

HIS 154: Vietnam War America

Messiah College

January Term 1999
daily
8:45 a.m. - noon
Climenhaga 33

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DESCRIPTION:

This is the story of our longest war, a war that continues to divide Americans twenty years after it ended. We will look at the war itself, its origins, the strategies of both sides, and the experiences of ordinary soldiers. We will also look at the things that have kept memory of the war alive: the place Vietnam has in movies and popular culture, the controversies that still fuel debate, and the ways the war changed the United States and the world.

OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of the course are: to gain a more intimate and thoughtful understanding of the Vietnam War and its effects, and to develop critical reading, analytical, and writing skills.

REQUIRED READINGS--BOOKS FOR PURCHASE IN BOOKSTORE:

Herring, George C. *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*.
Tang, Nhu Truong. *A Viet Cong Memoir*.
Downs, Frederick. *The Killing Zone: My Life in the Vietnam War*.

REQUIREMENTS:

read 3 books listed above
write 4 quizzes
write final exam
write paper of 5-7 double-spaced pages on an outside book or movie
participate in student discussion group
regular attendance and participation

STANDARD OF EVALUATION:

The final grade for the course will be derived as follows:

quiz #1	10%
quiz #2	5%
quiz #3	10%
quiz #4	5%
final exam	40%
paper	20%
group work & class participation	10%

QUIZZES:

Quizzes on readings and lecture material will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and identification (ID) questions. ID questions will ask you to identify and give the significance of several terms. These might be names, places, organizations, pieces of legislation, etc. In identifying these terms, play the role of the journalist who always answers the five “W” questions: who, what, when, where, and why. After you have identified the term, make sure you explain its significance--where it fits in or contributes to major themes covered in the course.

FINAL EXAM:

The final exam on the last day of the course will consist of 2 essays, both of them comprehensive in that they address the entire span of the course. The essays you write on the final exam should be well-organized, persuasive, and draw on materials from all the different facets of the course--lectures, readings, class discussions, and films--for examples and evidence.

PAPER:

Each student will write a paper that discusses either an outside book or a movie on the Vietnam War. In addition to a brief summary of the book or movie, papers should focus on what major question the book or movie addresses--Why did the Vietnam War occur? Why did the U.S. lose the Vietnam War? What was the impact of the Vietnam War? Papers should discuss whether the answers provided in the book or movie correspond to those encountered in other readings or in class, and assess the persuasiveness of the book or movie discussed. All books or movies must be approved by the instructor.

STUDENT DISCUSSION GROUPS:

Students will participate on one of three student discussion groups (on Tang, chs. 1-8; Downs, all; or Tang, chs. 13-24). Each group will be responsible for providing classmates with a list of questions on their reading before class discussion, and for leading class discussion

CLASS PARTICIPATION:

It goes without saying that you must attend class regularly in order to participate. You are expected to attend every class meeting. Beyond this minimal participation in the class (which will earn you only a minimal participation grade), you can gain participation points by regularly asking or answering questions, and by responding to readings, lectures, and films when given the opportunity.

NOTE ON ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITY:

As stated on page 42 of the Messiah College catalog, academic dishonesty of any kind (including cheating and plagiarism) violates the community standards of Messiah College, as well as those of the larger community of scholars into which you enter through this course. As such, any cases will be punished appropriately. However, please do not hesitate to talk to the instructor if you have any questions about how to use or cite outside sources.

SCHEDULE

[NOTE: ALL DETAILS SUBJECT TO CHANGE]

Mon., Jan. 11	Introduction; Vietnam & the World to 1945
Tues., Jan. 12	The Cold War & Vietnam, 1945-1960 reading: Herring, ch. 1.
Wed., Jan. 13	The French & Vietnamese at War, 1945-1960; discussion of Tang, chs. 1-8 directed by group #1 reading: Tang, chs. 1-8.
Thurs., Jan. 14	Quiz #1 on lectures of Jan. 11-13; JFK's New Frontier & Nation-Building, 1961-1964 reading: Herring, chs. 2-3.
Fri., Jan. 15	Film: <i>The Green Berets</i>
Mon., Jan. 18	LBJ's War, 1965 reading: Herring, ch. 4.
Tues., Jan. 19	The Ideal War: American Strategy & Tactics, 1965-68; Quiz #2 on Downs & discussion directed by group #2 reading: Downs, all.
Wed., Jan. 20	By Ground & by Air, 1965-1968 reading: Herring, ch. 5.
Thurs., Jan. 21	Quiz #3 on lectures of Jan. 18-20; Tet, 1968 reading: Herring, ch. 6; Tang, chs. 9-12.
Fri., Jan. 22	Film: <i>Platoon</i>
Mon., Jan. 25	Nixon's War & the Fall of South Vietnam, 1969-1975; Quiz #4 on Tang, chs. 13-24 & discussion directed by group #3 reading: Tang, chs. 13-24; Herring, ch. 7.
Tues., Jan. 26	Film: <i>The Deer Hunter</i>
Wed., Jan. 27	The Anti-War Movement, 1965-1975
Thurs., Jan. 28	Consequences & Aftermath of the War; Discussion of Papers (Paper DUE); Review reading: Herring, ch. 8.
Fri., Jan. 29	Exam

LIST OF OUTSIDE BOOKS FOR PAPER

- Broyles, William. *Brothers in Arms: A Journey from War to Peace*. New York: Knopf, 1986.
- Caputo, Philip. *A Rumor of War*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977.
- Garfinkle, Adam M. *Telltale Hearts: The Origins and Impact of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.
- Gelb, Leslie H. and Richard K. Betts. *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1979.
- Gibson, James William. *The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam*. Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986.
- Gibson, James William. *Warrior Dreams: Paramilitary Culture in Post-Vietnam America*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1994.
- Heineman, Kenneth J. *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era*. New York: New York University Press, 1993.
- Hellmann, John. *American Myth and the Legacy of Vietnam*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- Herr, Michael. *Dispatches*. New York: Knopf, 1977.
- Lederer, William J. and Eugene Burdick. *The Ugly American*. New York: Norton, 1958.
- MacPherson, Myra. *Long Time Passing: Vietnam and the Haunted Generation*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984.
- O'Brien, Tim. *Going after Cacciato: A Novel*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1978.
- O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried: A Work of Fiction*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990.
- Santoli, Al. *Everything We Had: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Thirty-Three American Soldiers Who Fought It*. New York: Random House, 1981.
- Terry, Wallace. *Bloods: An Oral History of the War by Black Veterans*. New York: Random House, 1984.
- Wells, Tom. *The War Within: America's Battle Over Vietnam*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
- [others approved by instructor]

LIST OF MOVIES FOR PAPER

Apocalypse Now
Bat 21
Born on the Fourth of July
Braddock: Missing in Action III
Coming Home
First Blood
Fly Away Home
Full Metal Jacket
Gardens of Stone
Hamburger Hill
Heartbreak Ridge
Heaven and Earth
Missing in Action
Missing in Action II: The Beginning
Rambo: First Blood, Part II
The Killing Fields
The Boys in Company C
Uncommon Valor
[others approved by instructor]