

HL90ak
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Fall 2014
Friday 10-12
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The Vietnam War in American Culture

As we mark the 50th anniversary of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, this course will examine the U.S. war in Vietnam from the 1950s through the fall of Saigon, and its legacies up to the present. Considering a range of texts by and about soldiers and veterans, policy makers and protesters, reporters and refugees, the course covers key events in the war, as well as representations and reinterpretations of these events in later years. In each week, I have paired materials produced during the war with those produced after the war in order to explore Americans' contested and changing understandings of the experiences and meanings of the Vietnam War. Texts include popular films, documentaries, journalism, fiction, letters, diaries, government documents, and war memorials.

Course Requirements

This is a seminar. Students are expected to come to class prepared for discussion about the materials assigned each week. In addition, students will write two papers and take a three-hour final exam.

Class Participation	20%
Paper One (5-7 pages)	20%
Paper Two (8-10 pages)	30%
Final Exam	30%

Academic Integrity

In this course, collaboration of any sort on any work submitted for formal evaluation is not permitted. This means that you may not discuss your paper assignments with other students. All work should be entirely your own and must use appropriate citation practices to acknowledge the use of books, articles, websites, lectures, discussions, etc., that you have consulted to complete your assignments.

To ensure the proper use of sources while at the same time recognizing and preserving the importance of the academic dialogue, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences adopted the following policy: It is expected that all written work submitted for academic credit will be your own. You should always take great care to distinguish your own ideas and knowledge from information derived from sources. The term "sources" includes not only primary and secondary material

published in print or online, but also information and opinions gained directly from other people. Quotations must be placed properly within quotation marks and must be cited fully. In addition, all paraphrased material must be acknowledged completely. You are responsible for learning the proper forms of citation. We expect you to be familiar with the *Harvard Guide to Using Sources*, which is available at <http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu>, and to adhere to either the MLA or Chicago citation form.

Course Texts

Texts marked with an asterisk (*) are available for purchase at the Harvard Coop. All films are digitized and available for viewing at the Language Resource Center at Lamont Library:

<https://lrc.fas.harvard.edu/course-materials/college/372524>

Other materials are available on the course iSite:

<http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k105846&pageid=icb.page687964>



Class Schedule and Assignments

September 5—Introduction

In class: U.S. Department of Defense, *Why Vietnam?* (1965),

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEljbPwFQ9M&feature=relmfu>

September 12—What Kind of War is This?: From World War to Guerrilla War

*Larry Addington, *America's War In Vietnam: A Short Narrative History* (2000)

Peter Davis, dir., *Hearts and Minds* (1974)

September 19—Exit the French: American Anti-Communism in 1950s Vietnam

*Graham Greene, *The Quiet American* (1955)

Joseph L. Mankiewicz, dir., *The Quiet American* (1958)

Frances Fitzgerald, "Marxism-Leninism in the Vietnam Landscape," in *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam* (1972), pp. 212-227

H. Bruce Franklin, "Our Man in Saigon," *The Nation*, February 3, 2003, pp. 43-44

September 26—Camaraderie and Alienation: Representing Combat

*Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (1977)

Francis Ford Coppola, dir., *Apocalypse Now* (1979)

October 3—“Humping the Boonies”: Grunts and the Vietnam War

Bernard Edelman, ed., *Dear America: Letters Home From Vietnam* (1985), chapter 2

*Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (1990)

Oliver Stone, dir., *Platoon* (1986)

October 6 (Monday)—Paper One Due at 4 p.m. (By email to biel@fas.harvard.edu)

October 10—“We Gotta Get Outta This Place”: Class, Race, and the Draft

Stewart Alsop, “Fairness and the Draft” (1970), in *Reporting Vietnam: American Journalism, 1959-1975* (1998), pp. 463-466

Thomas A. Johnson, “Black Servicemen and the War” (1968), in *Reporting Vietnam*, pp. 349-361

Wallace Terry, “Racial Tensions in the Military” (1969), in *Reporting Vietnam*, pp. 396-400

Michael Cimino, dir., *The Deer Hunter* (1979)

*Christian Appy, *Working Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (1993)

October 17—Protesting the War

Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines, eds., “Takin’ It to the Streets”: *A Sixties Reader* (2nd ed., 2002), pp. 89-92, 174-226

*Ron Kovic, *Born on the Fourth of July* (1976)

Sam Green and Bill Siegel, dirs., *The Weather Underground* (2002)

October 24—The My Lai Massacre

Seymour Hersh, "An Atrocity is Uncovered" (1969), in *Reporting Vietnam*, pp. 413-427

*Tim O'Brien, *In the Lake of the Woods* (1994)

*James S. Olson and Randy Roberts, eds., *My Lai: A Brief History with Documents* (1998), Introduction, Chapters 1, 5-7, 8 (pp. 178-187)

October 31—"The Best and The Brightest": Policymaking and the Vietnam War

David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (1972), Chapter 4

George C. Herring, ed., *The Pentagon Papers* (1993), Introduction, Chapters 4-7

Errol Morris, dir., *The Fog of War* (2004)

Robert Dean, "'They'll Forgive You for Anything Except Being Weak': Gender and U.S. Escalation in Vietnam, 1961-1965," in *A Companion to the Vietnam War* (2002), pp. 367-383

November 7—"Are They Going to Let Us Win This Time?": POWs and the Work of Commemoration

George Cosmatos, dir., *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985)

Craig Howes, *Voices of the Vietnam POWs: Witnesses to Their Fight* (1993), Chapters 1-3

*Kristen Hass, *Carried to the Wall* (1998), Introduction, Chapters 1, 4-5, Epilogue

November 14—Coming Home: Domesticating the War

*Bobbie Ann Mason, *In Country* (1985)

Hal Ashby, dir., *Coming Home* (1978)

November 17 (Monday)—Paper Two Due at 4 p.m. (By email to biel@fas.harvard.edu)

November 21—"Regret to Inform": Women and the Vietnam War

*Lan Cao, *Monkey Bridge* (1997)

Barbara Sonnenborn, dir., *Regret to Inform* (1998)

December 5—Remembering Vietnam: Summing Up

No assignment (Reading Period)

December 13 (Saturday)—Final Exam