

FRESHMAN SEMINAR: THE AMERICAN WAR IN VIETNAM
History 1095

Spring 2006
Monday, Wednesday, Friday ... 9:00 – 9:50 a.m.
106 Cina Hall

Scott Laderman
211 A. B. Anderson Hall
laderman@d.umn.edu
www.d.umn.edu/~laderman
Office Hours: Wednesdays ... 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.

Course Description

From Rambo, John Wayne, and Oliver Stone to French colonialism, the Tet offensive, and the “decent interval,” this course will examine both the history of the Vietnam war (or what most Vietnamese refer to as the American war) and the popular culture it spawned. You will read memoirs and academic studies, and will analyze numerous primary documents. You will view several Hollywood films and U.S.- and Vietnamese-made documentaries, and study some of the wide-ranging music created in response to the conflict. Through all of these activities we will explore the history of the war and will address the continuing legacies of the conflict in U.S. foreign relations, American politics and culture, and Vietnamese life.

The course will expose you to the conflicting histories and explanations for the war, and it will introduce several important issues involving history and “memory” in the United States. The primary objectives of this course are threefold: to critically analyze the American war in Vietnam, to develop a basic understanding of its relationship to contemporary politics and culture, and to learn the skills necessary to perform scholarly research and writing.

Required Books

Duong Van Mai Elliott. *The Sacred Willow: Four Generations in the Life of a Vietnamese Family*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

W. D. Ehrhart. *Passing Time: Memoir of a Vietnam Veteran Against the War*, Second Edition. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995.

Jerry Lembcke. *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam*. New York: New York University Press, 2000.

Robert Buzzanco. *Vietnam and the Transformation of American Life*. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1999.

Marilyn B. Young, John J. Fitzgerald, and A. Tom Grunfeld. *The Vietnam War: A History in Documents*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

** *The books are available at the UMD bookstore.* **

Course Requirements

1. **Class Participation and Attendance.** I expect students to have completed all of the weekly readings listed on the syllabus before the first class meeting of the week; I may call on you to answer questions or discuss pertinent points. As this is a seminar, timely completion of the readings is integral to the success of the class. I also will be asking students to work in groups to prepare comments on portions of the readings. If you are confused or concerned about any of the material, you are encouraged to speak with me during my office hours. If you cannot meet during my regular office hours, you may e-mail me to schedule an appointment at another time. *Students who miss more than two classes for reasons that are avoidable or illegitimate will suffer a final-grade reduction of one third for each additional absence; that is, for three absences a grade of "B+" would drop to a grade of "B," for four absences it would drop to a grade of "B-," et cetera.* Legitimate circumstances may include a religious holiday, verifiable and serious illness, serious family emergency, subpoena, jury duty, military service, or participation in a group activity sponsored by the university. I must be notified ahead of time of any and all absences. Absences due to illness, whether it is you or a family member, will require a note from a physician. (10 percent of final grade)
2. **Quizzes.** There will be four quizzes. The first three quizzes will cover various topics addressed in the readings, films, and lectures / discussion. The last of the four quizzes will cover research methods learned in the class. The quizzes will be given on February 10, March 10, March 31, and April 14. Make-up quizzes will not be given. (40 percent of final grade)
3. **Research Paper.** The last third of the semester will be devoted to learning how to research and write an academic research paper. In this double-spaced six- to eight-page paper, you will be required to historicize and analyze an event (significant battle, prowar or antiwar demonstration, news conference, et cetera) or cultural item (film, song, work of visual art, et cetera) that relates to the war in Vietnam. It is required that you demonstrate adequate familiarity with the historical context of the event or item, locate it in relation to the extant scholarship, and offer an extensive analysis about its significance and importance. Special attention must be paid to the scholarly literature dealing with the event or item (or similar events or items); you will need to cite at least three scholarly secondary sources (academic books, journal articles, or conference papers, but NOT encyclopedias). The class readings will not count as secondary sources for purposes of this assignment. You will also need to draw on at least three primary sources (archival documents or documents in published collections, interviews or oral histories, contemporaneous media accounts or reviews, et cetera) in your essay. I have provided links to a number of online sources of primary documents on the course website. In order to ensure that the assignment is properly understood and that your event or item can be reasonably and adequately covered, you will be required to turn in a one-page description of your topic, which will be worth ten percent of your final grade; the one-page description is due in class on April 7. You will also be required to compile an annotated list of the sources on which you will draw, both primary and secondary, which will be worth ten percent of your final grade; the annotated list of sources is due in class on April 19. Finally, you will need to peer review a classmate's work (and, in turn, you will have your work reviewed by one of your classmates), which will be worth ten percent of your final grade; the peer review is due on April 28. The completed paper will be worth twenty percent of your final grade. The final papers are due in class on May 5. Late papers will not be accepted. (50 percent of final grade)

Special Arrangements

It is my goal to enable your full participation in the classroom and in my assignments. Any student with a documented disability condition (e.g., physical learning, psychiatric, vision,

hearing) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must notify me and contact Disability Services and Resources (218-726-8217) at the beginning of the semester.

Grading Policy

The following criteria will be used to determine students' grades:

- A ... Achievement outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
- B ... Achievement significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
- C ... Achievement meeting the basic course requirements in every respect.
- D ... Achievement worthy of credit even though it does not fully meet the basic course requirements in every respect.
- F ... Performance failing to meet the basic course requirements.

Students who engage in academic dishonesty will be given an "F" in this course and will be reported to the appropriate university authorities for further disciplinary action. According to the *New Student Guide 2005* [www.d.umn.edu/cla/cla1001/AcademicDishonesty/index.html] of the College of Liberal Arts, academic dishonesty includes plagiarism, fabrication, cheating, and academic misconduct. The college defines plagiarism as follows:

Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's product, words, ideas, or data as one's own work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the product, words, ideas, or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate, and specific references. By placing one's name on work submitted for credit, the student certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgements. On written assignments, if verbatim statements are included, the statements must be enclosed by quotation marks or set off from regular text as indented extracts.

A student will avoid being charged with plagiarism if there is an acknowledgement of indebtedness. Indebtedness must be acknowledged whenever:

1. one quotes another person's actual words or replicates all or part of another's product;
2. one uses another person's ideas, opinions, work, data, or theories, even if they are completely paraphrased in one's own words;
3. one borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative materials – unless the information is common knowledge.

Unauthorized collaboration with others on papers or projects can inadvertently lead to a charge of plagiarism. In addition, it is plagiarism to submit as your own any academic exercise (for example, written work, printing, computer program, art or design work, musical composition, and choreography) prepared totally or in part by another.

Plagiarism also includes submitting work in which portions were substantially produced by someone acting as a tutor or editor.

It is your responsibility to thoroughly familiarize yourself with the meaning of the other forms of academic dishonesty – which are defined at the CLA website cited above – and to avoid engaging in these practices at all costs.

Lecture and Reading Schedule

Note: The weekly readings must be completed by the first class session of the week under which they appear. For example, the readings listed for week 2 must be completed by January 23.

Week 1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW (January 18, 20)

Week 2. VIETNAMESE HISTORY PRIOR TO WORLD WAR II (January 23, 25, 27)

- Reading ... Buzzanco, *Vietnam and the Transformation of American Life*, 1-21; Elliott, *The Sacred Willow*, xi-xiii, 3-101; Young, et al., *The Vietnam War*, 6-23

Week 3. THE FIRST INDOCHINA WAR (January 30, February 1, 3)

- Reading ... Buzzanco, *Vietnam and the Transformation of American Life*, 22-60; Elliott, *The Sacred Willow*, 103-187; Young, et al., *The Vietnam War*, 25-39

Week 4. PULLING THE STRINGS? THE DIEM YEARS (February 6, 8, 10)

- Reading ... Buzzanco, *Vietnam and the Transformation of American Life*, 61-100; Elliott, *The Sacred Willow*, 189-272; Young, et al., *The Vietnam War*, 41-65

***** Quiz No. 1 on Friday *****

Week 5. ESCALATING THE AMERICAN WAR (February 13, 15, 17)

- Reading ... Buzzanco, *Vietnam and the Transformation of American Life*, 101-136; Elliott, *The Sacred Willow*, 273-336; Young, et al., *The Vietnam War*, 67-87; Ehrhart, *Passing Time*, ix-xiv, 1-59

Week 6. ESCALATING THE AMERICAN WAR II (February 20, 22, 24)

- Reading ... Buzzanco, *Vietnam and the Transformation of American Life*, 139-190; Elliott, *The Sacred Willow*, 337-371; Young, et al., *The Vietnam War*, 89-115; Ehrhart, *Passing Time*, 60-115

Week 7. THE WAR AT HOME (February 28, March 1, 3)

- Reading ... Buzzanco, *Vietnam and the Transformation of American Life*, 191-251; Young, et al., *The Vietnam War*, 117-127, Ehrhart, *Passing Time*, 116-184

Week 8. FROM "VIETNAMIZATION" TO THE "DECENT INTERVAL" (March 6, 8, 10)

- Reading ... Elliott, *The Sacred Willow*, 373-403; Young, et al., *The Vietnam War*, 129-145; Ehrhart, *Passing Time*, 185-277

***** Quiz No. 2 on Friday *****

Week 9. SPRING BREAK ... NO CLASS (March 13, 15, 17)**Week 10. THE WAR AFTER THE WAR (March 20, 22, 24)**

- Reading ... Elliott, *The Sacred Willow*, 405-474; Young, et al., *The Vietnam War*, 147-161; Lembcke, *The Spitting Image*, ix-xi, 1-70

Week 11. LEGACIES (March 27, 29, 31)

- Reading ... Lembcke, *The Spitting Image*, 71-188

***** Quiz No. 3 on Friday *****

Week 12. RESEARCH I (April 3, 5, 7)

***** Due in Class on Friday: One-Page Description *****

Week 13. RESEARCH II (April 10, 12, 14)

***** Quiz No. 4 on Friday *****

Week 14. RESEARCH III (April 17, 19, 21)

***** Due in Class on Wednesday: Annotated List of Sources *****

Week 15. RESEARCH IV (April 24, 26, 28)

***** Due in Class on Friday: Peer Review *****

Week 16. RESEARCH V (May 1, 3, 5)

***** Due in Class on Friday: Research Paper *****

NOTE: I retain the right to revise or alter the syllabus at any time. You will be notified in class if any changes should be made.