

University of Wisconsin–Madison
Department of History
HISTORY 319—THE VIETNAM WARS

Spring 2025

Instructor: Alfred McCoy
TA: Ethan Moreland

I. COURSE PROCEDURES:

Class Meetings: Lectures will be given on Tuesdays and Thursdays in 1121 Humanities, from 2:30 to 3:45 p.m. In addition, students will attend a one-hour discussion section each week conducted by the Teaching Assistant (TA) for this course.

N.B. In lecture, laptops are only for taking notes and may *not* access the Internet.

Office Hours:

—For Ethan Moreland, by appointment on Tuesdays 1:30-2:20 pm and Thursdays 4:00-5:00 pm in 4268 Humanities, and can be contacted by phone (office: 608-263-1687) or by email <ejmoreland@wisc.edu>.

—For Alfred McCoy, Humanities Room 5131, Thursdays 11:30 to 1:30 p.m. and other hours by appointment (TEL: 608-263-1855). Messages may be left in Humanities Mailbox No. 5026, or sent via e-mail to: <awmccoy@wisc.edu>

Credit Policy: This 4-credit course has 4 hours of group meetings per week (each 50-minute segment of lecture and discussion counts as one hour according to UW-Madison's credit hour policy). The course also carries the expectation that you will spend an average of at least 2 hours outside of class for every hour in the classroom. In other words, in addition to class time, plan to allot an average of at least 8 hours per week for reading, writing, preparing for discussions, and/or studying for quizzes and exams for this class.

Learning Objectives: By seeing the Vietnam conflict from the viewpoint of ordinary American soldiers, Vietnamese villagers, Hanoi's military leaders, and White House insiders, the course seeks to provide students with multiple perspectives on a conflict that caused five million deaths, including 58,000 American soldiers. Through the course students will gain both a deeper understanding of this great crisis in U.S. foreign policy, a grasp of the complexities of contemporary history, and a capacity for critical analysis of government decision-making. Apart from its content, the course trains students in critical thinking, policy analysis, writing skills, and oral presentation.

Course Standards: In keeping with University regulations, you are required to do your own work for the course and not reproduce, without attribution and quotation marks, the work of others—including published or unpublished sources and text generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Grading: Students shall complete four forms of written work. Before 10:00 p.m. on lecture days, students shall take a short online quiz available on Canvas under the "Quizzes" tab. On February 27, students shall be given a take-home Midterm Exam. On April 17, students shall submit a 12-page research essay with full footnotes and bibliographic references. During examination week on May 6, students shall take a two-hour final examination. Final grades shall be computed as follows:

This course is graded on an A, AB, B, BC, C, D, F scale:

A = 92-100

AB = 88-91

B	= 82-87
BC	= 77-81
C	= 72-76
D	= 67-71
F	= 66 or below.

Final Grade: Mark in the course shall be computed as follows:

—lecture quizzes:	20%
—midterm exam	10%
—research essay:	20%
—discussion section mark:	30%
—final examination:	20%
—extra-credit films:	+2%

Course Requirements: For each of these assignments, there are different requirements for both the amount and form of work to be done:

a.) *Lecture Quizzes:* **After every assigned lecture** on Tuesdays and Thursday, students shall take a short online quiz via Canvas, located under the “Quizzes” tab.

Note: Lecture Quizzes will only be available on the day given between 4:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.

b.) *Midterm Exam:* To help students prepare for the research paper and the final exam, a short, single-question Midterm Exam will be distributed at the close of class on **Thursday, February 27** and returned at the start of class the following **Tuesday, March 4**.

c.) *Research Essay:* Following format instructions under Section VI below, complete a 12-page research essay (with one-inch margins, 12-point font) on one of the topics listed in Section VI.

On **Thursday, April 3**, students should submit a two-page outline to their TA with (a.) a one-paragraph abstract of the argument, (b.) an outline of the major points, and (c.) a bibliography. Students should discuss the outline with the TA during this week.

When submitted, essays must have: (1.) a minimum of 6 references to journal articles (at least two not found on the syllabus), (2.) at least 10 articles from the *New York Times*, (3.) two extended quotations, if relevant, from the “Pentagon Papers,” and, if not, from other official documents, and (4.) two extended quotations with full citations from U.S. Congressional reports on the war. The completed essay should be submitted by the start of lecture on **Thursday, April 17**.

—NB: For the *New York Times*, see ProQuest Historical Newspapers, Memorial Library, <<http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.web/proquesthn>>

d.) *Discussion Section Mark:* Based on your attendance, ability to complete the readings, and participation, the teaching assistant will assign you a mark for your performance in the discussion section. Absences will result in a loss of marks. **Since this is 30% of your grade, consistent attendance and finishing the readings is imperative.**

e.) *Final Examination:* In the space of two hours on **Tuesday, May 6, 12:25-2:25 p.m.**, students will answer two questions selected from a longer list of essay questions.

f.) *Extra-Credit Film Sessions:* For extra credit, students can view two films listed below and write a short, 3-page essay of critical analysis exploring how film illuminates a central aspect of the Vietnam conflict.

Readings: As detailed below, all textbooks are sold at University Bookstore and all readings marked with an asterisk (*) are available on-line from “Canvas.” 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 “Recommended” readings. To follow the lectures and their unfamiliar material, students should read selections from the “required” materials before the relevant lecture. In preparing essays on subjects related to the lecture topics, consult the “Recommended” readings for references.

Required Texts [Sold at University Book Store, State St. Mall]:

Marvin E. Gettleman, *Vietnam and America: A Documented History* (1995).
 Christopher Goscha, *Vietnam: A New History* (2023).
 Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin* (2003 Edition).
 Marilyn B. Young, *The Vietnam Wars: 1945–1990* (1991).

Optional Texts [Sold at University Bookstore]:

Neil Sheehan, *Bright Shining Lie* (1989).
 George Moss, *Vietnam: An American Ordeal* (2021, 7th Edition).

Reference Works [College Library, H.C. White Building]:

Stanley Kutler, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War* (1996).

Canvas [Available Online]: Through “Canvas,” students can access supplemental materials for the course, including: The Course Syllabus, Glossary of Lecture Terms, Lecture outlines, and links to relevant outside resources such as maps and historic photographs.

Required Readings [Available at Canvas]: All the readings marked with an asterisk (*) are available on-line from *Canvas*. If not so marked, then the reading is not available at Canvas.

Many of the required and the recommended readings are found in books held on reserve in the Reserve Room in the *College Library* in the Helen C. White Building.

The *Memorial Library* has, with few exceptions, all the books and journal articles (in hard copy and on-line at Jstor) cited in the syllabus.

II. REQUIRED WEEKLY READINGS [Readings on Canvas are marked *]:

First Lecture: Tuesday, January 21, 2:30 to 3:45 p.m.

Week One (January 21): Pre-Colonial Vietnamese State as Context for War

Required: (85 pages)

*David Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism* (1971), pp. 7–21.

*Li Tana, *Nguyen Cochinchina: Southern Vietnam in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (1998), pp. 99–116, 139–154, 155–158.

*Pierre Brocheux, *The Mekong Delta: Ecology, Economy, and Revolution, 1860–1960* (1995), pp. 1–17.

Ngo Vinh Long, “Vietnam’s Revolutionary Tradition,” in Gettleman, *Vietnam and America* (1995), pp. 4–18.

Recommended:

*Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (2016), pp. 4–19.

Week Two (January 28): The French Conquest

Required: (84 pages)

*Pierre Brocheux, *The Mekong Delta: Ecology, Economy, and Revolution, 1860–1960* (1995), pp. 18–50.

- *David Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism* (1971), pp. 22–43.
- *David Steinberg, et al., *In Search of Southeast Asia* (1987), pp. 186–192.
- *Shawn F. McHale, *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism and Buddhism in the Making of the Modern Vietnam* (2004), pp. 39–60.

Week Three (February 4): Vietnamese Nationalism

Required: (102 pages)

- *Christopher Goscha, *Vietnam: A New History* (2023), pp. 123–49.
- *David Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial* (1981), pp. 15–53.
- *Shawn F. McHale, *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism and Buddhism in the Making of the Modern Vietnam* (2004), pp. 3–38.

Recommended:

- *Hue-Tam Ho Tai, *Radicalism and the Origins of the Vietnamese Revolution* (1992), pp. 10–56.

Week Four (February 11): The Rise of the Communist Party

Required: (81 pages)

- Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars* (1991), pp. 1–19.
- *David Marr, “World War II and the Vietnamese Revolution,” in A.W. McCoy, ed., *Southeast Asia under Japanese Occupation* (1980), pp. 104–131.
- *Mark P. Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam & America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919–1950* (2000), pp. 73–106.

Recommended:

- William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh* (2000), pp. 46–104.
- *Bernard Fall, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920–66* (1967), pp. 21–50, 129–143.
- *Shawn F. McHale, *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism and Buddhism in the Making of the Modern Vietnam* (2004), pp. 102–142.
- Peter Zinoman, *Colonial Bastille: A History of Imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862–1940* (2001), pp. 200–239.

Week Five (February 18): The First Indochina War 1946–1954

Required: (71 pages)

- Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars* (1991), pp. 20–36.
- *Michael Schaller, “Securing the Great Crescent: Occupied Japan and the Origins of Containment in Southeast Asia,” *Journal of American History* 69:2 (September 1982), pp. 392–414.
- *Mark P. Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam & America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919–1950* (2000), pp. 146–176.

Recommended:

- *Mark Atwood Lawrence, *Assuming the Burden: Europe and the American Commitment to the War in Vietnam* (2005), pp. 190–232, 276–287.
- Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap, “Vietnamese Victory: Dien Bien Phu, 1954,” in Gettleman, *Vietnam and America* (1995), pp. 53–62.
- Documents on Geneva, in Gettleman, *Vietnam and America* (1995), pp. 65–80.

Week Six (February 25): Origins of the Saigon Regime

Required: (100 pages)

- Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars* (1991), pp. 37–88.
- *Seth Jacobs, “Ngo Dinh Diem, The Impossible Ally,” in A. Rotter, ed., *Light at the End of the Tunnel* (2010), pp. 146–158.
- Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin* (2003), pp. 127–161.

Recommended:

- *Christopher Goscha, *Vietnam: A New History* (2023), pp. 273–303.
- *Frances Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake* (1972), pp. 90–151.

Articles by E.G. Lansdale, W.R. Fishel & R. Scheer, in Gettleman, *Vietnam and America* (1995), pp. 81–164.

*Pierre Brocheux, *The Mekong Delta*, pp. 173–207.

{Midterm Exam distributed at the close of class on Thursday, February 27}

Week Seven (March 4): Disintegration of the South Vietnamese State

Required: (96 pages)

*Philip E. Catton, “Ngo Dinh Diem, Modernizer,” in A. Rotter, ed., *Light at the End of the Tunnel* (2010), pp. 159–171.

Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin* (2003), pp. 193–248.

Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars* (1991), pp. 89–104.

David Marr, “The Rise and Fall of ‘Counterinsurgency’: 1961–1964,” in, Gettleman, *Vietnam and America* (1995), pp. 204–214.

Recommended:

*George Kahin, *Intervention* (1986), pp. 93–181.

{Midterm Exams due at the start of class, Tuesday, March 4}

Week Eight (March 11): War on North Vietnam

Required: (71 pages)

Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars* (1991), pp. 105–149.

Documents on the Gulf of Tonkin Incident (1964) and the State Department

White Paper of 1965, in Gettleman, *Vietnam and America* (1995), pp. 248–273.

Recommended:

*George Kahin, *Intervention* (1986), pp. 306–331.

Week Nine (March 18): Intervention by U.S. Forces

Required: (88 pages)

Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars* (1991), pp. 150–171.

*Edward Miller, “War Stories: The Taylor–Buzzanco Debate and the Future of the Vietnam War Studies,” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 1:1 (2006), pp. 453–84.

*Fredrik Logevall, “Lyndon Johnson Chooses War,” in A. Rotter, ed., *Light at the End of the Tunnel* (2010), pp. 79–86.

*Harry Maurer, *On Strange Ground: An Oral History of Americans in Vietnam, 1945–1975* (1989), pp. 148–157, 171–186.

Recommended:

*George Kahin, *Intervention* (1986), pp. 332–401.

{SPRING BREAK: March 22 to March 30}

Week 10 (April 1): U.S. Troops in the Villages of Vietnam

Required: (85+ pages)

Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars* (1991), pp. 172–191.

*James William Gibson, *The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam* (1986), pp. 93–154.

Seymour M. Hersh, “My Lai,” in Gettleman, *Vietnam and America* (1995), pp. 410–424.

*Tom Mangold and John Penycate, “The National Liberation Front and the Land,” in A. Rotter, ed., *Light at the End of the Tunnel* (2010), pp. 191–195.

*Michael D. Sallah and Mitch Weiss, “Buried Secrets, Brutal Truths—Tiger Force,” *Toledo Blade*, October 22–26, 2003.

[<http://www.pulitzer.org/works/2004-Investigative-Reporting>]

*Nick Turse and Deborah Nelson, “Civilian Killings Went Unpunished,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 6, 2006 [<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-vietnam6aug06,0,6350517.story?coll=la-home-headlines>]

*Nick Turse, "A My Lai a Month," *The Nation* (New York), 18 November 2008.
 [<<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/my-lai-month/>>]

{Thursday, April 3: Submission of Essay Outlines to TA}

Week 11 (April 8): The Tet Offensive & The War at Home

Required: (127 pages)

Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars* (1991), pp. 192–253.

*George C. Herring, "The Tet Offensive, 1968," in A. Rotter, ed., *Light at the End of the Tunnel* (2010), pp. 87-100.

*Lien-Hang Nguyen, "The War Politburo: Vietnam's Diplomatic and Political Road to the Tet Offensive," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 1, nos. 1-2 (February/August 2006), pp. 4-35.

*Paul Joseph, "Direct and Indirect Effects of the Movement Against the Vietnam War," in J. Werner and L.D. Huynh, eds., *The Vietnam War* (1993), pp. 165–184.

Recommended:

Anti-War Movement, in Gettleman, *Vietnam and America* (1995), pp. 295–338, 455–462.

Week 12 (April 15): The U.S. Bombing of Laos and Cambodia

Required: (83 pages)

***FILM**— Marc Eberle, *The Most Secret Place on Earth* (Gebrueder Beetz Filmproduktion, 2008), all 77 minutes.

*Alfred W. McCoy, "America's Secret War in Laos, 1955–1975," in Marilyn B. Young and Robert Buzzanco, eds., *A Companion to the Vietnam War* (2002), pp. 283–313.

Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin* (2003), pp. 305–331.

*Ben Kiernan, "The Impact on Cambodia of the U.S. Intervention in Vietnam," in J. Werner and L.D. Huynh, eds., *The Vietnam War* (1993), pp. 216–229.

*William Shawcross, "Bombing Cambodia: A Critique," in A. Rotter, ed., *Light at the End of the Tunnel* (2010), pp. 287-297.

Recommended:

*Fred Branfman, *Voices from the Plain of Jars: Life under an Air War* (1972), pp. 3–29, 62–77.

{Research Essay Due: Thursday, April 17}

Week 13 (April 22): U.S. Withdrawal and "Vietnamization"

Required: (102 pages)

*Noam Chomsky, "On the Aggression of South Vietnamese Peasants Against the United States," in *Towards a New Cold War* (1982), pp. 154–165.

*Andrew J. Gawthorpe, *To Build As Well As Destroy: American Nation Building in South Vietnam* (2018), pp. 1-18, 185-190.

*Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam* (1978), pp. 343–373.

Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin* (2003), pp. 254–261.

Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars* (1991), pp. 254–280.

Recommended:

**The Winter Soldier Investigation: An Inquiry into American War Crimes* (1972), pp. xiii–xv, 5–11, 101–07, 149–55, 173, 181.

Week 14 (April 29): Defeat and Legacy of the Vietnam War

Required: (110 pages)

*Ngo Vinh Long, "Vietnamese Perspectives," in Stanley Kutler, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War* (1996), pp. 591–611.

*Alfred W. McCoy, "Torture in the Crucible of Counterinsurgency," in Lloyd C. Gardner and Marilyn B. Young, eds., *Iraq and the Lessons of Vietnam: Or, How Not to Learn from the Past* (2007), pp. 230–62, 297–302.

Film: John Stockwell, “The CIA’s Final Days in Vietnam” (1985), *YouTube*,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ca-D9weiY7A>.

Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars* (1991), pp. 281-330.

Recommended:

*Melvin R. Laird, “Iraq: Learning the Lessons of Vietnam,” *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 6 (November/December 2005), pp. 22–43.

*Arnold R. Isaacs, “American Perspectives: ‘We’ve All Been There’—The War and American Memory,” in Stanley Kutler, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War* (1996), pp. 10–24.

*Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (2016), pp. 279-304.

*Christopher Goscha, *Vietnam: A New History* (2023), pp. 440-61.

{Final Exam, Tuesday, May 6, 12:25-2:25 p.m.}

III. FILM VIEWING—Suggested Titles:

—*Discussion Section Film Selections:* At the discretion of the TA, selections from the following documentary films, running no more than 15 minutes, will be shown in sections or made available on Canvas for viewing outside class to stimulate discussion.

- 1.) “The Weather Underground” (2002) (Bullfrog Productions)
- 2.) “Memories of a Massacre” (2001) (“60 Minutes,” CBS Television).
- 3.) “Winter Soldier” (1972)
- 4.) “The War at Home” (1979)
- 5.) “The Betrayal (Nerakhoon)” (2008)
- 6.) “The Most Secret Place on Earth” (2008)
- 7.) “Two Days in October” (PBS, 2005)

—*Films in Lecture:* Short segments, usually less than five minutes each, will be shown, at the instructor’s discretion, in Lecture:

- 1.) “The Weather Underground” (2002) (Mark Rudd interview).
- 2.) “Vietnam: A Television History (1983–1988) (Robert McNamara, Tonkin Gulf)
- 3.) “Winter Soldier” (1972) (pacification footage)
- 4.) “Memories of a Massacre” (2001) (Bob Kerrey, Gerhard Klan interviews)
- 5.) “Vietnam: A Television History” (1983–1988) (Richard Nixon, Cambodia)
- 6.) “Going Upriver” (2004) (John Kerry speech to Congress, VVAW)
- 7.) “Hearts and Minds” (1974)

—*Miscellaneous Films:* For extra credit and insight, the films listed below are all highly recommended and are available on YouTube, on DVD from on-line retailers, or Learning Support Services:

- 1.) “Hearts and Minds” (1974) (Oscar Winner, 1974, Best Documentary)
- 2.) “Vietnam Requiem” (1984)
- 3.) “In the Year of the Pig” (1968)
- 4.) “The Quiet American” (1958) (black and white; with Audie Murphy)
- 5.) “The Quiet American” (2002) (color; with Michael Caine)
- 6.) “Born on the Fourth of July” (1989)
- 7.) “Full Metal Jacket” (1987)
- 8.) “Platoon” (1986) (Oscar Winner, 1986, Best Picture)
- 9.) “Heaven and Earth” (1993)
- 10.) “The Lost Battalion” (2001) (French feature film)
- 11.) “Casualties of War” (1989)
- 12.) “Apocalypse Now” (1979)
- 13.) “Indochine” (1992)
- 14.) “We Were Soldiers” (2002)
- 15.) “Winter Soldier” (1972)
- 16.) “Going Upriver” (2004)

- 17.) “Two Days in October” (2005 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XxdkHetlJv8>)
- 18.) “The Vietnam War,” (2017), by Ken Burns available on YouTube and other outlets.
- 19.) “Da Five Bloods” (2020)

—*Learning Support Services in Van Hise Hall, College Library, and Memorial Library Microforms/Media Center (Room 443)*: These on-campus media centers have a collection of Vietnam feature films and documentaries that can provide visual imagery that will help this chronicle of colonialism, revolution, diplomacy, and battles come alive. Among the films available are:

- 1.) “The War at Home” (1979) (VHS) - HS1.004/ DVD at College and Memorial - DS557.73 W37 2003
- 2.) “Apocalypse Now” (1979) (VHS/DVD) - ID2.020 / DVD at Memorial - PN1997 A663 2010
- 3.) “Hearts of Darkness” (1991) (VHS) - ID2.021
- 4.) “Vietnam: A Television History” (1987) (VHS) - ID2.006
- 5.) “Indochine (1992) (VHS/DVD) - FR2059.149
- 6.) “The Trials of Henry Kissinger” (2002) (VHS) - HS2.016
VHS at Memorial - E840.8 K58 T75 2002, DVD at College - E840.8 K58 T75 2003
- 7.) “The Fog of War” (2003) (DVD) - HS1.018 / at College - E840.4 F68 2004
- 8.) “The Weather Underground” (2002) (DVD) - HS1.020 / at College - HN90 R3 W43 2004
- 9.) “In the Year of the Pig” (1968) (VHS) - HS1.019
- 10.) “Memories of a Massacre” (2001) (VHS)- HS1.017
- 11.) “Bombies” (2001) (VHS) - ID2.141

IV. VACATION READING – Suggested Fiction and Non-Fiction Titles:

- 1.) Bao Ninh (1996), *Sorrows of War*.
- 2.) Tim O’Brien (1994), *In the Lake of the Woods*.
- 3.) Tim O’Brien (1990), *The Things they Carried*.
- 4.) Graham Greene (1955), *The Quiet American*.
- 5.) Jean Larteguy (1965), *Yellow Fever*.
- 6.) Jean Larteguy (1969), *The Bronze Drum*.
- 7.) Danielle Trussoni (2006), *Falling Through the Earth*.
- 8.) Lewis B. Puller, Jr. (2000), *Fortunate Son*.
- 9.) Michael Herr (1977), *Dispatches*.
- 10.) Viet Thanh Nguyen (2015), *The Sympathizer*.

V. MAJOR ESSAY QUESTIONS:

- 1.) *Nationalism*: By balancing biography with the history of modern Vietnamese nationalism, explain how Ho Chi Minh emerged as an effective leader of Vietnam’s anti-colonial struggle.
- 2.) *Eisenhower’s Domino Theory*: In a famous remark in 1954, President Eisenhower warned that should the Communists prove victorious in Vietnam, the rest of the countries of Southeast Asia would “topple like a row of dominoes” to a monolithic and expansionist Communism. Was this an accurate assumption? Please discuss some of the relevant aspects of Vietnamese communism and history that would either support or undermine such an understanding.
- 3.) *The U.S. Role in the Coup against Diem*: One Asian expert once said: “It is fair to say that the overthrow of Ngo Dinh Diem in November of 1963 would not have occurred without at least the tacit approval of the U.S.” Analyze the dynamics of Diem’s downfall and weigh the role of the United States in a wider context.
- 4.) *The U.S. Backing of the Saigon Military Regime*: When Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara visited Vietnam in 1964, he repeatedly described General Nguyen Khanh as Vietnam’s “best possible leader” and the Johnson administration thus provided him substantial aid. Trace the changing U.S. positions towards civilian versus autocratic governments in Saigon

from 1963 to 1973. What do these governments, and U.S. relations with them, reveal about the dilemma of American policy in Vietnam?

5.) *Tonkin Gulf Incident*: After voting on the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, Senator Wayne Morse from Oregon said: “I believe that history will record that we have made a great mistake in subverting and circumventing the Constitution of the United States. [B]y means of this resolution ... we are in effect giving the President war making powers in the absence of a declaration of war. I believe that to be a historic mistake.” Trace the development of the Tonkin Gulf incident and the Tonkin Gulf resolution, indicating whether you agree with Morse. Please explain and document your position fully.

6.) *War in the Villages*: Discuss the character of the Vietnamese village and explain why the U.S.-directed pacification policy, including the Phoenix Program, largely failed there between 1959 and 1969.

7.) *Tet Offensive*: Was the 1968 Tet offensive a simple U.S. intelligence failure or did it represent the inability of the White House, the Pentagon, and MACV to understand the deeper politics of the war? From this perspective, discuss the impact of this battle on the war in Vietnam and the war at home in the United States.

8.) *My Lai Massacre*: As his court martial began, one unnamed American told a reporter, “Rusty Calley is a scapegoat.” Using this remark as a point of departure, examine U.S. military counter-insurgency tactics in the years surrounding the My Lai incident and determine, in light of subsequent revelations about the “Tiger Force” and other atrocities, to what extent civilian killings were an exception, a manifestation, or a component of U.S. Army pacification.

9.) *Cambodia and Laos*: Analyze the impact of U.S. political and military policy upon either Cambodia or Laos between 1965 and 1975.

10.) *War Crimes*: Prominent intellectuals such as Noam Chomsky, Bertrand Russell, and Jean Paul Sartre have argued that the U.S. government committed war crimes while fighting in Indochina. Focusing on the case of ex-Senator Robert Kerrey and the events at Thanh Phong village, determine whether his actions, and the larger Phoenix Program, were war crimes as defined by the 1949 Geneva Convention. Should ex-Senator Kerrey have been indicted, like Lt. Calley, for war crimes?

11.) *The Grunt’s War*: Analyze the changing quality of combat in Vietnam between 1965 and 1972, focusing on its impact upon the discipline within the U.S. Army and upon the individual American soldier.

12.) *The Anti-war Movement*: The anti-war movement is largely remembered as a student movement. To what degree is this true? What were the various motivations that people had to be opposed to the war in Indochina? What were the various arguments they used against it? Consider the opposition that emerged from students, African Americans, soldiers, workers, and women.

13.) *Vietnamization*: When recalling President Nixon’s support for Vietnamization, Richard Smyser, a State Department official, said that, “For domestic and political reasons American troops had to be gotten out of there.” Explain those domestic and political reasons.

14.) *CIA Covert Operations*: One scholar has said, “The Vietnam War is Exhibit A for the abolition of the CIA.” Explore the role of the major CIA covert operations in the period 1963 to 1975—including Diem’s ouster, the Desoto missions, the CORDS/Phoenix Program, and the Secret War in Laos—to assess whether reliance on covert operations contributed to the making of this quagmire.

15.) *Christmas Bombings*: At the Paris meetings in January 1973, Henry Kissinger claimed that “What has brought us to this point is the President’s [Nixon’s] firmness and the North Vietnamese belief that he will not be affected by either congressional or public pressures. Le Duc Tho [Hanoi’s negotiator] has repeatedly made these points to me.” Do you agree with Kissinger that the bombings of 1972 were necessary to force the North Vietnamese to sign the peace agreement? Please explain and document your position fully.

16.) *Congressional Cut-off of Aid to Vietnam*: An anonymous South Vietnamese said: “Not only did the US not provide us with the assistance they had promised, but they did not even allow us to save face and dignity, the only assets of a poor country. It seemed better to be America's enemy than ally, for the enemy at least had America’s respect.” Do you agree with those who argue that the staged termination of aid to South Vietnam caused its collapse? Please explain and document your answer fully.

17.) *The Fall of Saigon and its Impact on America*: After the Persian Gulf War, President George H.W. Bush said, “We have finally kicked the Vietnam Syndrome.” What exactly is the “Vietnam Syndrome”? And how did it affect U.S. foreign policy? Please explain and document your answer fully.

18.) *Robert McNamara’s Apology*: In his book *In Retrospect*, former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert McNamara said: “We of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations who participated in the decisions on Vietnam acted according to ... the principles and traditions of this nation. ... Yet we were wrong, terribly wrong.” Why does McNamara think the Johnson administration was ‘wrong’? Consider the policies of the Johnson administration and discuss key points that would confirm or controvert McNamara’s retrospective assessment.

VI. HOW TO WRITE A RESEARCH ESSAY—A THREE-STEP METHOD:-

1.) *STEP ONE—Reading & Research*:

a.) Sources/Research:

- 1.) All good essays begin with the three “Rs”—reading, research, and reflection.
- 2.) Like most essays, a History 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 usually reflects the depth of its author’s reading.

b.) 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 textbooks, select more specific sources.
- 3.) As you read, begin forming ideas in your mind about:
 - a.) an overall hypothesis, and;
 - b.) the evidence you need 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 all the bibliographic information for your source: author, title, place of publication, publisher, and relevant pages.
- 5.) Toward 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.

c.) Citing Your Sources:

- 1.) Assuming three paragraphs per page, you should have at least one source or 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.) Use endnotes or footnotes in the following format:

25. Alfred W. McCoy, ed., *Southeast Asia Since 1800* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 134–35.

- 4.) For a second, non-sequential citation of the same work a short citation:

27. McCoy, *Southeast Asia Since 1800*, 77–78.

- 5.) If you are citing the same source in sequence, use *Ibid* for second citation.

27. McCoy, *Southeast Asia Since 1800*, 77–78.

28. *Ibid.*, 79–80.

29. *Ibid.*, 80–81.

- 6.) For details, see, *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

2.) *STEP TWO—Framing the Argument:*

a.) **Outline:** With your reading done, you are ready to outline your argument. Begin by articulating the single, central question you will ask and answer in the course of this paper. Next, write a one- or two-page outline of your essay with the basic components discussed below.

b.) **Overall structure:** Every essay, whether humanities or social science, has three basic elements—the problem/hypothesis, the evidence/argument, and the conclusion. To summarize very broadly, the *introduction* asks a question and poses a hypothesis, the *argument* arrays evidence to explore that hypothesis, and *the conclusion* reflects upon the original hypothesis in light of the evidence presented.

Of these three elements, the formulation of a hypothesis is, by far, the most difficult. In your opening paragraph, try to stand back from the mass of material you have read and articulate a thesis, which in most History essays usually analyzes *causality* (why events occurred) or *consequence* (the particular import of an event or a pattern of events). Then identify the factors, topics, or elements that you will explore to test your thesis. Ideally, these factors should serve as an agenda for the topics that you will explore in the next section of your essay, the evidence/argument.

By the time you start writing, you should be able to summarize your argument in a first sentence for the essay akin to the following formulation: “By applying A to B, the essay will explore/explain C.” For example, an essay on the Tet Offensive might begin: “By exploring the media coverage of the Tet Offensive, it becomes apparent that a clear U.S. military victory became transformed, in the mind of the American public, into a major political defeat.” Please note: Not only has this sentence articulated an argument, but it also identified the key components or factors that will be used to structure the essay: i.e. media, military operations, and political defeat. Here are some further reflections on each of these sections:

- 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”).
- b.) In stating your problem, refer to the literature in the syllabus.
- c.) A standard and often effective device is to identify two differing schools of thought about a single problem and offer resolution.
- d.) Make sure you are examining the main point, not a secondary or side issue.

2.) The Evidence: In the middle part of your essay, you must present evidence—through an analytical intertwining of events and factors—to deal with the problem posed at the beginning of your essay. Be specific. Give the reader a brief narrative of an event grounded in some statistical or anecdotal 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. In this section, you can also reflect on your findings, considering issues that essay did not address sufficiently or reflecting on the limitations of your argument.

c.) Level of Argument: Some students produce papers that fill all the demands of the format but do not produce an argument that fully engages the problem.

- 1.) Drawing upon reading and lectures, try to frame an argument that seems to address the question in the most direct and significant manner possible, drawing the most convincing possible evidence to support the case you are making.
- 2.) By reading several sources with diverse viewpoints and reflecting on the authors’ approaches, you can define an appropriate question and level of analysis.

d.) 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. In general, 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 period of time, 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.) *STEP THREE—Writing the Essay*:

a.) Procedure:

- 1.) Write an outline, in bullet-point format, of about 2 pages for a 10- to 15-page essay. Each projected paragraph in the essay should be a line in your outline.
- 2.) Following your outline, write a first draft taking care to introduce transitional clauses or sentences that allow the reader to follow your argument paragraph by paragraph.
- 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 to include short periodic sentences, simple compound sentences, compound sentences with clauses in apposition, and longer sentences communicating detail.

c.) Paragraphs:

- 1.) Start each paragraph with a “topic sentence”—that is, 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 some of your sentences with words such as “similarly,” “moreover,” and “however” so that they flow from one sentence to another.
- 4.) Paragraphs should not be too long. If you need a rough guide, have 3 paragraphs to a page with 8 to 10 lines in each.

d.) Aspire to style:

- 1.) Ideally, there should be a rhythm to your writing. Sensitize your mind’s ear to the rhythms of your prose, making your writing an expression of your inner voice.
- 2.) As in all forms of discourse, there is an appropriate style for an academic essay somewhere between the chatty colloquial and the overly formal.