

SOUTHEAST ASIAN REFUGEES OF THE COLD WAR

Hist 246, Asian 246, AsianAm 246

Semester: Spring 2020

Lectures: TR 9:30-10:45am; Social Science 5208

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KS & CH: TBA (in section)



Between 1975 and 1995, over two million Southeast Asians fled from the three former French colonies frequently referred to collectively as Indochina: Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Over 1.3 million of these migrants came as refugees to the United States and added four new major ethnic groups to American society: Hmong, Khmer, Lao, and Vietnamese, including among them ethnic Chinese and the children of American military personnel (frequently referred to as "Amerasians"). This course is intended to provide a better understanding of the conditions that led these people, and thousands of others, to flee their homelands in Southeast Asia and eventually take refuge and start new lives in the US, as well as in the other countries that offered them asylum (including Canada, Australia, and France).

The course will be divided into four parts and will emphasize the Cold War conflicts and wars that devastated these three countries and resulted in the flight and resettlement of these refugees, especially between 1975 and 1995. **Part 1, *Peoples of the Indochina Countries***, will introduce the themes of the course and provide basic information on the histories, cultures, and social organizational patterns of the four ethnic groups that are the focus of the course: Hmong, Khmer, Lao, and Vietnamese. **Part 2, *Colonial Origins of Conflicts in Indochina***, will concentrate on the modern history and changing societies of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, with emphasis on the last decades of French colonial rule, the Japanese occupation during the Pacific War, and the nationalist, revolutionary, and global (Cold War) struggles and upheavals that took place in these three countries, especially from the 1920s through the 1950s. In addition to

discussing the larger contexts of the Cold War, this section will emphasize the significant social, economic, political, and geopolitical developments that took place in French Indochina during the first half of the 20th century. **Part 3, *The "Cold" Wars in Indochina***, will survey the violent conflicts of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, with emphasis on the wars in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, the political alignments (international and domestic) that these conflicts created, the traumatic aftermath of US withdrawal and Communist victories, and the post-1975 developments and continuing conflicts that further devastated all three countries. **Part 4, *Disorderly Departures: Refugees and Migrants***, will concentrate on the flight of thousands of people from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos from 1975 to the mid-1990s. It will attempt to describe and analyze the mass exodus of refugees and migrants and the global efforts to facilitate their survival and resettlement. Lectures and readings will concentrate on the reasons for seeking asylum (or continued resistance), the chaos and hardship of the escape, the difficult realities of camp life, and the mechanisms of resettlement in the US. This section will also explore some aspects of the early resettlement experiences of refugees and migrants in US, with particular attention to the period up to the mid-1990s.

The content of the course will be presented through lectures and discussion sections, electronically accessible readings, and film/video documentaries. All the course readings, as indicated, will be made available as an electronic reader through Canvas. All films will be viewed on scheduled evenings (see attached description of film/video series). The films will also be available in the Reserve Reading Room for viewing.

In addition to the exams, students will also be required to read and submit a written report on one memoir, family history or refugee narrative to be selected from the list of choices (see below). These books can be purchased online and copies will also be made available at the Reserve Reading Room, College Library, H.C. White Building.

Grades in this course will be based on the following criteria (see attached sheets for explanations of examinations and the writing project):

- 1) 60%: three examinations (10%, 25%, 25%):
 - * all three are take-home exams (see attached exam schedule & coverage)
 - * 1st exam: Feb 6th; 2nd exam: Mar 31; 3rd exam (final) Apr 30
- 2) 20%: report on memoir/family history; due: April 28 OR BEFORE
- 3) 20%: attendance and participation in discussion section (criteria defined in section)

Learning Goals: by the end of the course, students should be able:

- * to demonstrate knowledge of the modern history and the refugee crisis (1975-95) of three Southeast Asian countries: Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos
- * to analyze the information presented within a comparative and interdisciplinary framework
- * to develop more effective oral and written skills

Note to Students: This course meets as a group for 4 hours per week and carries the expectation that you will spend an average of 2 hours outside of class for every hour in the classroom. As such, please plan to allot an average of 8 hours a week for reading, writing, and preparing for discussions, and/or for studying for exams.

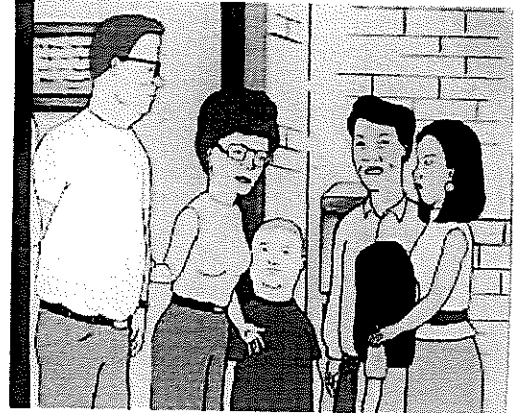
**SOUTHEAST ASIAN REFUGEES OF THE COLD WAR
COURSE SYLLABUS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS**

INTRODUCTION

January 21, 23, and 28

Clarifying Some Terms & Mapping the Road Ahead

Hank Hill bids farewell to the Souphanousaphon family:
"Ya'll come back now: that's Texan for *sayonara!*"
-- the view from *King of the Hill*



When & What Was the Cold War?

REQUIRED READING: *M.P. Leffler, "Assuming Hegemony, 1947-1950" in *The Specter of Communism* (New York, 1994): 64-96.
*O.A. Westad, "Introduction" and "Creating the Third World" in *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge, 2005): 1-3, 110-119; 152-157.

PART 1. PEOPLES OF THE INDOCHINA COUNTRIES

January 30

Vietnam and Its People: The Vietnamese

REQUIRED READING: *F.M. LeBar, et al., "Viet-Muong: Vietnamese" in *Ethnic Groups in Mainland Southeast Asia* (HRAF, 1964): 161-171.
*N. Kibria, *Family Tighrope: The Changing Lives of Vietnamese Americans* (Princeton, 1993): 38-64

February 4

Cambodia and Its People: The Khmer

REQUIRED READING: *M. Ebihara, "Mon-Khmer" and "Lowland Groups: Khmer" in *Ethnic Groups in Mainland Southeast Asia*, by F.M. LeBar, et al. (HRAF, 1964): 94-95, 98-105.
*J. Hein, "Peoples: Khmer" in *Ethnic Origins: The Adaptation of Cambodian and Hmong Refugees in Four American Cities* (New York, 2006): 45-59.

February 6

Laos and Its People: The Lao and the Hmong

- REQUIRED READING:** *"Social Systems" and "Lao" in *Laos: A Country Study*, ed. by D.P. Whitaker (Washington DC, 1971, 1985 ed): 39-50.
*"Laotian Tai" [Lao] and "Miao Yao" [Hmong] in *Ethnic Groups in Mainland Southeast Asia*, by F.M. LeBar, et al. (HRAF, 1964): Hmong: 63-64, 72-77; Lao: 215-220.
*J. Hein, "Peoples: Hmong" in *Ethnic Origins: The Adaptation of Cambodian and Hmong Refugees in Four American Cities* (NY, 2006): 60-75.
- REQUIRED VIEWING:** **Miao Year* (see list of films for content)

FIRST EXAM (10%): Handed out in lecture on Feb 6th (Thurs); due back on Canvas by Feb 11th (Tues); coverage: all lectures, readings & film for the Introduction and Part 1: *Introduction and Peoples of the Indochina Countries (1/21-2/6)*.

PART 2. COLONIAL ORIGINS OF CONFLICT IN INDOCHINA

FOCUS ON INDOCHINA: From French Colonialism to Cold War Decolonization
(1850s-1950s: French Conquest and Colonial Rule; Nationalism and Communism: Struggles for Liberation; Japanese Occupation; Toward Decolonization and the Start of Cold War Conflicts)

February 11 and 13

VIETNAM

- REQUIRED READING:** *N.G. Owen, ed. "Vietnam, 1885-1975: Colonialism, Communism, and Wars" in *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia* (Honolulu, 2005): 335-349.
*W. Duiker. "Roots of Revolution" in *Vietnam: Nation and Revolution* (Boulder, 1983): 28-48.
- REQUIRED VIEWING:** **The Roots of War* (see list of films for content)

February 18

CAMBODIA

- REQUIRED READING:** *N.G. Owen, ed. "Cambodia, 1884-1975" in *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia* (Honolulu, 2005): 361-370.

February 20 and 25

LAOS

- REQUIRED READING:** *N.G. Owen, ed. "Laos to 1975" *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia* (Honolulu, 2005): 371-375.
*G. Evans, *A Short History of Laos* (Crows Nest, NSW, 2002): 42-59, 70-92.
*Barney, G.L. "The Meo of Xieng Khouang Province, Laos" in *Southeast Asian Tribes, Minorities, and Nations*, ed. by P. Kunstadter (Princeton, 1967): 271-294.

PART 3. THE "COLD" WARS IN INDOCHINA

FOCUS ON THE WARS IN VIETNAM, CAMBODIA, AND LAOS

(1950s-1975: Communist-Led Revolutions for Independence; US, USSR, and PRC Involvements; Internal Political Upheavals; and Final Resolutions)

February 27, March 3

Vietnam War -- American War

- REQUIRED READING:** *W. Duiker. "A Nation Divided" in *Vietnam: Nation and Revolution* (Boulder, CO, 1983): 49-70.
*W.S. Turley, "Of Lessons and Their Price" in *The Second Indochina War* (Lanham, MD, 2009): 237-263.
- REQUIRED VIEWING:** **America's Mandarin* (see list of films for content)

March 5

Drawn Reluctantly Into War: The Cambodian "Sideshow"

- REQUIRED READINGS:** *D. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia* (Boulder, CO, 1996 edition): 191-208.
*N. Sihanouk, "Organizing Treachery" in *My War with the CIA* (New York, 1973): 36-48.
*W. Shawcross, "The Coup" in *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia* (New York, 1979): 112-127.
- REQUIRED VIEWING:** **Cambodia and Laos* (see film list for content)

March 10 and 12

The Not So "Secret" War in Laos

REQUIRED READING: *G. Evans, *A Short History of Laos* (Crows Nest, 2002): 98-112; 120-133; 146-150; 165-175.
*M.N. Lee, "Epilogue" in *Dreams of the Hmong Kingdom*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015: 302-312.
*K. Quincy, "A Hmong War" and "Resistance" in *Hmong: History of a People* (Chenny, 1995 edition): 189-215.

***** SPRING BREAK: March 14 through March 23 *****

March 24, 26, and 31

Post-War Wars: Continuing Conflict in Indochina, 1975-1990

REQUIRED READING: *D. Elliott, *The Third Indochina Conflict* (Boulder, 1981): 1-19.
*D. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia* (Boulder, CO, 1996 edition): 209-235.
*G. Evans, *A Short History of Laos* (Crows Nest, 2002): 176-191.

REVIEW SESSION: March 30, Monday, 6-8pm: 206 Ingraham Hall

SECOND EXAM (25%): Handed out in lecture on March 31 (Tues); due back on Canvas by 5:00pm on April 3rd (Friday); coverage: all lectures, readings, and films for Part 2: *Colonial Origins of Conflict in Indochina* (2/11-2/25); and Part 3: *The "Cold" Wars in Indochina* (2/27-3/31)

PART 4. DISORDERLY DEPARTURES: REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

April 2 and 7

Managing Refugees: Global Responses to Regional Crisis

REQUIRED READING: *C.J. Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate* (Princeton, 2008), 133-140; 145-166.
*W.C. Robinson, *Terms of Refuge* (London, 1998), 10-38.
*J. Hein, *From Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia* (New York, 1995): 11-25.

April 9 and 14

Disorderly Departures from VIETNAM: From Escape to Camps

- REQUIRED READING:** *J.M. Freeman, *Changing Identities: Vietnamese Americans, 1975-1995* (Boston, 1995): 29-42.
*U.S. Committee for Refugees. *Vietnamese Boat People: Pirates' Vulnerable Prey* (1984): 18-page pamphlet.
*J.M. Freeman, "Flight to Freedom" in *Hearts of Sorrow: Vietnamese-American Lives* (Stanford, 1989): 291-302, 313-319, 343-349.
- REQUIRED VIEWING:** **Oh, Saigon* (see film list for content)

April 16 and 21

Disorderly Departures from CAMBODIA: From Escape to Camps

- REQUIRED READING:** *N.J. Smith-Hefner, *Khmer Americans* (Berkeley, 1999): 1-12.
*S. Chan, *Survivors: Cambodian Refugees in the United States* (Urbana, IL, 2004): 39-80.
*U. Welaratna, *Beyond the Killing Fields* (Stanford, 1993): 165-195.
- REQUIRED VIEWING:** **Refugee* (see film list for contents)
**Cambodian Doughnut Dreams* (see film list for contents)

April 23 and 28

Disorderly Departures from LAOS: From Escape to Camps

- REQUIRED READING:** *U.S. Committee for Refugees. *Refugees from Laos: In Harm's Way* (July 1986): 24-page pamphlet.
*P. Van Esterik, *Taking Refuge: Lao Buddhists in North America* (Tempe, AZ, 1992): 11-32.
*A. Fadiman, "Flight" in *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* (New York, 1997), 154-170.
*L. Long, *Ban Vinai: The Refugee Camp* (NY, 1993): 31-72.
*S. Chan, *Hmong Means Free: Life in Laos and America* (Philadelphia, 1994): 42-60.
*T. Pfaff, *Hmong in America: Journey from a Secret War* (Eau Claire, 1995): 49-63.
- REQUIRED VIEWING:** **Becoming American* (see film list for contents)
**Betrayal* (see film list for contents)

**** MEMOIR REPORT DUE: April 28 (Tues) on Canvas ****

April 30

Assessing Early Resettlement in the United States

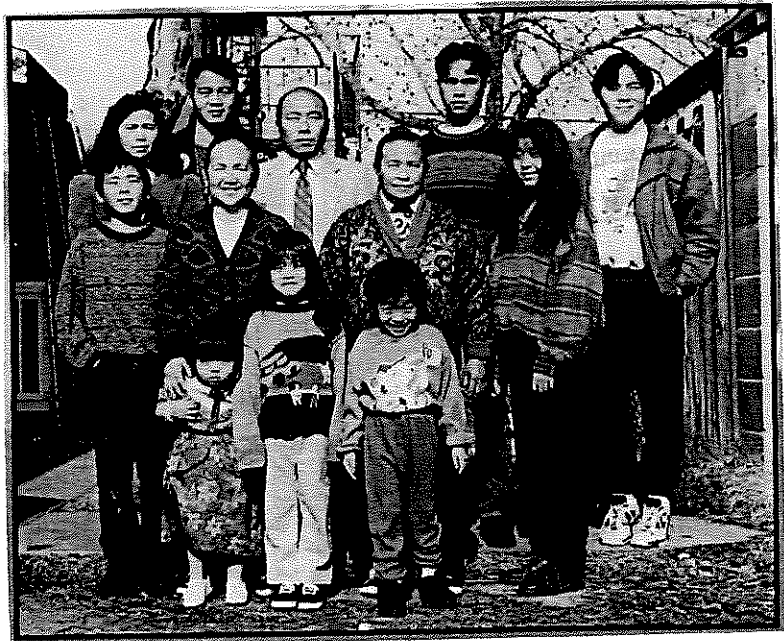
REQUIRED READINGS: *W.C. Robinson, *Terms of Refuge* (London, 1988): 127-138.
*J. Hein, *From Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia* (NY, 1995): 50-68.
*S. Chan, *Survivors: Cambodian Refugees in the United States* (Urbana, IL, 2004): 81-102; 107-122.
*S.R. Cowan, "Lao Refugees in Lowell: Reinterpreting the Past, Finding Meaning in the Present" in *Southeast Asian Refugees and Immigrants in the Mill City: Changing Families, Communities, Institutions - Thirty Years Afterward* (Lebanon, 2007): 131-152.
*A. Fadiman, "The Melting Pot" and "Why Did They Pick Merced?" in *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* (New York, 1997), 181-209; 225-249.

Changing the Terms: Slowing the Flow in the 1990s

RECOMMENDED READINGS: *W.C. Robinson, *Terms of Refuge* (London, 1998): 187-230.

REVIEW SESSION April 29 (Weds, with Pizza)
6:00pm in Room 206 Ingraham Hall

THIRD (FINAL) EXAM (25%): Take home exam (final) distributed in lecture on April 30th (Thurs) and due back on Canvas by 5:00pm on May 5 (Thurs, or before); the question(s) will pertain to all the lectures, discussion sections, readings, and films from the Introduction and Parts 1, 2, 3, & 4), with emphasis on Part 4: *Disorderly Departures: Refugees and Migrants* (4/2-4/30).



SOUTHEAST ASIAN REFUGEES OF THE COLD WAR

EXAMINATIONS FOR THE COURSE

Three unit exams will be given in this course, all essay exams. All three will be take-home exams. The exams will be given at the end of Part 1 (February 6th), counting 10%); at the end of Parts 2 & 3 (March 31), counting 25%; and at the end of Part 4 (Apr 30), counting 25%). Each exam should be treated as a short research paper based on the lectures, information from discussion sections, readings, and the required films. References to these should be cited as necessary in your exam papers. Additional information will be provided in discussion sections regarding the format for these examinations. In summery, the exams are as follows.

FIRST EXAM (10%): Handed out in lecture on Feb 6th (Thurs); due back on Canvas by Feb 11th (Tues); coverage: all lectures, readings & film for the Introduction and Part 1: *Introduction and Peoples of the Indochina Countries* (1/21-2/6).

SECOND EXAM (25%): Handed out in lecture on March 31 (Tues); due back on Canvas by 5:00pm on April 3rd (Friday); coverage: all lectures, readings, and films for Part 2: *Colonial Origins of Conflict in Indochina* (2/11-2/25); and Part 3: *The "Cold" Wars in Indochina* (2/27-3/31)

THIRD (FINAL) EXAM (25%): Take home exam (final) distributed in lecture on April 30th (Thurs) and due back on Canvas by 5:00pm on May 5 (Thurs, or before); the question(s) will pertain to all the lectures, discussion sections, readings, and films from the Introduction and Parts 1, 2, 3, & 4), with emphasis on Part 4: *Disorderly Departures: Refugees and Migrants* (4/2-4/30).



SOUTHEAST ASIAN REFUGEES OF THE COLD WAR REPORT ON MEMOIR READING

This report is 20% of your grade. From the list of books below, each student will select **ONE** memoir or family history. You are encouraged to read this book early in the course to prepare yourself to better understand the impact of the events discussed in the course on the lives of these people. Do not try to write this paper until you are more familiar with the subject matter. When you are, you can read it again, this time preparing yourself to write. You will write a 5-page paper (see format below) on the memoir you have selected, emphasizing how the story relates to the subject matter of the course, particularly how the individuals responded to the various developments outlined in the four units treated in the course. Equally important, you should observe how the stories present different interpretations. When the memoir has omitted critical events and/or relationships that you would have expected to be covered, you should point this out in your essay. In this sense, you will be interrogating the memoir based on your understanding and knowledge of the events as covered in the lectures, discussions, assigned readings, & required films. The assignment is intended for you to compare the memoir (as a personal story) to the historical narrative that has been presented in the class, both in terms of where the memoir corresponds to that narrative and where it does not. If you wish you may speculate on why information was included or excluded. Your report, therefore, should take into account the ethnic background of the author as this is discussed, the situation before resettlement in the US (the individual's or family's life in their country of origin before the 1960s), their involvement in the conflicts and wars (1960s and 1980s), their flight from their country, their camp experiences, and the processes that led to their resettlement in the US. You may also comment on aspects of early resettlement in the U.S. **This report will be due in lecture on April 28 (OR BEFORE).**

LIST OF BOOKS FOR MEMOIR REPORT

All the books below can be purchased online; copies are also be made available at the Reserve Reading Room, College Library, H.C. White Building. Select and read **ONE** of these books for your report.

- * Huynh, Jade Ngoc Quang. *South Wind Changing* (Vietnamese). St. Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 1994.
- * Him, Chanrithy. *When Broken Glass Floats: Growing Up under the Khmer Rouge* (Cambodian). NY: W.W. Norton & Co, 2000.
- * Yang, Kao Kalia. *The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir* (Hmong). Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2008.
- * Thavisouk Phrasavath. *Stepped Out of the Womb*. (Lao). Lao Century Media, [2011].

More details on this assignment will be given in your discussion sections.

Project Specifications:

Format: Computer Printed; 12-Pt Font; 1" Margins

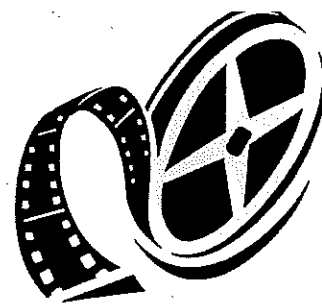
Length: 5 double-spaced pages

Deadline: **April 28 (in lecture) OR BEFORE**

BOB DAHM ILLUSTRATION



SOUTHEAST ASIAN REFUGEES OF THE COLD WAR: FILMS



Descriptions of Required Films for Course

The nine films below are part of the required course materials and should be viewed by all the students in the course. Each of these films is listed as "required viewing" in the course syllabus at the place where they are most relevant to the content being discussed at that time. These films are on reserve at the Reserve Reading Room in the College Library; if not, their locations are indicated below. Many are also available online.

Miao Year (1971, 1991, 2006; 60 minutes)

Reconstructs life in a Miao (Hmong) village community in northern Thailand, with footage of the Hmong villages during the late French colonial era; deals in part with poppy cultivation and other aspects of Hmong life at this time. Produced by W.R. Geddes, an anthropologist who worked among the Hmong of northern Thailand. Housed: CIMC (Education Library): PreK-12 Stacks) Available: College Library Reserves: DS570/M5/M53/2006.

The Roots of War (1945-1953) (1983; 2004 edition; 60 minutes)

The first of 11 episodes in the award-winning PBS documentary series, *Vietnam: A Television History*; this segment deals with the French colonial period, the nationalist movements in Vietnam beginning in the 1920s, the Japanese occupation during the Pacific War, 1941-45, and the First Indochina War, 1946-1954 between France and the Viet Minh, the communist-nationalist forces led by Ho Chi Minh, ending with the Geneva Accords. Available: Learning Support Services: ID2.006 (Episode 1); available online.

America's Mandarin (1954-1963) (1983, 2004 edition; 60 minutes)

The 2nd episode of *Vietnam: A Television History*; focused on the division of Vietnam (between North & South) and the build up to the Second Indochina War directly involving the Americans. The documentary concentrates on the regime of President Ngo Dinh Diem of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) and analyzes the increasing conflicts in the South, the rise of the National Liberation Front (Viet Cong), and the decision of the US to fully engage in what became the "Vietnam War." Available: Learning Support Services: ID2.006 (Episode 3); available online.

Cambodia and Laos (1983, 2004 edition; 60 minutes)

The 8th episode of *Vietnam: A Television History*; this documentary (originally titled: *No Neutral Ground*) concentrates on the two other "theaters" of warfare in Indochina: Cambodia and Laos. The film traces US involvement in Laos from the early 1960s and in Cambodia in the late 1960s, and outlines the events that engulfed these two countries in devastating warfare. Available: Learning Support Services: ID2.006 (Episode 9); available online.

Oh, Saigon (2007; 60 minutes)

The complex story of the family of Doan Hoang, airlifted out of Saigon in April 1975, leaving behind her half sister who later escaped as a "boat person." The film deals with their lives in Louisville, Kentucky and centers on Doan's desire to bring her family back to Vietnam. On two return trips, the deep wounds in the family are revealed and each member of the family, including those left behind, begin to come to terms with their disruptive past. The film is written, directed (with John Battsek), and produced by Doan Hoang, and was funded by, among others, the Sundance Institute. Available: College Library Reserves: DS559.5/O328/2007

Refugee (2003; 60 minutes)

Mike Siv, a young Cambodian American from San Francisco, and two of his friends return to Cambodia to locate and get to know members of their families left behind in the 1970s. Video taping their journey, the three Americans encounter the disruptive pasts that transformed the lives of their parents and grandparents. Directed by Spencer Nakasako (NAATA production). Available: College Library Reserves: E184/A75/N35/2005

Cambodian Doughnut Dreams (1990; 20 minutes)

Focuses on three Cambodian Americans who, 10 years after escaping from the Khmer Rouge genocide, own and operate doughnut shops in Long Beach, California, where some 80% of the local donut businesses are operated by Cambodians. The film describes their lives and recounts the stories of their suffering and escape to Thailand and migration to the US. A film by Charles Davis. Available: College Library Reserves: E184/K45/C36/2005

Becoming American (2005, c.1982; 60 minutes)

Traces the story of one Hmong family from a refugee camp in Thailand to the initial difficulties and culture shock of resettlement in the Seattle area. Directed by Ken Levine and Iris Film & Video, & WNET/13 Seattle; produced by New Day Films. Available: College Library Reserves: E184/H55/B43/2005

The Betrayal (Nerakhoon) (2008; 60 minutes)

A 23-year chronicle of the journey of a Lao family from Laos to the U.S.; the story is narrated by Thavisouk Phrasavath, co-director of the film; it focuses on his personal experiences and those of his immediate family, mostly in New York. Directed by Ellen Kuras. Official selection Sundance Film Festival. Available: College Library Reserves: E184/L25/B48/2008

