

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
Department of History
Spring 1988

History 319

The Vietnam Wars

Professor Smail

Office Hours: Wednesdays 11:00 to 12:00; Fridays 2:00 to 3:00; or by agreement
(5219 Humanities Bldg.)

LECTURES

Tuesdays and Thursdays 6:30-7:20 p.m. in Agriculture Hall 125

PBS TV SERIES ON VIETNAM WARS (optional)

Tuesdays 7:30-8:30 in class after lecture

DISCUSSION SECTIONS

To be worked out during first week

REQUIRED READING--1250 pages

a. Three required texts:

1. William Duiker, The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam
2. George Herring, America's Longest War (1986 edition)
3. F. J. West, The Village

b. Other readings in Reserve Book room, Helen C. White Building

OTHER REQUIRED MATERIALS

There will be a small, inexpensive course packet of materials, including special outline maps for the map exercises, at Kinko's on University Ave. Students should get their packets in registration week.

GRADING

7 and 12 weeks exams (25% each)

Final exam (45%)

Two map exercises, and two quizzes (5%)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What we usually call "The Vietnam War" (1965-1975) was one of the central events in modern U.S. history. It generated a deep and painful division of public opinion in which the pro-war forces were called murderers and their

opponents traitors. It brought violent demonstrations and counter-demonstrations, massive draft-dodging, and costs of some \$200 billion. It required the services of some three million Americans, of whom about 58,000 died, it wrecked the careers of the two presidents who carried it out, and it brought back its veterans to a cruelly indifferent homeland. Today it provides the basic frame of reference for the fierce dispute on US foreign policy, particularly in Central America. There is good reason to study the war as a topic in US history.

But that is not the whole story. The fighting in 1965-75 took place not in the US but in Vietnam (as well as in neighboring Cambodia and Laos). Somewhat over a million Vietnamese were killed in those ten years, about 20 for each American who died. Perhaps six million were driven from their home villages in the fighting. It was the most intensive war in human history: year by year in a country about 2 1/2 times the size of Wisconsin about a million tons of bombs were dropped, a million acres were defoliated, and 200,000 acres of crops were destroyed.

One must also keep in mind that for the Vietnamese and their neighbors 1965-1975 was only one phase in a much longer war. For them the war began in 1940, and with varying levels of violence, has continued up to the present moment. Over that nearly half century long war about one and three quarters million Vietnamese, roughly 5 percent of the population, were killed, and about three and a half million wounded. The same proportion of total US population in the 1965-75 period would have meant ten million Americans dead and twenty million wounded. Few Vietnamese alive today do not have at least one dead or wounded relative to remember. No American can pay attention only to what we are doing over there, or concentrate on only ten years of so protracted and terrible a war--in which, in any case, the US was actively involved during the twenty years before 1965.

How and when did the United States get involved in these wars, and why did it stay in so long? Why and how did it get out? Should the US have been there at any time over the years; was it morally right or wrong? Was it possible for the US to have won or not? What did that war do to or for American society? How and why did the Vietnam Wars get started in 1940? What has kept them going up to the present? What drew so many outside powers--Chinese, French, Americans, and Russians--into the story? How did the fighting spread, slowly at first, then faster, to neighboring Laos and Cambodia? From where did the Vietnamese communists and others who fought with them get the strength to wear down and eventually expel the French and then the Americans? Were these wars of independence, or civil wars, or "proxy wars" in which local forces served the interests of competing great powers? It is these questions, as well as the more familiar ones--"Could the war have been won?" "Should we have gone into Vietnam?"--that this course attempts to answer.

PART I: THE BIG WAR, 1965-681st Week

1. Jan 19 T -- Vietnam in early 1965.
2. Jan 21 R -- The Big War, 1965-67.

Required reading 290 pages (read in 1st 2 or 3 weeks)
West (text)

2nd Week

3. Jan 26 T -- The Big War, the Tet offensive.

Required reading 75 pages
Herring (text), Chapters V & VI

PART II: VIETNAM AND ITS HISTORY

4. Jan 28 R -- Ecology and ethnic groups in Indochina.

Required reading none

3rd Week

5. Feb 2 T -- The Chinese connection, independence and Confucianism.
6. Feb 4 R -- The drive to the south, Nguyen dynasty and French conquest.

Required reading none

Map exercise #1 due in class on Feb. 4th.

4th Week

7. Feb 9 T -- Social change in French Indochina.
8. Feb 11 R -- Vietnamese responses.

Required reading 45 pages
Duiker (text) Chapters 2 and 3

Map exercise #2 due in class on Feb. 11th. Use the two maps (12 copies each) in the Reserve Collection, H.C. White Building, DS 509.5 E 83/1 and DS 509.5 E 83/2. The two maps, when placed together, cover the whole of Indochina.

PART III: JAPANESE OCCUPATION AND FRENCH/VIET MINH WAR5th Week

9. Feb 16 T -- Japanese occupation and the August Revolution.
10. Feb 18 R -- The French/Viet Minh War.

Required reading 125 pages

Duiker, Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 (to page 139 only)

Bernard Fall, Street Without Joy, pages 185-235. Reserve: DS 550

F3 1972

Quiz #1 will be given in class on Feb. 18th.

6th Week

11. Feb 23 T -- The Battle of Dien Bien Phu and the Geneva Conference.
12. Feb 25 R -- After Geneva: Crisis in the Southern half of Vietnam

Required reading 70 pages

Duiker, Chapter 7 (page 139 to end)

Herring, Chapter 1

PART IV: DIVIDED LAND, UNEASY PEACE, 1954-647th Week

13. Mar 1 T -- Ngo Dinh Diem's rise to power.

Mar 3 R -- SEVEN WEEK EXAM

Required reading 40 pages

Duiker, Chapter 8 (to page 186 only)

Herring, Chapter II (to page 66 only)

8th Week

15. Mar 8 T -- War in Laos #1.
16. Mar 10 R -- War in Laos #2.

Required reading none

SPRING VACATION

9th Week

17. Mar 22 T -- Land Reform in the Northern half.
18. Mar 24 R -- Collapse in the Southern half: rural.

Required reading 155 pages

David W. P. Elliott, "Political Integration in North Vietnam: The cooperativization period." Reserve: RB HIST E5012 P0
Herring, Chapter II (page 66 to end) and Chapter III
Duiker, Chapter 8 (page 186 to end)
Jeffrey Race, War Comes to Long An, pages 141-181 and 193-198.
Reserve: DS 557 AB L657 1973
Konrad Kellen, Conversations with Enemy Soldiers. Reserve: AS 36 R32/6131

10th Week

19. Mar 29 T -- Collapse in the Southern half: urban.
20. Mar 31 R -- On to Johnson's War.

Required reading 65 pages

Herring, Chapter IV
Duiker, Chapter 9

PART V: EXPANSION OF THE WARS, 1965-7511th Week

21. Apr 5 T -- Drawing down U.S. troop strength; Vietnamization.
22. Apr 7 R -- The destruction of Cambodia #1.

Required reading 145 pages

Herring, Chapter VII
Duiker, Chapter 10 & 11
Guenter Lewy, America in Vietnam, Chapter 3, Reserve: DS 558 L48

Quiz #2 will be given in class on Apr. 7.

12th Week

23. Apr 12 T -- Destruction of Cambodia #2.
24. Apr 14 R -- TWELVE WEEK EXAM

Required reading 57 pages

Herring, Chapter VIII (to page 269 only)
Duiker, Chapter 12
Lewy, (see Reserve info under 11th week above) Chapter 5

13th Week

25. Apr 19 T -- "The War at Home."
26. Apr 21 R -- Veterans.

Required reading 95 pages

Lawrence Baskir, Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, the War, and the Vietnam Generation, pages 1-72. Reserve: DS 559.8 D7 B37 1978B

Philip Converse, "'Silent Majorities' and the Vietnam War."
Reserve: RB HIST C7862 SI

Leslie Gelb, "The Essential Domino: American Politics and Vietnam." Reserve: RB HIST G3035 ES

PART VI: THE WARS CONTINUE14th Week

27. Apr 26 T -- Cambodia under Pol Pot.
28. Apr 28 R -- New International alignments, new wars.

Required reading 70 pages

David W. P. Elliott, The Third Indochina Conflict, pages 21-62.

Reserve: DS 554.824 T47

Herring, Chapter VIII (page 269 to end)

Duiker, Chapter 13

PART VII: CONCLUSIONS15th Week

29. May 3 T -- Could the U.S. have won? When and how?
30. May 5 R -- Was U.S. policy morally sound? When and how?

Required reading none

MAP EXERCISESFIRST

For reference use Atlas of South-East Asia. Reserve: G 2360 A7. There are four copies on 3-hour basis. Other atlases may be found in the Reference Room of the Memorial Library.

Rivers (mark as much of their length as is shown on your outline map)

Mekong
Red
Black

Major towns and cities

Angkor
Danang
Haiphong
Hanoi
Hue
Luang Prabang
Phnom Penh
Saigon
Vientiane
Bangkok

Other bodies of Water

Khone (falls)
Tonle Sap
South China Sea
Gulf of Tonkin

Other

Red River delta (Hanoi to the sea)
Mekong delta (from Cambodian border to the sea, out to southwest tip at Ca Mau Point)

SECOND

Ethnic/linguistic groups of Indochina

For reference use the map (two sheets) provided in the Reserve Book Room, DS 509.5 E83/1 and DS 509.5 E83/2.

1. The three large lowland groups (use solid colors, or heavy hatching)
 - a. Vietnamese (use two colors of different hatchings):
 - i. Around 1000 AD (see map or "South-East Asia about 1150" on the front endpapers of Atlas of South-East Asia. Reserve G 2360 A7.
 - ii. Additional area occupied by Vietnamese by the 20th century.
 - b. Cambodians (Khmers) -- in Cambodia and bits of Vietnam and Laos (omit Cambodians in Thailand).
 - c. Lowland Buddhist Lao of Laos. Draw an arbitrary 1/4 inch thick line in color or hatching from Luang Prabang to Khone (falls) on the left bank (going downstream) of the Mekong River.
2. Hill ethnic groups (occupying all the rest of Indochina). Mark with one color or light hatching.

NOTE: Be sure to use only your two outline maps provided in your Kinko's course packet.

NAMES AND TERMS FOR THE QUIZZES

Each quiz will give ten definitions on the left side, and fifteen numbered names and terms, drawn from the lists below, on the right side. You will choose a number for each definition.

Names and Terms for Quiz #1

Mekong River ("may kong")	Ly ("lee") dynasty
Red River	Le ("lay") dynasty
monsoon	Nguyen ("nwin") dynasty
slash and burn	Bac Bo = Tongking (or Tonkin) = North
wet rice	Trung Bo = Annam = Center
Hanoi	Nam Bo = Cochin-China = South
Hue ("hway")	scholar-gentry
Saigon	scholar-officials (mandarins)
Phnom Penh	Confucianism
Tai (language)	Mahayana Buddhism
Thai (to do with modern country of Thailand)	Theravada Buddhism
Khmer = Cambodian	The three gems
quoc ngu	Nam Tien
Lac	Viet Bac
Indochina	The year of the August Revolution (1945)
	The year the French-Viet Minh War began (1946)
	The year the Communists triumphed in China (1949)
	The year of the battle of Route 4 (1950)

NOTE: In Vietnamese (and other languages of Indochina) the letter a is almost always pronounced "ah" as in Ma and Pa.

Names and Terms for Quiz #2

-- Charles DeGaulle	-- Hoa Hao ("hwa how")
-- Ho Chi Minh ("ming")	Cao Dai ("cow die")
Vo Nguyen Giap ("zhahp")	Viet Minh ("vyet ming")
Bao Dai	-- National Liberation Front = NLF = "Viet Cong"
Ngo Dinh Diem ("zyem")	ARVN
Ngo Dinh Nhu ("noo")	NVA
Nguyen Cao Ky ("key")	Pathet Lao
Nguyen Van Thieu ("tyoo")	Democratic Republic of Vietnam = DRV
-- Souphanouvong	-- Dien Bien Phu
Souvana Phouma	Tet
-- John Kennedy	search and destroy
Lyndon Johnson	free-fire zones
Robert McNamara	Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)
William Westmoreland	The year Diem ousted Bao Dai (1955)
Richard Nixon	The year all-Vietnam elections were supposed to be held
Henry Kissinger	The year the NLF was founded (1960)
	The year Diem was assassinated (1963)

NOTE: Vietnamese names are given in this order: family name, (often a middle name), a personal name -- equivalent to "Smith J. Harry." Vietnamese are always referred to by their personal names: "President Diem," not "President Ngo" -- equivalent to "President Lyndon." (This rule does not apply to Ho Chi Minh (a pseudonym) or Bao Dai (a king's official name.)