

THE VIETNAM WAR History 3396

Spring 2014
Tuesday, 1:00 – 1:50, and Thursday, 12:00 – 1:50
312 Kirby Plaza

Scott Laderman
316 Kirby Plaza
218-726-7207
laderman@d.umn.edu
www.d.umn.edu/~laderman
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 8:15 –
9:30, and by appointment

Course Description

The war in Vietnam remains one of the most controversial events in the history of U.S. foreign relations. From Vietnamese nationalism and Cold War anti-Communism to Rambo, Barry Sadler, and Oliver Stone's *Platoon*, this course will examine not only the history of the Vietnam War but also its political and cultural legacies. In order to appreciate how it was lived by various participants, you will read two memoirs: one by an American, the other by a Vietnamese. Two monographs and a close analysis of dozens of primary documents will enable an appreciation of how the conflict unfolded. And through several Hollywood films, television programs, and documentaries, as well as a selection of music from the 1960s and 1970s, you will be exposed to how popular culture responded to – and helped to influence – the war in Indochina. The course will introduce you to the conflict's contested history and explanations, and it will explore several important issues involving history and "memory" in the United States and Vietnam.

The primary objectives of this course are twofold: to critically analyze the Vietnam War and to develop a basic understanding of its relationship to contemporary politics and culture.

Required Books

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

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

Mark Atwood Lawrence. *Assuming the Burden: Europe and the American Commitment to War in Vietnam*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

Nick Turse. *Kill Anything that Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2013.

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

Course Requirements

1. Class Participation and Attendance. Attendance is mandatory. If you are unable to attend class (legitimate excuses for an absence include a religious holiday, a verifiable illness, a serious family emergency, a subpoena, jury duty, military service, or participation in a group activity sponsored by the University), I must be notified in a timely fashion. I expect students to have completed all of the weekly readings listed on the syllabus before the first class session of the week. I may call on you to answer questions or to discuss pertinent points. However, the class meetings will generally complement, not duplicate, the required readings. I may also ask students to work in groups to prepare comments or questions on the readings or on selected primary sources. 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 contact me to schedule an appointment at another time. (10 percent of final grade)
2. Quizzes. There will be three quizzes covering various topics addressed in the readings, films, and lectures/discussion. The quizzes will be given on February 20, March 13, and April 17. Make-up quizzes will not be allowed. (30 percent of final grade)
3. Final Exam. The final exam will be given on May 14 from 2:00 to 3:55 p.m. It will be a comprehensive exam covering material from throughout the semester. (20 percent of final grade)
4. Research Paper. In this double-spaced eight-page paper, you will be required to historicize and analyze an event (significant battle, pro-war or antiwar demonstration, news conference, et cetera) or cultural artifact (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 artifact, locate it in relation to the extant scholarship, and offer an extensive analysis of its significance and importance. Special attention must be paid to the scholarly literature dealing with the event or artifact (or similar events or artifacts); you will need to cite at least four scholarly secondary sources (academic books, journal articles, or conference papers, but NOT encyclopedias or book reviews). The class readings will not count as secondary sources for purposes of this assignment. Please be aware, too, that not all journal articles that appear in the UMD Library's electronic databases (Academic Search Premier, Academic OneFile, et cetera), and not all books on a given subject, are necessarily scholarly. I thus strongly recommend showing me your sources before you begin your reading – that is, at an early date – to confirm that they meet the course requirements. You will also need to draw on at least three primary sources (archival documents or documents in published collections, interviews or oral histories, et cetera) in your essay. I have provided links to a number of online sources of primary documents on the course website. All sources used – whether consulted, quoted, paraphrased, summarized, et cetera – must be acknowledged through an appropriate citation. You must draw on your sources to develop a coherent and tightly argued thesis that is original and is supported by the evidence you cite. The papers must include page numbers and use Chicago-style endnotes; if you are unclear about what this means or when and how to cite outside sources, see me. I have also placed a brief citation guide on the course website. The papers must be formatted using twelve-point Times or Times New Roman font and one-inch margins. They will be graded on the basis of both style and content; it is therefore imperative that the papers be well written and free of grammatical and spelling errors. If you are not a great writer, assistance is available at the Writers' Workshop on the second floor of the Kathryn A. Martin Library (d.umn.edu/writwork; writwork@d.umn.edu; 218-726-8500). In order to ensure that your topic is manageable and meets the requirements of the course, I strongly advise you to discuss the project with me well before the deadline. The paper will require considerable research; you should therefore get started early in the semester, especially as you may need to obtain some of your research materials through interlibrary loan. I am available to assist you with the paper, but you must make the effort to come see me. Please note, too, that I am willing to review rough drafts; however, my deadline for looking at drafts is

two weeks before the assignment is due. The final papers are due in class on May 6. Late papers will not be accepted. (40 percent of final grade)

Students with Disabilities

It is the policy and practice of the University of Minnesota, Duluth, to create inclusive learning environments for all students, including students with disabilities. If there are aspects of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or your ability to meet course requirements – such as time-limited exams, inaccessible web content, or the use of non-captioned videos – please notify me as soon as possible. You should also contact the Office of Disability Resources to discuss and arrange reasonable accommodations. Please call 218-726-8217 or visit the DR website at <www.d.umn.edu/access> for more information.

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.

Grades are based on a one hundred-point scale. The research paper, which comprises forty percent of your grade, is worth forty points, for example. I use the following scale in calculating grades:

- A ... 94 to 100
- A- ... 90 to 93.95
- B+ ... 87 to 89.95
- B ... 83 to 86.95
- B- ... 80 to 82.95
- C+ ... 77 to 79.95
- C ... 73 to 76.95
- C- ... 70 to 72.95
- D ... 67 to 69.95
- F ... 0 to 66.95

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 *Student Guide* of the College of Liberal Arts (www.d.umn.edu/~clasa/cla1001/SA/academicdishonesty.htm), 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 28.

Week 1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW (January 21, 23)

Week 2. VIETNAMESE HISTORY PRIOR TO WORLD WAR II (January 28, 30)

- Reading ... Elliott, *The Sacred Willow*, xi-xiii, 3-82; Lawrence, *Assuming the Burden*, ix-xii, 1-58; Young, et al., *The Vietnam War*, 6-23

Week 3. TOWARD REVOLUTION: THE APPEAL OF VIETNAMESE NATIONALISM (February 4, 6)

- Reading ... Elliott, *The Sacred Willow*, 83-135; Lawrence, *Assuming the Burden*, 59-144

Week 4. THE FIRST INDOCHINA WAR (February 11, 13)

- Reading ... Elliott, *The Sacred Willow*, 137-214; Lawrence, *Assuming the Burden*, 147-215; Young, et al., *The Vietnam War*, 25-39

Week 5. THE SETTLEMENT IN GENEVA (February 18, 20)

- Reading ... Elliott, *The Sacred Willow*, 215-272; Lawrence, *Assuming the Burden*, 215-287; Young, et al., *The Vietnam War*, 41-48

***** Quiz No. 1 on Thursday *****

Week 6. PULLING THE STRINGS? THE DIEM YEARS (February 25, 27)

- Reading ... Elliott, *The Sacred Willow*, 273-299; Turse, *Kill Anything That Moves*, 1-23; Young, et al., *The Vietnam War*, 48-65

Week 7. ESCALATING THE AMERICAN WAR, PART I (March 4, 6)

- Reading ... Ehrhart, *Passing Time*, ix-xiv, 1-37; Turse, *Kill Anything That Moves*, 25-75; Young, et al., *The Vietnam War*, 67-95

Week 8. ESCALATING THE AMERICAN WAR, PART II (March 11, 13)

- Reading ... Ehrhart, *Passing Time*, 38-88; Turse, *Kill Anything That Moves*, 76-107; Elliott, *The Sacred Willow*, 301-336

***** Quiz No. 2 on Thursday *****

Week 9. SPRING BREAK ... NO CLASS (March 18, 20)**Week 10. VIETNAMESE AND AMERICAN EXPERIENCES OF WAR (March 25, 27)**

- Reading ... Ehrhart, *Passing Time*, 89-131; Elliott, *The Sacred Willow*, 337-371; Turse, *Kill Anything That Moves*, 108-191; Young, et al., *The Vietnam War*, 97-115

Week 11. THE WAR AT HOME (April 1, 3)

- Reading ... Ehrhart, *Passing Time*, 132-188; Turse, *Kill Anything That Moves*, 192-221; Young, et al., *The Vietnam War*, 117-127

Week 12. 1968 (April 8, 10)

- Reading ... Ehrhart, *Passing Time*, 189-266; Turse, *Kill Anything That Moves*, 222-241

Week 13. FROM "VIETNAMIZATION" TO THE "DECENT INTERVAL" (April 15, 17)

- Reading ... Ehrhart, *Passing Time*, 267-277; Elliott, *The Sacred Willow*, 373-432; Turse, *Kill Anything That Moves*, 241-258; Young, et al., *The Vietnam War*, 129-145

***** Quiz No. 3 on Thursday *****

Week 14. SIDESHOW: CAMBODIA, THE UNITED STATES, AND THE KHMER ROUGE (April 22, 24)

- Reading ... Elliott, *The Sacred Willow*, 433-474

Week 15. THE WAR AFTER THE WAR (April 29, May 1)

- Reading ... Young, et al., *The Vietnam War*, 147-161

Week 16. LEGACIES (May 6, 8)

- Reading ... Turse, *Kill Anything That Moves*, 259-262

***** Due in Class on May 6: Research Paper *****

NOTE: I reserve the right to change the syllabus at any time; you will be notified in class if any such changes are made.