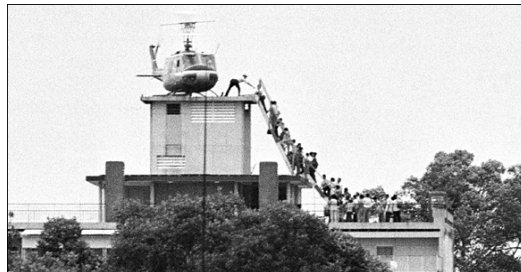


History 677 001:  
**The Vietnam War**  
Spring 2019  
M 7:20-10:00 PM  
Innovation 316



PROF. LAIR

Email: [mLair@gmu.edu](mailto:mLair@gmu.edu)

Office Hours: M 6-7 PM & by appointment

Office: Robinson B341

IMPORTANT DATES

Jan. 28	First Day of This Class	Feb. 12	Last Day to Drop (tuition penalty TBD)
Jan. 29	Last Day to Add	May 6	Last Day of This Class
Feb. 5	Last Day to Drop (no tuition penalty)	May 13	Final Paper Due

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will provide an introduction to the history and historiography of the Vietnam War, including the origins of the conflict; the strategy and tactics of the United States, North Vietnam, and the Viet Cong; U.S. nation building in South Vietnam; individuals' experiences serving in the war on both sides; the antiwar movement; and the Vietnam War in public memory.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Professional historians recognize that "history" is not an immutable set of facts, but rather a collection of competing interpretations. Historiography is the study of historical writing, bounded in this case by writings related to the Vietnam War. The emphasis in this seminar will be on the historiography of the Vietnam War. That is, we will examine a variety of approaches to the study of the war and its interpretations. We will examine several different types of sources (a classic survey text, several argument-driven monographs written by professional scholars, a diary, a novel, and an oral history collection), considering the merits and weaknesses of each approach to the study of the past. For the argument-driven monographs, we will pay special attention to how the author frames his or her questions and the design of the project to answer them.

Skills developed in the course include formal and informal writing, textual analysis, public speaking, framing questions, leading others in discussion, and critical thinking. Assessment will be based on leading discussion, writing book reviews, and writing a lengthy final paper. Through their written work, students will be able demonstrate the ability to: identify, discuss, and evaluate a book's argument, sources, and methodology; frame discussion and research questions; conduct research into relevant secondary sources; evaluate the quality, credibility, and limitations of the arguments presented by scholars working on similar topics; situate findings within the scholarly literature of the topic; connect issues in the readings to larger intellectual or social concerns; effectively communicate ideas orally and in writing; and effectively lead others in a productive discussion of scholarly work.

## ASSESSMENT

Assessment will be based on the following items, which are explained more fully in the Assignment Guide:

- Informed, constructive participation in every discussion: 20%
- Presenting one of the course readings to the class and helping to lead discussion: 20%
- Two short (750 words) book reviews: 20%
- A long (15-20 pp. excluding citation) historiographic essay on a subtopic of your choosing: 40%
  - In special circumstances and only with my permission, students may substitute an original research paper for an historiographic essay.

**How to Think about Grades:** Grades represent an assessment of your work, not an assessment of you as a person, and they are not a reward or a sanction. Your focus this semester should be on improving your process and your results, not on achieving a particular grade. Everything you do as a graduate student deserves your best. There is no "curve" in the class, so any distribution of grades is possible.

**How to Think About Grades as a Graduate Student:** Graduate school grades are different than undergraduate, because everyone is expected to be excellent. Students who maintain less than a 3.0 are removed from their programs (at Mason 2 Fs or 3 Cs will result in termination). In programs with funding, students lose their funding with less than a 3.5. Therefore, receiving a grade of B or B- in graduate school suggests that there is something wrong in your process that deserves your attention. Frequent B-grades, of any type, are cause for concern will preclude admission to a doctoral program.

*If you have questions or concerns about how you are doing in the course, please check in with me.*

## REQUIRED COURSE READINGS

The following list is in alphabetical order, not the order we will read them. Please consult the schedule on the last page of this syllabus for the schedule of readings. Books marked with \* are eligible for your book reviews.

Appy, *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides* (this book has been republished under the less provocative name *Vietnam: The Definitive Oral History Told from All Sides*)

Bao Ninh, *The Sorrow of War: A Novel of North Vietnam*

Brigham, *ARVN: Life and Death in the South Vietnamese Army\**

Chapman, *Cauldron of Resistance: Ngo Dinh Diem, The United States and 1950s Southern Vietnam\**

Daddis, *Westmoreland's War: Reassessing American Strategy in Vietnam\**

Daddis, *Withdrawal: Reassessing America's Final Years in Vietnam\**

Grace, *Kent State: Death and Dissent in the Long Sixties\**

Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975\**

Kieran, *Forever Vietnam: How a Divisive War Changed American Public Memory\**

Longley, *Grunts: The American Combat Soldier in Vietnam\**

Marr, *Vietnam 1945: The Quest for Power\**

Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-65\**

Nguyen, *Hanoi's War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam\**

Tang, *A Viet Cong Memoir* - OR - Tram, *Last Night I Dreamed of Peace*

Wilkins, *Grab Their Belts to Fight Them: The Viet Cong's Big Unit War Against the US, 1965-66\**

## 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/mason-honor-code/full-honor-code-document/>), 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 plagiarism, go here: <http://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/what-is-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**

Being in class is not the same as not being in class. Depending on the night you missed, you may be asked to do some additional work to make up for not attending and participating in discussion.

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. If you get sleepy, please excuse yourself and go for a walk, drink water, or stand at your seat or at the back of the room.

### ☀ **Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability and need academic accommodations, please see me privately and contact the Office of Disability Services. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office and will take effect the day that I am notified. As per University policy, academic accommodations are not retroactive. 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. The weather where you live is not the operative variable; it is the weather at Mason.

### 💻 **IT Policy**

**Laptops:** I want my students to be intellectually 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 also distracting to other students, and the glazed look of disengaged students staring at said screens is distracting to me. If you use a laptop to take notes, you should be prepared to send me your notes on a moment's notice via Mason's wireless. 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 our work, our own learning and improvement, and each other.

**Cell Phones:** Please silence your phone prior to class and put it *away*. If you have some kind of emergent situation that requires monitoring your notifications, you can notify *me* prior to class. Otherwise, if you insist on constantly looking at your phone, I will stop liking you immediately.

### ☹ **Late Assignments**

Writing assignments will be accepted late, but a grade penalty may attach.

### 📁 **Submitting Your Work**

Work will be submitted in hard copy and/or soft copy. Consult the assignment guide for details.

**Hard Copies:** Please do not use a separate cover sheet and, if possible, please print two-sided.

**Soft Copies:** Submit via email in Microsoft Word (not a pdf) from your GMU account to [mLair@gmu.edu](mailto:mLair@gmu.edu) using the following email subject and file name:

Email Subject: HIST 677: [Name of Assignment]

File Name: YourLastName.HIST677.FinalPaper.SP19.doc(x).

## USEFUL CAMPUS RESOURCES

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

**Citing Sources in Chicago Style:** <http://vle.credoreference.com/george-mason/citing-sources-chicago>

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

**Financial Literacy** (assistance understanding your finances and financial aid): <https://www2.gmu.edu/admissions-aid/financial-aid/financial-literacy>

**Graduate Student Life:** <http://gradlife.gmu.edu/>

**Learning Services** (for free coaching & academic skills workshops): <https://learningservices.gmu.edu/>

**Library Info Guides:** <http://infoguides.gmu.edu/>

**Mason Alerts:** Sign up at <https://ready.gmu.edu/masonalert/> for alerts related to campus emergencies and closings.

**The Office of Academic Integrity:** <https://oai.gmu.edu/>

**Office of Disability Services:** <http://ods.gmu.edu>

**Patriot Pantry** (for food assistance): <https://ssac.gmu.edu/patriot-pantry/> or email [pantry@gmu.edu](mailto:pantry@gmu.edu) to make an appointment to use the pantry.

**Patriot Web** (to register for courses or view your transcript & degree evaluation): <https://patriotweb.gmu.edu/>

**Stay Mason Student Support Fund** (for students in acute financial distress who are at risk of dropping out): <https://ulife.gmu.edu/forms/stay-mason-student-support-fund-application/>

**Student Support & Advocacy Center** (for health, well-being, and support): SUB I Suite 3200, 703-993-3686, <https://ssac.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**, 703-993-1200, [wcenter@gmu.edu](mailto:wcenter@gmu.edu), <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>