter Soldier”
5.) “The War at Home”

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**Films in Lecture:** Short segments, usually less than five minutes each, will be shown in Lecture:

1.) “The Weather Underground” (Mark Rudd interview).
2.) “Vietnam: A Television History” (MacNamara, Tonkin Gulf)
3.) “Winter Soldier” (pacification footage)
4.) “Memories of a Massacre” (Bob Kerrey, Gerhard Klan interviews)
5.) “Vietnam: A Television History” (Nixon, Cambodia).
6.) “Going Upriver” (Kerry speech to Congress, VVAW)
7.) “Hearts and Minds”

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**Miscellaneous Films:** The films listed below are all highly recommended and are available on video at the more specialist Madison area video outlets:

1.) “Hearts and Minds” (Oscar Winner, 1974, Best Documentary)
2.) “Vietnam Requiem”
3.) “Vietnam: Year of the Pig”
4.) “The Quiet American” (black and white; with Audie Murphy)
5.) “The Quiet American” (color; with Michael Caine)
6.) “Born on the Fourth of July”
7.) “Full Metal Jacket”
8.) “Platoon”
9.) “Heaven and Earth”
10.) “The Lost Battalion” (French feature film)
11.) “Casualties of War”
12.) “Apocalypse Now”
13.) “Indochine”
14.) “We Were Soldiers”
15.) “Winter Soldier”
16.) “Going Up River”

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**Learning Support Services in Van Hise Hall:** This on-campus media center has a collection of Vietnam feature films and documentaries that can provide visual imagery that will help this chronicle of colonialism, revolution, diplomacy, and battles come alive. Among the films available are:

1.) “The War at Home” - HS1.004
2.) “Apocalypse Now” - ID2.020
3.) “Hearts of Darkness” (VHS) - ID2.021
4.) “The Vietnam War” (PBS series) - ID2.006
5.) “Indochine” - FR2059.149
6.) “The Trial of Henry Kissinger” - HS1.016
7.) “The Fog of War” (DVD) - HS1.018
8.) “The Weather Underground” (DVD) - HS1.020
9.) “Vietnam: In the Year of the Pig” (VHS) - HS1.019
10.) “Memories of a Massacre” (DVD) - HS1.017
11.) “Bombies” (DVD) - ID2.141
V. VACATION READING--Suggested Fiction and Non-Fiction Titles:

1.) Bao Ninh, *Sorrows of War.*
2.) Tim O'Brien, *In the Lake of the Woods.*
3.) Tim O'Brien, *The Things they Carried.*
4.) Graham Greene, *The Quiet American.*
5.) Jean Larteguy, *Yellow Fever.*
6.) Jean Larteguy, *The Bronze Drum.*
7.) Neil Sheehan, *Bright Shining Lie.*
8.) Lewis B. Puller, Jr., *Fortunate Son.*
9.) Michael Herr, *Dispatches.*

VI. MAJOR ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1.) *Nationalism:* By balancing biography with the history of modern Vietnamese nationalism, explain how Ho Chi Minh emerged as an effective leader of Vietnam’s anti-colonial struggle.

2.) *Eisenhower's Domino Theory:* In a famous speech in 1954, President Eisenhower warned that should the Communists prove victorious in Vietnam, the rest of the countries of Southeast Asia would “topple like a row of dominoes” to a monolithic and expansionist Communism. Was this an accurate assumption? Please discuss some of the relevant aspects of Vietnamese communism and history that would either support or undermine such an understanding.

3.) *The U. S. Role in the Coup against Diem:* One Asian expert once said: "It is fair to say that the overthrow of Ngo Dinh Diem in November of 1963 would not have occurred without at least the tacit approval of the U.S." Analyze the dynamics of Diem’s downfall and weigh the role of the United States in a wider context.


5.) *Tonkin Gulf Incident:* After voting on the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, Senator Wayne Morse from Oregon said: "I believe that history will record that we have made a great mistake in subverting and circumventing the Constitution of the United States,[B]y means of this resolution....we are in effect giving the President war making powers in the absence of a declaration of war. I believe that to be a historic mistake." Trace the development of the Tonkin Gulf incident and the Tonkin Gulf resolution, indicating whether you agree with Morse. Please explain and document your position fully.

6.) *War in the Villages:* Discuss the character of the Vietnamese village and explain why the US-directed pacification policy, including the Phoenix Program, largely failed there between 1959 and 1969.

7.) *Tet Offensive:* Was the 1968 Tet offensive a simple US intelligence failure or did it represent the inability of the White House, the Pentagon, and MACV to understand the deeper politics of the war? From this perspective, discuss the impact of this battle on the war in Vietnam and the war at home in the United States.

8.) *My Lai Massacre:* As his court martial began, one unnamed American told a reporter, "Rusty Calley is a scapegoat." Using this remark as point of departure, examine U. S. military counter-insurgency tactics in the years surrounding the My Lai incident and determine, in light of recent revelations about the “Tiger Force” and other atrocities, to what extent civilian killings were an exception, a manifestation, or a component of US Army pacification.
9.) Cambodia and Laos: Analyze the impact of US political and military policy upon either Cambodia or Laos between 1965 and 1975.

10.) War crimes: Prominent intellectuals such as Noam Chomsky, Bertrand Russell and Jean Paul Sartre have argued that the U. S. government committed war crimes while fighting in Indochina. Focusing on the case of ex-Senator Robert Kerrey and the events at Thanh Phong village, determine whether his actions, and the larger Phoenix program, were war crimes as defined by the 1949 Geneva Convention. Should ex-Senator Kerrey be indicted, like Lt. Calley, for war crimes?

11.) The Grunt’s War: Analyze the changing quality of combat in Vietnam between 1965 and 1972, focusing on its impact upon the discipline within the US Army and upon the individual American soldier.

12.) The Anti-war Movement: The anti-war movement is largely remembered as a student movement. To what degree is this true? What were the various motivations that people had to be opposed to the war in Indochina? What were the various arguments they used against it? Consider the opposition that emerged from among students, blacks, soldiers, workers and women.

13.) Vietnaminization: When recalling President Nixon's support for Vietnamization, Richard Smyser, a State Department official, said that, "For domestic and political reasons American troops had to be gotten out of there." Explain those domestic and political reasons.

14.) CIA Covert Operations: One scholar has said, “The Vietnam War is Exhibit A for the abolition of the CIA.” Explore the role of the major CIA covert operations in the period 1963 to 1975—including Diem’s ouster, the Desoto missions, the CORDS/Phoenix Program, and the Secret War in Laos--to assess whether reliance on covert operations contributed to the making of this quagmire.

15.) Christmas Bombings: At the Paris meetings in January 1973, Henry Kissinger claimed that "What has brought us to this point is the President's [Nixon's] firmness and the North Vietnamese belief that he will not be affected by either congressional or public pressures. Le Duc Tho [the North Vietnamese negotiator] has repeatedly made these points to me." Do you agree with Kissinger that the bombings of 1972 were necessary to force the North Vietnamese to sign the peace agreement? Please explain and document your position fully.

16.) Congressional Cut-off of Aid to Vietnam: An anonymous South Vietnamese said: "Not only did the US not provide us with the assistance they had promised, but they did not even allow us to save face and dignity, the only assets of a poor country. It seemed better to be America's enemy than ally, for the enemy at least had America's respect." Do you agree with those who argue that the staged termination of aid to South Vietnam caused its collapse? Please explain and document your answer fully.

17.) The Fall of Saigon and its Impact on America: After the Persian Gulf War, President George H.W. Bush said, "We have finally kicked the Vietnam Syndrome.” To what was he referring? What exactly is the “Vietnam Syndrome”? And how has it affected US foreign policy? Please explain and document your answer fully.

18.) Robert McNamara’s Apology: In his book In Retrospect, former U. S. Defense Secretary Robert McNamara said: "We of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations who participated in the decisions on Vietnam acted according to what we thought were the principles and traditions of this nation. We made our decisions in light of those values. Yet we were wrong, terribly wrong." Why does McNamara think the Johnson administration was "wrong”? Do you think that McNamara has correctly located the reasons for the US government’s failure in Vietnam? Consider the policies of the Johnson administration in light of McNamara's retrospective assessment.
VII. HOW TO WRITE A RESEARCH ESSAY—A THREE-STEP METHOD:

1.) Step One—Need to Read:
   a.) Sources/Research:
      1.) All good essays begin with the three “Rs”—reading, research, and reflection.
      2.) Like most essays, a history term paper is a distillation of its author's reading and reflections upon the subject at hand. The quality of an essay's expression and analysis usually reflects the depth and diversity of its author's reading.
      3.) Conversely, if you do not read, then your essay will very likely reflect a certain lack of depth.

   b.) How to Read for an Essay:
      1.) Using the course syllabus, begin with a general text to get an overview of the problem.
      2.) Using the syllabus or textbooks, select more specific sources.
      3.) As you read, begin forming ideas in your mind about:
         (a) your overall hypothesis, and;
         (b) the evidence you need or have found to support your argument.
      4.) As you read, take notes, either on paper, or in the margin of a photocopy of the source. As you take notes, make sure you have the bibliographic information for your source: author, title, place of publication, publisher, and relevant pages.
      5.) Towards the end of your reading, draw up an outline of the essay. If you are missing sources for the argument you would like to present, then do additional reading.

   c.) Citing Your Sources:
      1.) Assuming three paragraphs per page, you should have one source or note per paragraph.
      2.) Every idea that is not your own and every major body of data you use in your essay should be sourced. In particular, quotations must be sourced.
      3.) You may use end notes or footnotes in the following format:


      4.) For a second, sequential citation of the same work use “Ibid.; and for all subsequent, non-sequential citations of the same work use a short citation form, that might be:

         McCoy, *Southeast Asia Since 1800*, pp. 77-78.


2.) Step Two—Framing the Argument:
   a.) Outline: With your reading done, you are ready to outline your argument. Begin by asking yourself the single, central question you will ask and answer in the course of this paper. Next, write a one- or two-page outline of your essay with the basic components discussed below.
b.) Overall structure: Every scientific report, whether natural or social, has three basic elements—the problem/hypothesis, the evidence/argument, and the conclusion. To summarize very broadly, the introduction asks a question and poses a hypothesis, the argument arrays evidence to explore that hypothesis, and the conclusion reflects upon the original hypothesis in light of the evidence presented.

Of these three elements, the opening formulation of an hypothesis is, by far, the most difficult. In your opening paragraph, try to stand back from the dense mass of material you have read and articulate a thesis, which usually explains causality (why events occurred) or analyzes significance (the particular import of an event or a pattern of events). Then identify the factors, topics, or elements that you will explore to test your thesis. Ideally, these factors should serve as a broad outline of the topics that you will explore in the next section of your essay, the argument/evidence. Here are some further reflections on each of these sections:

1.) The Problem: In your introduction, state the problem clearly.
   a.) If necessary, you should give your definition of any key terms that require a specific usage (e.g., "revolution.")
   b.) In stating your problem, refer to the literature in the syllabus.
   c.) A standard and often effective device is to identify two differing schools of thought about a single problem.
   d.) Make sure you are examining the main point, not a minor side issue.

2.) The Evidence: In the middle part of your essay, you must present evidence—in some logical order—to deal with the problem posed at the beginning of your essay. Be specific—give the reader a brief narrative of an event or provide some statistical or anecdotal evidence.

3.) The Conclusion: In the final page or two of your essay, reflect on the problem as stated in the introduction in light of the evidence you presented in the middle part of the essay. Stretch the data you present for clarity, but do not exaggerate or over-extend the usefulness of your data.

c.) Level of Argument: It is difficult to spell out in precise terms what I mean by "level of argument."
   1.) Drawing upon reading and lectures, try to frame an argument that seems to address the question in the most direct and significant manner possible, drawing the most convincing possible evidence to support the case you are making.
   2.) How do you define an appropriate question and level of analysis? You can sensitize yourself to the question by reading several sources with diverse viewpoints and approaches.

d.) Nature of History Questions: In courses such as this one, history involves the study of change in large-scale human communities, societies and nations, over time. Most history essays ask you to understand or explain two aspects of change—events and their causes, or, simply, what happened and why it happened. Thus, most history questions ask you to explain elements of the following:
   1.) In a limited period of time, explain the factors underlying a given event. Why did that event happen?
   2.) Explain the impact that an event, such as a war or revolution, had upon a human community within a period succeeding the actual event.
   3.) Over a longer period of time, explain how and why complex communities changed in a given way.