



## SOUTHEAST ASIAN REFUGEES OF THE COLD WAR

Hist 246, Asian 246, AsianAm 246

Semester: Spring 2021 (4 credits)

Completely remote (online): all Lecture asynchronous; all Discussion Sections synchronous

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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 lectures, readings, and films, as indicated, will be available on Canvas.

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 will all be made available on Canvas.

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 16-19; 2nd exam: April 1-5; 3rd exam (final) April 30-May 5
- 2) 20%: report on memoir/family history; due: April 27 (Tues) 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  
SPRING 2021 OUTLINE**

**INTRODUCTION**

**LECTURE 01: Clarifying Some Terms & Mapping the Road Ahead**

(to be completed by January 26: 1 hour, 15 minutes)

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*

**LECTURE 02: COMMUNISM & THE COLD WAR: AN OVERVIEW**

(to be completed by February 4: 2 hours, 30 minutes)

**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**

**LECTURE 03: Vietnamese, Cambodians, Lao, and Hmong**

(to be completed by February 16: 3 hours, 45 minutes)

**Vietnam & 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 Tightrope: The Changing Lives of Vietnamese Americans* (Princeton, 1993): 38-64

## **Cambodia & 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.

## **Laos & Its People: The Lao & 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%):** To be posted on Canvas on Feb 16 (Tuesday); due back on Canvas by Feb 19 (Friday); required materials: content of Lectures 01-03, readings, & one film.

## **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)

### **LECTURE 04: VIETNAM to 1954**

(to be completed by February 23: 2 hours, 30 minutes)

### **REQUIRED READING:**

\* N. 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)

### **LECTURE 05: CAMBODIA to 1954**

(to be completed by February 25: 1 hour, 15 minutes)

#### **REQUIRED READING**

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

### **LECTURE 06: LAOS to 1954**

(to be completed by March 4: 2 hours, 30 minutes)

#### **REQUIRED READING**

\* N. 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.

\* G. Barney, "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)

### **LECTURE 07: The Vietnam War – The American War: to 1975**

(to be completed by March 11: 2 hours, 30 minutes)

#### **REQUIRED READING:**

\* W. Duiker. "A Nation Divided" in *Vietnam: Nation and Revolution* (Boulder, CO, 1983): 49-70.

\* W. 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)

### **LECTURE 08: Cambodia – Drawn Reluctantly Into War: to 1975**

(to be completed by March 16: 1 hour, 15 minutes)

#### **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)

### **LECTURE 09: The Not So "Secret" War in Laos: to 1975**

(to be completed by March 23: 2 hours, 30 minutes)

#### **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.

### **LECTURE 10: Post-War Wars & Conflicts in Indochina, 1975-1990s**

(to be completed by April 6: 3 hours, 45 minutes)

#### **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.

**SECOND EXAM (25%):** To be posted on Canvas on April 1 (Thursday); due back on Canvas by April 5 (Monday); required materials: content of Lectures 04-10, readings, & films.

**\*\*\* SPRING BREAK: April 2-4 \*\*\***

## **PART 4. DISORDERLY DEPARTURES: REFUGEES & MIGRANTS**

### **LECTURE 11: Managing Refugees: Global Responses to Regional Crisis**

(to be completed by April 8: 1 hour, 15 minutes)

#### **REQUIRED READING**

\* W. Robinson, *Terms of Refuge* (London, 1998), 10-38.

## **LECTURE 12: VIETNAM: Flight to Camps**

(to be completed by April 13: 2 hours, 30 minutes)

### **REQUIRED READING**

\* J. 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. 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)

## **LECTURE 13: CAMBODIA: Flight to Camps**

(to be completed by April 15: 1 hour, 15 minutes)

### **REQUIRED READING:**

\* N. 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)

## **LECTURE 14: LAOS: Flight to Camps**

(to be completed by April 20: 2 hours, 30 minutes)

### **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)

## **LECTURE 15: Statistical Overview**

(to be viewed by April 20: for reference only)

**\*\* MEMOIR REPORT DUE: April 27 (Tues) on Canvas \*\***

## **LECTURE 16: "A Nation of Immigrants"**

(to be completed by April 22: 1 hour, 15 minutes)

**LECTURE 17a: Assessing Early Resettlement in the US**

(to be completed by April 28: 1 hour, 15 minutes)

**REQUIRED READING:**

- \* C. Bon Tempo, *Americans at the Gate* (Princeton, 2008), 133-140; 145-166.
- \* J. Hein, *From Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia* (New York, 1995): 11-25.

**LECTURE 17b: Assessing Early Resettlement in the US**

(to be completed by April 30: 1 hour, 15 minutes)

**REQUIRED READINGS**

- \* W. 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. 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.

**RECOMMENDED READINGS:**

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

**THIRD (FINAL) EXAM (25%):** To be posted on Canvas on April 29 (Thurs); due back on Canvas by April TBA; required materials: content of Lectures 11-17, readings, & films.