

Spring 2017
HIST 377/387: THE VIETNAM WAR
MW 3-4:15, Robinson B203

DR. LAIR
Email: MLair@gmu.edu

OFFICE HOURS:
MW 4:30-5 & by appointment



COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will address America's Vietnam War, including Vietnamese history and culture, French colonialism, American foreign policy in the Cold War, Chinese-Vietnamese relations, American and Vietnamese strategy, the antiwar movement, the fall of Saigon, and some of the war's legacies. The course will combine readings, lecture, documentary films, and discussions.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will learn about the historical and cultural antecedents of the "American War" in South Vietnam; the origins of American intervention in Southeast Asia; the major strategies and events of the Vietnam War; and the conclusion of the Vietnam War. In doing so, they will develop understanding of global patterns and processes and their interaction with society; demonstrate understanding of the interconnectedness, difference, and diversity of a global society; and apply awareness of global issues to a consideration of individual or collective responsibilities within a global society. We will achieve these objectives by examining historical events and issues from a variety of perspectives. Skills developed in the course include formal and informal writing, textual analysis, public speaking, and critical thinking.

ASSESSMENT

Final grades will be based on completion of the following:

- Two midterm exams (25% each)
- A final exam (30%; part of the final will be cumulative)
- Homework and in-class writing exercises (20%; you may drop your lowest grade on these assignments)

The homework assignments will be posted and submitted on Blackboard. The in-class writing exercises will be unannounced in order to encourage regular attendance.

Grades represent an assessment of your work, not a reward, sanction, or an evaluation of you as a person. A's are reserved for truly excellent work; B's are assigned to accomplished work; C's are assigned to average work; D's are assigned to below average work; and F's are reserved for work that suggests a lack of comprehension or care. Any distribution of final grades is possible; there will be no "curve" in this class.

EXAM FORMAT

The exams will be a mix of fill-in-the-blanks, short answer essays, and a long essay. Questions will be drawn from all course materials: *America's Longest War*, the Blackboard readings, lectures, in-class discussions, and films. The essay part of the final exam will be cumulative. **Please bring a bluebook to each exam.**

REQUIRED READINGS

- Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, the fourth or fifth edition.
- Documents and articles posted on Blackboard, Mason's course management website.
 - Go to <https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu> to log into the course page for this class.
 - Under "Course Content" you'll find folders that correspond to the topics in the course syllabus.

COURSE POLICIES

Please read these policies and make sure you understand them. If you have questions, please ask. You are expected to know these policies and to plan your work schedule, transportation, etc. accordingly.



Academic Integrity

Mason students are bound by an Honor Code (<http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/>), which states, "Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work." The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously, and violations are treated gravely. In this course, academic integrity means that:

- When you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task.
- When you rely on someone else's work in any aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form.
- All aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions.
- You will tell the truth about the status of your work.

For a discussion of what constitutes plagiarism, go here: <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/plagiarism/>

If you have questions, please ask for guidance and clarification. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. I will report students suspected of dishonesty to the University's Honor Board for disciplinary action, including failure of the course and even expulsion.



Attendance, Punctuality, and Coming to Class Sick

Regular attendance is required; you can't participate if you're not in class. Also, please arrive to class on time. If you need to arrive late or leave early, please sit near the door to minimize the disruption. Please do not come to class if you have a serious illness, especially a fever or an uncontrolled cough.



Communication & Office Hours

I encourage you to meet with me to discuss any facet of the course. Quick questions can be addressed before/after class or in email. More substantive conversations are best reserved for a meeting. Please email me if you would like to set something up. **I will only be using GMU email addresses to communicate with students. Please write to me from your GMU account, and check your GMU account regularly or forward your email.**



Decorum

Students are expected to be physically and intellectually present in class, to behave in a professional way, and to be respectful of others. Please refrain from eating, sleeping, talking when others have the floor, passing notes, multitasking, or anything else that demeans our class. Please silence your phones and put them away before class begins.



Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and need academic accommodations, please see me privately and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please talk to me as soon as possible (though you can wait until office hours, in the interest of privacy). <http://ods.gmu.edu>



Diversity

George Mason University strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected. **If you feel uncomfortable or unwelcome in class for any reason, please come and talk to me.**



Inclement Weather

On bad-weather days, consult the University's homepage for cancellation information. If the University is open, we will be having class, including scheduled exams and in-class writing exercises.

Late Assignments & Make-ups

You are required to provide documentation of an acceptable reason (serious illness, a genuine family emergency, or a required University.) for missing an exam or in-class writing assignment. You are allowed to drop your lowest homework/in-class writing assignment grade, so there will be no make-ups for your first missed assignment. A make-up for missing a second assignment will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and you will need to provide documentation of your situation.



Using Laptops in Class

I would like my students to be present in class, and it is my responsibility to forge a productive classroom culture that encourages best-practices for learning. Studies have shown that students retain more information when they take notes by hand. Further, laptops with Internet connections provide intense temptation to multitask, dividing the user's attention. The screens' contents are distracting to other students, and the glazed look of disengaged students staring at said screens is distracting to me. If you have to use a laptop to take notes, you will sit in the back row with no one behind you. If you plan to multitask during class, you should stay home. Please join me in creating a space for learning and discussion, in which we are all focused on this important topic, our own learning and improvement, and each other.

USEFUL CAMPUS RESOURCES

Advising Tips for History Majors: <http://historyarthistory.gmu.edu/undergraduate/history-advising>

Blackboard: <https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/>

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), SUB I Room 3129, 703-993-2380, <http://caps.gmu.edu>

Free Academic Skills Workshops: <http://caps.gmu.edu/students/academic-skills-workshops/>

The Mason Honor Code: <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/>

Patriot Web: <https://patriotweb.gmu.edu/>

University Policies

The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other relevant policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/> and <http://chssundergrad.gmu.edu/>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

Writing Center, Robinson A114, 703-993-1200, <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

WEEKLY TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

The readings should be completed prior to coming to class. If you're unsure where we are in the syllabus, don't hesitate to ask. This schedule is subject to change at my discretion. Page numbers for Herring, *America's Longest War*, refer to the 5th edition.

HIST 377/387 Schedule Part I

Wk	Date	Topic	Reading/Preparation for Class
1.	Jan. 23	Course Introduction Legacies of the Vietnam War	Course Syllabus "Back on the Mekong Delta....," <i>WaPo</i> , Jan.15, 2017
	Jan. 25	Introduction to Vietnam	Nguyen Khac Vien, "Confucianism and Marxism"
2.	Jan. 30	Vietnam Becomes a Nation	Ngo Vinh Long, "Vietnam's Revolutionary Tradition"
		Last Day to Add & Drop (no tuition liability)	
	Feb. 1	Colonial Vietnam	Jules Ferry, "On French Colonial Expansion" Vietnamese Declaration of Independence, 1945
3.	Feb. 6	Global War	The Atlantic Charter, 1941 Excerpt from NSC-68, 1950
	Feb. 8	The Communists Rise to Power in Vietnam	Excerpt from Halberstam's <i>Ho</i> , pp. 12-61 Mao, "The Three Stages of Protracted War, 1938"
4.	Feb. 13	The Franco-Vietminh War, 1946-54	<i>America's Longest War</i> , Ch. 1
		Last Day to Drop (33% tuition liability)	
	Feb. 15	The Franco-Vietminh War, 1946-54, cont'd.	Ho Chi Minh's Letter to President Truman, 1946 "State Department Recommends Aid to France, 1950" Giap, selection from <i>People's War, People's Army</i> "Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference, 1954"
5.	Feb. 20	The US Steps In, 1954-61	<i>America's Longest War</i> , Ch. 2
	Feb. 22	Nation Building, 1954-61 (or '75)	"President Eisenhower on the 'Domino Theory,' 1954" Cooper, "Boy, You Speak Just Like an American" Khrushchev, "The Vietnamese Had Their Own Ideas"
	Feb. 24	Final Day to Drop (67% tuition liability)	
6.	Feb. 27	Midterm I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study all course material since the first day of class. • Bring a bluebook!
		Selective Withdrawal Period begins.	

HIST 377/387 Schedule Part II

Wk	Date	Topic	Reading/Preparation for Class
	Mar. 1	The Rising Tide of Insurgency	Manifesto of the National Liberation Front, 1960 "Truong Nhu Tang on the Origins of the National Liberation Front (1957-1959), 1985"
7.	Mar. 6	The Rising Tide of Insurgency, cont'd.	"Ho Chi Minh's Appeal After the Geneva Agreements, 1954" "A Viet Cong Recruit Explains Why He Joined the Revolution (1961), 1986" "South Vietnamese Peasant Girl Becomes a Vietcong Supporter (c. 1961), 1989" Tran Thi Gung, "I Was Stuck in a Tunnel for Seven Days" Truong My Ha, "They Tried to Make Us Say, 'Down With President Ho!'" Chuy, "We Came Home Hairless with Ghostly White Eyes"
	Mar. 8	Crisis in Indochina, 1961-63	<i>America's Longest War</i> , Ch. 3 "President Kennedy on the 'Domino Theory,' 1963"
8.	March 13-17!	★★★ Spring Break—No Class, ★★★	
9.	Mar. 20	LBJ's Decision for War, 1963-65	<i>America's Longest War</i> , Ch. 4 NSAM 273, 1963 "Reassessment of U.S. Objectives in SVN, 1964" "The Tonkin Gulf Resolution, 1964"
	Mar. 22	LBJ's Decision for War, 1963-65, cont'd.	"McNamara Recommends Escalation, 1965" "George Ball Dissents, 1965" "Lyndon Johnson Explains Why Americans Fight in Vietnam, 1965" "LBJ Recalls His Decision to Commit Troops (1965), 1971"
10.	Mar. 27	The American War in Vietnam	<i>America's Longest War</i> , Ch. 5 LBJ Orders Pants (Video) Smith, "I Was Thanking God They Didn't Have Air Support"
	Mar. 29	The American War in Vietnam, cont'.	Stephen Klein, "Intimations of Mortality" Excerpt from Edelman, ed., <i>Dear America</i> Excerpt from Whalon, <i>The Saigon Zoo</i> Le Cao Dai, "Sometimes I Operated All Night..." Phan Xuan Sinh, "All My Ancestors Are Buried Here" Ta Quang Thinh, "They Carried Me the Whole Way Back to the North" Watkins, "The Sand Was Probably the Only Thing That Saved Me"
	Mar. 31	Selective Withdrawal Period Ends	
11.	April 3	Midterm II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study all course material since the first exam. • Bring a bluebook!

HIST 377/387 Schedule Part III

Wk	Date	Topic	Reading/Preparation for Class
	April 5	The Tet Offensive, 1968: Vietnam	<i>America's Longest War</i> , Ch. 6 Gabriel, "We Buried Our Own Men Right There"
12.	April 10	The Tet Offensive, 1968: America	The Tet Offensive in Editorial Cartoons, 1968
	April 12	The Antiwar Movement: Dissent	<i>America's Longest War</i> , pp. 113-17, 160-67, 210-31, 248-52, 267-68 (review) "Proclamation of the Antidraft Resistance, 1967" "Martin Luther King Jr. Declares His Opposition to the War, 1967" "Todd Gitlin Recalls the New Left's Revolutionary Romanticism, 1987" "A Vietnam Veteran Opposes the War, 1971" Lafferty, "No Draft Board Ever Failed to Meet Its Quotas" "James Fallows Reflects on the Draft's Inequities (1969), 1975" Sherlock, "Steve Sherlock, Bronze Star with a 'V'"
13.	April 17	The Antiwar Movement: Backlash	"A Veteran Remembers His Bitter Homecoming, 1981" "Conservative Tom Anderson Arraigns Student Radicals, 1969" "Vice President Agnew's Perspective on Protest, 1969"
	April 19	Vietnamization, 1968-73	<i>America's Longest War</i> , Ch. 7 Davidson, "I Wouldn't Buy a Used Car From That Man" Halyburton, "I Don't See How You've Got a Worse Place Than This"
14.	April 24	Vietnamization, 1968-73, cont'd.	"Richard M. Nixon Reassures Nguyen Van Thieu, 1973" "US Promise of Postwar Reconstruction: Letter to DRV Prime Minister Pham Van Dong (1973)"
	April 26	The Third Indochina War, 1973-75	<i>America's Longest War</i> , Ch. 8, pp. 333-354.
15.	May 1	The Third Indochina War, 1973-75, cont'd.	Appy, excerpt from <i>Patriots</i> on "Collapse" "Kissinger Appeals to Congress for Emergency Aid, 1975" "A South Vietnamese Pilot Reflects on His Country's Defeat (1975), 1990" "A South Vietnamese Civilian Remembers His Last Days in Saigon (1975), 1990" "Van Tien Celebrates the Great Spring Victory (1975), 1977"
	May 3	Legacies of the Vietnam War	<i>America's Longest War</i> , Ch. 8, pp. 354-380.
16.	May 4-14	Study & review!	
17.	May 15 1:30-4:15	Final Exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The fill-in and short answer sections of the exam will cover material since the previous exam. The long essay will be cumulative. Bring a bluebook!
Enjoy your summer!			