

HISTORY 319--THE VIETNAM WARS

Department of History
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Summer 1994

Mr. McCoy

I. COURSE PROCEDURES:-

Class Meetings: Lectures by Mr. McCoy on Monday through Thursday, 11:45 am to 2:15 pm in 1641 Humanities Building.

Office Hours: In Room 5131 Humanities, Monday, 4:00-5:00 pm and other hours by appointment (TEL: 263-1855). Messages may be left in mailbox No. 5026.

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 take-home exams or essays on subjects related to the lecture topics, consult the bibliographies in these texts for references. These readings are available from several sources:

a.) Textbook--Required [Sold at University Bookstore]:

Frances Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake* .
James Gibson, *The Perfect War*.
George McT. Kahin, *Intervention*.
Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*.
Guenter Lewey, *America in Vietnam* .

b.) Textbooks--Recommended:

Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin*.
Neil Sheehan, *Bright Shining Lie*.

c.) Libraries:

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.

Grading: Students shall complete three pieces of written work. Students shall take a mid term examination on June 22nd, submit a research essay on June 30th, and on July 7 they shall sit a final examination.

--mid term examination: 30%
--research essay: 40%
--final examination: 30%

II. READINGS FOR LECTURES :-

1.) Lecture 1 (June 13): First Indochina War--A Military History

Karnow, Stanley, **Vietnam: A History** (New York: Penguin, 1983), pp. 135-60, 169-205.

2.) Lecture 2 (June 14): Origins of the Diem Regime

Kahin, George McT., **Intervention** (New York: Anchor Books, 1986), pp. 66-92, 93-121.

Karnow, Stanley, **Vietnam: A History** (New York: Penguin, 1983), pp. 213-39.

Lansdale, Edward G., **In the Midst of Wars: An American's Mission to Southeast Asia** (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 126-153, 184-201, 282-312.

McCoy, Alfred W., **The Politics of Heroin** (New York: Lawrence Hill, 1991), pp. 127-161.

3.) Lecture 3 (June 15): Downfall of Ngo Dinh Diem

Fitzgerald, Frances, **Fire in the Lake** (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1972), pp. 72-137.

Kahin, George McT., **Intervention** (New York: Anchor Books, 1986), pp. 122-81.

Karnow, Stanley, **Vietnam: A History** (New York: Penguin, 1983), pp. 277-311.

4.) Lecture 4 (June 16): Saigon Politics

Fitzgerald, Frances, **Fire in the Lake** (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1972), pp. 264-338.

Kahin, George McT., **Intervention** (New York: Anchor Books, 1986), pp. 182-235.

5.) Lecture 5 (June 20): LBJ Intervenes in Vietnam

Gibson, James William, **The Perfect War** (New York: Randon House, 1986), pp. 319-56.

Kahin, George McT., **Intervention** (New York: Anchor Books, 1986), pp. 236-59, 306-31.

Karnow, Stanley, **Vietnam: A History** (New York: Penguin, 1983), pp. 357-86.

6.) Lecture 6 (June 21): LBJ's War

Kahin, George McT., **Intervention** (New York: Anchor Books, 1986), pp. 347-401.

Karnow, Stanley, **Vietnam: A History** (New York: Penguin, 1983), pp. 395-426.

7.) Lecture 7 (June 22): The Big War, 1965-67

Gibson, James William, **The Perfect War** (New York: Random House, 1986), pp. 93-154, 270-315.

Herring, George C., "**Cold Blood**": **LBJ's Conduct of Limited War in Vietnam**" (Colorado: The Harmon Memorial Lectures in Military History, US Air Force Academy, 1990), pp. 1-34.

Kahin, George McT., **Intervention** (New York: Anchor Books, 1986), pp. 403-32.

Karnow, Stanley, **Vietnam: A History** (New York: Penguin, 1983), pp. 435-73.

8.) Lecture 8 (June 23): The Tet Offensive

Fitzgerald, Frances, **Fire in the Lake** (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1972), pp. 388-400.

Karnow, Stanley, **Vietnam: A History** (New York: Penguin, 1983), pp. 523-66.

9.) Lecture 9 (June 27): Aftermath of Tet

Lewey, Guenter, **America in Vietnam** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 127-61, 162-89.

10.) Lecture 10 (June 28): Nixon's War

Karnow, Stanley, **Vietnam: A History** (New York: Penguin, 1983), pp. 577-612.

11.) Lecture 11 (June 29): The Destruction of Cambodia

Gibson, James William, **The Perfect War** (New York: Random House, 1986), pp. 403-18.

Shawcross, William, **Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia** (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), pp. 19-35, 112-149, 280-299.

12.) Lecture 12 (June 30): Secret War in Laos

Gibson, James William, **The Perfect War** (New York: Random House, 1986), pp. 382-402.

McCoy, Alfred W., **The Politics of Heroin** (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1991), 283-343.

13.) Lecture 13 (July 5): Nixon Doctrine in Action, 1970-73

Lewey, Guenter, **America in Vietnam** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 190-222.

14.) Lecture 14 (July 6): Paris Peace Accord

Karnow, Stanley, **Vietnam: A History** (New York: Penguin, 1983), pp. 623-70.

15.) Lecture 15 (July 7): Fall of Saigon

Kolko, Gabriel, **Anatomy of a War** (New York: Pantheon, 1985), pp. 476-544.

Moss, George D., **Vietnam: An American Ordeal** (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 2nd Edition, 1994), pp. 380-412.

III. FORMAT FOR TAKE-HOME EXAMS & ESSAYS:**1.) Prose:****a.) Procedure:**

- 1.) By hand write out an outline of about 2 pages for a 10-page essay. Each projected paragraph in the essay should be a line in your outline.
- 2.) Write a first draft. If using a personal computer, there is a very real possibility that it will read like a long, chatty letter home, not a major research essay.
- 3.) Reading aloud to yourself, if necessary, edit the prose and produce a second draft.

b.) Sentences:

- 1.) Each sentence should be a complete sentence with subject, verb, and direct object.
- 2.) Vary your sentences--short, periodic sentences; simple compound sentences; compound sentences with clauses in apposition; and longer sentences communicating detail.

c.) Paragraphs:

- 1.) Start your paragraph with a periodic or compound sentence stating the basic message of this particular paragraph.
- 2.) Varying your sentence structure, elaborate and expand this theme into a fully developed paragraph.
- 3.) Within the paragraph, try to link your sentences so that they flow from one to another.
- 4.) Paragraphs should not be too long. If you need a crude guide, have 3 to a page, or 8 to 10 typed lines each.

d.) Aspire to style:

- 1.) There is a music--with melody and rhythm--to prose. Sensitize your mind's ear to the music of prose and try to make your own word music. Try to make your writing an expression of your inner voice.

- 2.) As in all forms of social discourse, there is an appropriate style for an academic essay.
 - a.) Use a formal voice--not ponderous, just formal.
 - b.) Avoid contractions (can't, didn't).
 - c.) Avoid colloquialisms (e.g., "Colonialism in Southeast Asia was really heavy.")
- 3.) In short, adopt a tone or voice somewhere between the chatty colloquial and the ponderous.

2.) Argument:

- a.) *Overall structure:* Every scientific report, whether natural or social, has 3 basic elements:
 - 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," if the question asks, for example, "Was the 1896 revolution in the Philippines a social revolution?")
 - b.) In stating your problem, refer to the literature in the syllabus, not something you have seen recently on CNN.
 - 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 logical order--to deal with the problem posed at the beginning of your essay. Be specific--give the reader brief narratives of an event, or provide some statistical 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.

- b.) *Level of Argument:* It is difficult to spell out in precise terms what I mean by "level of argument."
 - 1.) To overstate the case, you should not deal with the question of "the impact of French colonialism in the Mekong Delta" by probing the problem of whether "the French made life in Vietnam happier for the natives."
 - 2.) How do you define an appropriate question and level of analysis? Simple. You can sensitize yourself to the question by reading several sources with diverse viewpoints and approaches.

- c.) *The 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 time period, 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.

3.) Sources/Research:

a.) *Need to Read:*

- 1.) 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 reflects, subtly but ineluctably, the depth and diversity of its author's reading.
- 2.) Conversely, if you do not read, then you cannot have anything of any substance to say on a subject.

b.) *Basic Format:*

- 1.) Assuming 3 paragraphs per page, you should have one source 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:
 Alfred W. McCoy, **Southeast Asia Since 1800** (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), pp. 34-5.
- 4.) For details, see, The University of Chicago Press, **A Manual of Style**.

c.) *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 textbook references, 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.