

Spring 2020
HIST 377/387: THE VIETNAM WAR
TR 3-4:15, Robinson B228

DR. LAIR
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Office: Robinson B341
Office Hours: TR 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 (15% each) and a final exam (20%).** These exams will be a mix of fill-in-the-blanks and short answer essays. Questions will be drawn from all course materials. The midterm exams will not be cumulative, but part of the final exam will be cumulative.
- **Three take-home essays (10% each).** These essays will coincide with the exams. They will require synthesis of course materials, especially the course readings. The essay topics will be posted on Blackboard on the day of each exam. You will have a few days to write each essay, and you will submit them via Blackboard.
- **Homework assignments & in-class writing exercises (20%).** Homework assignments may be submitted via Blackboard or in hard copy in class, as assigned. In-class writing exercises will be unannounced in order to encourage regular attendance and attention to the course readings.

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 final exam will include a cumulative essay. **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.

GRADING

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.

Course grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

A+ 97-100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D 60-69
A 94-96	B 84-86	C 74-76	F <60
A- 90-93	B- 80-83	C- 70-73	

COURSE & UNIVERSITY 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](#), 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. I will report students suspected of dishonesty to the University’s Honor Board for disciplinary action, including failure of the course.

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](#). If you have questions, please ask for guidance and clarification.

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. But it is also important to take care of yourself and your fellow students. Please do not come to class if you have a serious illness, especially a fever or an uncontrolled cough.

Communication

I will be using Blackboard to email the class via the Announcements feature. Emails sent through Blackboard may be found under “Announcements” on the course Home Page for the duration of the semester. Please write to me only from your GMU account, and please check your GMU account regularly or forward your GMU email. It would be helpful if you would preface the subject of your emails to me with “HIST 377” or “HIST 387,” depending on which course number you are enrolled under.

Decorum

I expect you 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, talking over others, passing notes, using your phone, multitasking on a laptop, doing other work, or anything else that demeans our class.

Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and need academic accommodations, please see me privately and contact [Disability Services](#). 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).

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 ever feel uncomfortable or unwelcome in class for any reason, please come talk to me.**

IT Policy

I would like my students to be intellectually and emotionally 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, though this is admittedly problematic for saving notes and making them searchable. Further, laptops and cell phones 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.

Phones: Please silence your phones, put them away before class, and refrain from checking them during class.

Laptops: If you use a laptop to take notes, you will sit in the back row(s) with no one behind you. You should also be prepared to send me your notes on a moment's notice via Mason's wireless.

Please join me in creating a space for learning and discussion, in which we are all focused on these important topics, our own learning and improvement, and each other!

Late Assignments & Make-ups

Late assignments will be docked 1 letter grade for every 24 hours the assignment is late. If you have extenuating circumstances (serious illness, a genuine family emergency, etc), please let me know and be prepared to provide documentation.

You are required to provide documentation of an acceptable reason (serious illness, a genuine family emergency, or a required University field trip) 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. You will need to provide documentation of your situation.

Office Hours: TR, 4:30-5 & by appointment, Robinson B341

I encourage you to meet with me to discuss any facet of the course. My preferred time to meet with students is directly after class. If you need to speak with me but are not able to meet during this time, please see me briefly after class or send me an email to set up an appointment in my office for another time.

University Enrollment Policy

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes. (Deadlines each semester are available on the [Registrar's website](#).) After the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the CHSS dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons. Undergraduate students may choose to exercise a [selective withdrawal](#) 3 times in their academic career at Mason. Visit the Registrar's website for more information.

USEFUL CAMPUS RESOURCES

Academic advising for History majors & minors: Read [online](#) or visit the Undergraduate Coordinator in Robinson B361 during regular business hours.

Career Services: For networking, mentors, and assistance applying for jobs or graduate school. SUB 1 Room 3400, 703-993-2370, careers@gmu.edu.

Chosen Name & Pronoun Policy: For information on how to update your chosen name and pronouns.

Counseling and Psychological Services: For free counseling). SUB I Room 3129, 703-993-2380.

Disability Services: SUB I, Suite 2500, 703-993-2474, ods@gmu.edu.

Financial Literacy: Assistance understanding your finances and financial aid.

Learning Services: For free academic skills workshops and free individual coaching.

LGBTQ Resources: <http://lgbtq.gmu.edu>

Mason Alerts: Sign up at for alerts related to campus emergencies and closings.

Patriot Pantry: Free food assistance for food-insecure students. Email pantry@gmu.edu to make an appointment to use the pantry.

Stay Mason Student Support Fund: For students in acute financial distress who are at risk of dropping out. NOTE: The application process takes several weeks, and funds are limited. But, it's worth a try!

Student Health Services: SUB 1, Room 2300, 703-993-2831.

Student Support & Advocacy Center: For health, well-being, and support. SUB I Suite 3200, 703-993-3686.

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: Multiple locations, 703-993-1200, wcenter@gmu.edu.

WEEKLY TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

- This schedule is subject to change at my discretion.
- Completed readings prior to coming to class. If you're unsure where we are in the syllabus, just ask!
- Page numbers for Herring, *America's Longest War*, refer to the 5th edition.
- All readings besides Herring may be found on Blackboard (Bb) under "Course Readings."

HIST 377/387 Schedule Part I

WK	DATE	TOPIC	READING/PREPARATION FOR CLASS <i>Readings marked with • are required and o are optional.</i>
1.	Jan. 21	Course Introduction	• Course Syllabus
	Jan. 23	Legacies of the Vietnam War	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>America’s Longest War</i>, Ch. 8, pp. 354-380• “U.S. Helping Defuse Vietnam’s Dioxin Hot Spots Blamed on Agent Orange,” April 7, 2016o “Back on the Mekong Delta, John Kerry Meets a Man Who Once Tried to Kill Him and Finds Exoneration,” Jan. 15, 2017”o “Vietnam War Survivor Faces Another Deadly Foe,” Jan. 1, 2018”o “Fifty Years Later, A Danger in Vietnam Persists: Unexploded Ordnance,” Feb. 11, 2018o “How Vietnam War Protests Accelerated the Rise of the Christian Right,” <i>Smithsonian</i>, May 3, 2018o “Having at Last Grieved, A Vietnam War Widow Returns to The Wall,” May 28, 2018o “The Last Battle of the Vietnam War: Agent Orange and Its ‘Presumed Diseases,’” May 28, 2018• Obituary for Bill Ebeltoft, December 2019• “Anti-War Movements Opposing Vietnam and Iraq Have Lessons to Teach About Stopping a War With Iran,” <i>Teen Vogue</i>, Jan. 6, 2020 (just read the Vietnam parts)• “Biden Says He Got Into Politics Because of Vietnam War,” <i>Washington Examiner</i>, January 7, 2020
2.	Jan. 28	Introduction to Vietnam	• Nguyen Khac Vien, “Confucianism and Marxism”
		Jan. 28: Last day to add.	
	Jan. 30	Vietnam Becomes a Nation	• Ngo Vinh Long, “Vietnam’s Revolutionary Tradition”
3.	Feb. 4	Colonial Vietnam: French Rule	• Jules Ferry, "On French Colonial Expansion"
	Feb. 5	Last day to drop with 100% tuition refund.	
	Feb. 6	Colonial Vietnam: The Vietnamese Response	• Vietnamese Declaration of Independence, 1945
4.	Feb. 11	WWII in Vietnam	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Atlantic Charter, 1941• Excerpt from NSC-68, 1950
		Last day to drop (50% tuition refund).	
	Feb. 12	Unrestricted withdrawal period begins (0% tuition refund).	
Part I of the schedule continues on the next page!			

HIST 377/387 Schedule Part I, continued

WK	DATE	TOPIC	READING/PREPARATION FOR CLASS <i>Readings marked with • are required and o are optional.</i>
4.	Feb. 13	The Communists' Rise to Power in Vietnam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excerpt from Halberstam's <i>Ho</i>, pp. 12-61 • Mao, "The Three Stages of Protracted War, 1938"
5.	Feb. 18	The Franco-Vietminh War, 1946-54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>America's Longest War</i>, Ch. 1
	Feb. 20	The Franco-Vietminh War, 1946-54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ho Chi Minh's Letter to President Truman, 1946 • "The State Department Recommends Aid to France, 1950" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Giap, selection from <i>People's War, People's Army</i> • "Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference, 1954"
6.	Feb. 24	Unrestricted withdrawal period ends (0% tuition refund).	
	Feb. 25	Midterm I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study all course materials starting with January 28. • Bring a bluebook!
		Feb. 25: Selective withdrawal period begins (0% tuition refund).	
	Sunday, March 1	Take-home essay due NLT 10 PM.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will find the prompt and portal for submission on Bb.

HIST 377/387 Schedule Part II

WK	DATE	TOPIC	READING/PREPARATION FOR CLASS
6.	Feb. 27	The US Steps In, 1950-61	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>America's Longest War</i>, Ch. 2
7.	Mar. 3	Nation Building, 1954-61 (or '75)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "President Eisenhower on the 'Domino Theory,' 1954" • Cooper, "Boy, You Speak Just Like an American" • Khrushchev, "The Vietnamese Had Their Own Ideas"
	Mar. 5	The Rising Tide of Insurgency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "Ho Chi Minh's Appeal After the Geneva Agreements, 1954" • Manifesto of the National Liberation Front, 1960 • "Truong Nhu Tang on the Origins of the National Liberation Front (1957-1959), 1985" • "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 Hoa, "They Tried to Make Us Say, 'Down With President Ho!'" • Chuy, "We Came Home Hairless with Ghostly White Eyes"
8.	March 9-13	Spring Break: No Class!	
9.	Mar. 17	Crisis in Indochina, 1961-63	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>America's Longest War</i>, Ch. 3 • "President Kennedy on the 'Domino Theory,' 1963" • NSAM 273, 1963 • Handout: "The Political Landscape of Vietnam, 1960-75" (QUIZ)
	Mar. 19	LBJ's Decision for War, 1963-65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>America's Longest War</i>, Ch. 4 • "Reassessment of U.S. Objectives in SVN, 1964" • "The Tonkin Gulf Resolution, 1964" ○ "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"
<i>Part II of the schedule continues on the next page!</i>			

HIST 377/387 Schedule Part II, continued

WK	DATE	TOPIC	READING/PREPARATION FOR CLASS
10.	Mar. 24	The American War in Vietnam: Air V	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>America's Longest War</i>, Ch. 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ LBJ Orders Pants (Video) • Smith, "I Was Thanking God <i>They</i> Didn't Have Air Support"
	Mar. 26	The American War in Vietnam: Ground War in South Vietnam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephen Klein, "Intimations of Mortality" • Excerpt from Edelman, ed., <i>Dear America</i> • Excerpt from Whalon, <i>The Saigon Zoo</i> • Watkins, "The Sand Was Probably the Only Thing That Saved Me"
11.	Mar. 30	Selective withdrawal period ends (0% tuition refund).	
	March 3	The American War in Vietnam: Pacification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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"
	Apr. 2	Midterm II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study all course materials since the first exam. Bring a bluebook!
12.	Apr. 7	Take-home essay due NLT 10 PM.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will find the prompt and portal for submission on Bb.

HIST 377/387 Schedule Part III

WK	DATE	TOPIC	READING/PREPARATION FOR CLASS
12.	Apr. 7	The Tet Offensive, 1968: Vietnam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>America's Longest War</i>, Ch. 6 • Gabriel, "We Buried Our Own Men Right There"
	Apr. 9	The Tet Offensive, 1968: The US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Tet Offensive in Editorial Cartoons, 1968
13.	Apr. 14	The Draft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Proclamation of the Antidraft Resistance, 1967" • Lafferty, "No Draft Board Ever Failed to Meet Its Quotas" • "James Fallows Reflects on the Draft's Inequities (1969), 1975"
	Apr. 16	The Growth of the Antiwar Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>America's Longest War</i>, pp. 113-17, 160-67, 210-31, 248-52, 267-68 (review) • Todd Gitlin Recalls the New Left's Revolutionary Romanticism, 1987" • "Martin Luther King Jr. Declares His Opposition to the War, 1967" • "A Vietnam Veteran Opposes the War, 1971" • Sherlock, "Steve Sherlock, Bronze Star with a 'V'"
14.	Apr. 21	Backlash Against the Antiwar Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "A Veteran Remembers His Bitter Homecoming, 1981" • "Conservative Tom Anderson Arraigns Student Radicals, 1969" • "Vice President Agnew's Perspective on Protest, 1969"
	Apr. 23	Vietnamization, 1968-73	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>America's Longest War</i>, Ch. 7 • Halyburton, "I Don't See How You've Got a Worse Place Than This" • "Davidson, "I Wouldn't Buy a Used Car From That Man"
15.	Apr. 28	Vietnamization, 1968-73	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Richard M. Nixon Reassures Nguyen Van Thieu, 1973" • "US Promise of Postwar Reconstruction: Letter to DRV Prime Minister Pham Van Dong (1973)"
	April 30	The Third Indochina War, 1973-75	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>America's Longest War</i>, Ch. 8, pp. 333-354 • <i>America's Longest War</i>, Ch. 8, pp. 354-380 (review for the final) • Appy, excerpt from <i>Patriots</i> on "Collapse" • "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" • Wolff, "After the Crusade," <i>Time</i>, April 24, 1995
Please see the next page for information about the final exam!			

16.	May 1-6	Study & review!	
Thursday, May 7, 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.• Bring a bluebook!	
Sunday, May 10, NLT 10 PM	Final exam take-home essay(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The essay(s) will be cumulative.• You will find the prompt and portal for submission on Bb.	
Congratulations, graduates! Everyone, have a great summer! For your summer viewing pleasure, check out the Vietnam War film guide I posted on Blackboard.			