

Spring 2012

HIST 377: THE VIETNAM WAR
MW, 12-1:15 PM, Science & Technology I Rm 131

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OFFICE HOURS:
M 2-3:30 & by appointment on Thursdays



IMPORTANT DATES

First Day of This Class:	January 23
Last Day to Drop:	February 24
Selective Withdrawal Period:	February 27-March 30
Spring Break:	March 12-16
Last Day of This Class:	May 2

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, and the fall of Saigon.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The course will combine readings, lecture, documentary films, and discussions. 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 3 papers (25% each) and several unannounced in-class writing exercises designed to test reading and lecture comprehension (25%). Students may write a 4th paper, if they have turned in the required 3 papers on time, and then drop their lowest paper grade. Students may also drop their lowest grade on the in-class writing assignments. Details about the paper topics may be found in a separate handout.

Grades represent an assessment of your work, not a reward or a sanction, and not 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. There will be no "grading curve" in this class.

REQUIRED READINGS

Edelman, editor, *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam*

Tram, *Last Night I Dreamed of Peace: The Diary of Dang Thuy Tram*

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

Small, *Antiwarriors: The Vietnam War and the Battle for America's Hearts and Minds*

The above books are available in the GMU bookstore, various libraries, and online.

The required readings also include several documents and articles posted on Blackboard, Mason's course management website.

Go to <https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp> to log into the course page for this class. There you will find several folders that correspond to the topics for the course. Inside each folder are .jpg or .pdf files of readings. You should read each one carefully and take notes on its contents.

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://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>), 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. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free exchange of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification. Academic dishonesty of any kind 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.

Attendance and Punctuality

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 after class or in email. Substantive conversations are best reserved for office hours. If you cannot come to regularly scheduled office hours, please contact me about arranging a meeting time that is mutually convenient.

Students must use their MasonLIVE email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. Please write to me only from your MasonLIVE account, and check it regularly. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

Decorum

In every class, students are expected to be intellectually present, to behave in a professional way, and to be respectful of others, including the instructor. Please refrain from eating, sleeping, editorial body language, talking when others have the floor, passing notes, reading newspapers, doing the crossword, doing coursework for other classes, leaving early, or anything else that demeans our class. Please arrive to class on time and turn off all electronic devices (see note on laptops below) before class begins. Students who behave in an unprofessional manner will be warned the first time and may be dismissed from class if the behavior persists.

Note-taking on laptops is fine and even encouraged, but if you cannot discipline yourself to remain offline for just three hours per week, then I suggest you spare yourself the temptation and use pen and paper to take notes in class. To prevent Internet surfers from distracting other students, all laptop users are required to sit in the back row. Students who do not use laptops are asked to reserve those seats for laptop users. Students using laptops who are not seated in the back row will be asked to move. If non-laptop users are sitting in the back row and there are not enough seats for laptop users, then the non-laptop users will be asked to move.

☀ **Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability and you 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 promotes a learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason 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. For more information on Diversity, go to: http://cte.gmu.edu/Teaching_at_Mason/DiversityStatement.html

❄ **Inclement Weather**

On bad-weather days, consult the University's homepage for cancellation information. If the University is open, we will be having class and all of the rules regarding attendance and punctuality apply. That is, snow on the roads does *not* equal an automatic extension on assignments.

📝 **Late Assignments & Make-ups**

The only acceptable reasons for missing class are serious illness, a genuine family emergency, and being on fire. Be prepared to show documentation for all of these. There will be no make-ups for quizzes. Late papers will not be accepted except in extreme situations, because you will have a choice of assignments to write. If you miss a deadline, simply write the next paper. Also, please do not send papers as email attachments without my explicit prior permission; I won't open them. If you do ask for, and receive, permission to submit your paper via email attachment, it must be written in Microsoft Word with the following file name: YOURLASTNAME.HIST377.Paper[Assignment Name].doc or .docx and sent from your GMU account.

USEFUL CAMPUS RESOURCES

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

Blackboard: <https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>

Writing Center, Robinson A114, 703-993-1200, <http://writingcenter.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/learningservices/workshops.php>

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 policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

WEEKLY TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

The readings for each week should be completed prior to coming to class. This schedule is subject to change, including the addition or subtraction of readings, at my discretion.

1. January 23 & 25: Introduction to Vietnam

- Nguyen Khac Vien, "Confucianism and Marxism"

2. January 30 & Feb. 1: Vietnam Becomes a Nation & Colonial Vietnam

- Ngo Vinh Long, "Vietnam's Revolutionary Tradition"
- Ho Chi Minh, "Vietnamese Declaration of Independence, 1945"

3. February 6 & 7: The Communists' Rise to Power

- Introduction and Note on Translation of *Last Night I Dreamed of Peace*
- Selection from David Halberstam's *Ho*, pp. 12-61
- Mao Tse-Tung (Zedong), "The Three Stages of the Protracted War," 1938

4. February 13 & 15: The Franco-Vietminh War, 1946-1954

- *America's Longest War*, Ch. 1
- 1st 1/3 of *Last Night I Dreamed of Peace*
- Ho Chi Minh's Letter to President Truman, 1946
- "The State Department Recommends Military Aid to the French, 1950"
- Vo Nguyen Giap, selection from *People's War, People's Army*
- "Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference, 1954"

• Paper A1 due Wednesday 2/15

5. February 20 & 22: The US Steps In, 1954-1961

- *Dear America*, Foreword, Introduction, & Ch. 1
- 2nd 1/3 of *Last Night I Dreamed of Peace*
- *America's Longest War*, Ch. 2
- President Eisenhower on the "Domino Theory," 1954

6. February 27 & 29 The Rising Tide of Insurgency

- *Dear America*, Ch. 2
- Last 1/3 of *Last Night I Dreamed of Peace*
- Garry Trudeau, "Showtime in the Tunnelplex"
- "Ho Chi Minh's Appeal After the Geneva Agreements, 1954"
- "Truong Nhu Tang on the Origins of the National Liberation Front (1957-1959), 1985"
- "Manifesto of the National Liberation Front, 1960"
- "A Viet Cong Recruit Explains Why He Joined the Revolution (1961), 1986"
- "A South Vietnamese Peasant Girl Becomes a Vietcong Supporter (c. 1961), 1989"

• Paper A2 due Wednesday 2/29

7. March 5 & 7: Crisis in Indochina, 1961-1963

- *America's Longest War*, Ch. 3
- *Antiwarriors*, Ch. 1
- *Dear America*, Ch. 3-4
- President Kennedy on the "Domino Theory," 1963

8. March 12 & 14: No Class—Spring Break!

9. March 19 & 21: LBJ's Decision for War, 1963-1965

- *America's Longest War*, Ch. 4
- *Antiwarriors*, Ch. 2
- *Dear America*, Ch. 5
- "Reassessment of U.S. Objectives in South Vietnam, 1964"
- "The Tonkin Gulf Resolution, 1964"
- "Lyndon Johnson Explains Why Americans Fight in Vietnam, 1965"
- "Robert S. McNamara Recommends Escalation, 1965"
- "George Ball Dissents, 1965"
- "Lyndon B. Johnson Recalls His Decision to Commit Troops (1965), 1971"

10. March 26 & 28: The American War in Vietnam

- *America's Longest War*, Ch. 5
- *Antiwarriors*, Ch. 3-4

• Paper B1 due Wednesday 3/28

11. April 2 & 4: The American War in Vietnam

- *Dear America*, Ch. 6-7

• Paper B2 due Thursday 4/4

12. April 9 & 11: The Tet Offensive, 1968

- *America's Longest War*, Ch. 6
- *Antiwarriors*, Ch. 5

13. April 16 & 18: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement

- *America's Longest War*, pp. 159-61, 204-213, 219-21, 260-61 (review)
- *Antiwarriors*, Ch. 7
- "Proclamation of the Antidraft Resistance, 1967"
- "James Fallows Reflects on the Draft's Inequities (1969), 1975"
- "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"
- "A Veteran Remembers His Bitter Homecoming, 1981"
- "Conservative Tom Anderson Arraigns Student Radicals, 1969"
- "Vice President Spiro Agnew's Perspective on Protest, 1969"

• Paper B3 due Wednesday 4/18

14. April 23 & 25: Vietnamization, 1968-1973

- *America's Longest War*, Ch. 7
- *Antiwarriors*, Ch. 6
- *Dear America*, Ch. 8 & Epilogue
- Speeches by Pham Van Dong and Chou En-Lai (Zhou Enlai) on the Chinese-Vietnamese Partnership, March 1971
- "Richard M. Nixon Reassures Nguyen Van Thieu, 1973"
- "US Promise of Postwar Reconstruction: Letter to DRV Prime Minister Pham Van Dong (1973)"

15. April 30 & May 2: The Third Indochina War, 1973-75

- *America's Longest War*, Ch. 8
- *Antiwarriors*, Ch. 8-9
- "Henry Kissinger Appeals to Congress for Emergency Aid, 1975"
- "James R. Schlesinger Jr. Recalls the Collapse of South Vietnam (1975), 1987"
- "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"

• Paper C1 due Wednesday 5/2

16. May 9-16: Final Exams**• Paper C2 due Wednesday 5/9!**

Please place it in my mailbox in Robinson B359 by 5 PM. Fourth papers are also due at this time.