

THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
Department of History

Semester I Year 83-84

<u>COURSE NO.</u>	<u>COURSE TITLE</u>	<u>INSTRUCTOR</u>
573-2	The Vietnam Wars	Smail

SUBJECT

This colloquium deals with the stupendous upheaval in the former colony of French Indochina which began with the Japanese occupation in 1940 and is still in full swing today in what are now officially the three nations of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

What most Americans think of as "The Vietnam War" (1965-75) was only a phase -- though an exceptionally violent one -- in the much longer time of troubles for the peoples who live in this region. Americans, too, understandably tend to see these events from a vantage point here at home, looking outward across the Pacific at distant and alien lands over there. We also tend, equally understandably, to be more interested in what we were doing over there and whether what we were doing was right or wrong, than in what was happening in and to the societies primarily concerned.

This course will present a longer and wider view of these events. It will take full account of the Chinese, French, Russians and Americans as they enter from the outside to play important roles in the history of Indochina, but it is centered on the story of the Indochinese peoples themselves. It is only by making a serious effort to see the story from a mental vantage point inside Indochina that Americans can gain a properly balanced understanding of the terrible events in which we were so deeply involved -- and are still.

CLASS SESSIONS

The first three sessions will briefly summarize the main themes in the history of the region up to 1945, and will take the form of lectures with interludes of discussion and questions. The rest of the sessions will start and end with myself in the chair, providing whatever scene-setting is necessary at the beginning and concluding comment at the close. The middle portions of these sessions will consist of discussions of short papers by student members, presided over mainly by the student paper writers for that week.

READING

Required reading will average 200 pages a week -- more for sessions at which a student is supplying a paper, fewer in the other weeks. For each session there will be assigned readings for everyone along with optional readings intended mainly for paper-writers. There will be texts available in the bookstores, a substantial number of books on Reserve, and information about where to find other writings. PBS is running a 13-part TV series (Vietnam, a television history) this fall. Episodes that appear during the semester are required viewing for this course.

PAPERS

Each student member will write two papers of 7 to 9 typewritten pages on issues and questions supplied in the syllabus for each week's session. These papers will be reproduced in sufficient copies for the class and made available by noon Mondays. The schedule for the semester will be worked out at the first session.

GRADES

One-third of the grade will be for each of a student's two papers, one-third for class discussion over the whole semester.

Please note course requires consent of instructor. See him in 5219 Humanities during Registration Week.

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Department of History

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573	The Vietnam Wars	Smail

Subject

The passage of time now makes it possible to study the Vietnam wars properly. The gridlock of hawk and dove in this country has broken, and the last few years have seen the publication of large numbers of good-quality studies that provide meat to chew on.

Sessions 2 through 14 (#1 is preliminary, #15 is waived, so student members can catch up with their other courses) will be devoted to six broad topics roughly as follows:

- A. (weeks 2-4) Vietnamese history: to 1802; 19th century (Nguyen dynasty, French conquest); 1900-45 (Colonialism, nationalism, Japanese occupation).
- B. (weeks 5-7) The three phases of the 30 Years War: 1945-54 (French phase); 1954-64 (North and South Vietnam separated); 1965-75 (Johnson-Nixon wars).
- C. (weeks 8-9) The 30 Years War inside Vietnamese society: local histories, captured documents, biography
- D. (weeks 10-11) US policy & actions; domestic US politics
- E. (week 12) American troops in Vietnam, and returning as vets: fiction, reportage, current issues
- F. (weeks 13-14) The wider war spilling out into the Vietnamese highlands, Laos, Cambodia and war with China: to 1975; from 1975 to date.

Procedures

The main business of a colloquium is to work collectively through a large body of writings. The management will supply an extensive bibliography indicating which books can be found in Reserve, in a special collection housed in the History Dept Library, and in various other libraries on campus. There will be a required course-pack of articles on sale at a local zerox establishment, and a map and perhaps several books at the bookstores. For each session there will be a list of relevant works. Most sessions from #4 to #14 will be chaired by one or two student members (depending on numbers enrolled) who will be responsible for writing and distributing beforehand a brief survey and essay on the major issues and for guiding the discussion. In cases where the session reading lists are long (most) we will divide up readings beforehand; each person will be responsible for conveying the gist of such works to the class as a whole.

Grading Grading will be based 50-50 on class discussion and a research paper of 20-25 pages

Admission This is a consent-of-instructor course. Students who are **interested should consult me as early as possible in registration week.**