ARLT 101G | The American War in Vietnam

Prof. Viet Nguyen

Class meets TTH 12:30-1:50, in THH 201, with an additional discussion section and film screenings. Film screenings and locations are in the syllabus below.

Office hours: T 2-4, W 1-2, and by appointment
Office location: THH 404D

Contact information: vnguyen@usc.edu or 213-740-3746. Emails preferred, as I hardly ever check my office voicemail.

Teaching assistants Deborah Al-Najjar, Robert Eap, and Viet Le will provide their own section syllabi with office hours and contact information.

COURSE OVERVIEW

The Vietnam War is still invoked in debates over current American wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This course provides an introduction to the war's history in order for today's Americans to understand some of the key factors leading the US into its current geopolitical situation. Since the war remains poorly understood and remembered, the course begins over a century ago in the French colonial era (1887-1954), spends the bulk of its time on the period of American involvement (1954-1975), and ends with postwar legacies in Southeast Asia and the United States.

The course is a multidisciplinary, multicultural and international overview of the war's history and its afterlife in American and Vietnamese memory. Student reading will draw primarily from films, literature, art, journalism, historical writing, and political discourse, while lectures will provide necessary historical and political background. The course corrects a fundamental flaw in the American pedagogy and scholarship on Vietnam, which mostly sees the country, people, and war purely from the perspective of American self-interest and ethnocentrism. In contrast, this courses stresses the diversity of American experiences, the importance of Vietnamese points of view, and the existence of international actors in the war who were neither American nor Vietnamese.

Students will develop critical thinking skills through 1) writing papers and 2) working in collaborative teams to develop the course's public project, an online memorial featuring oral histories of the war's witnesses and testimonies to the dead. Using a lo-tech approach to multimedia, "The American War in Vietnam" actively involves students in engaging with history, sharing their work with the general public, and constructing a digital memorial. The papers will be 5-7 page analytical essays addressing the texts of the course, where students will be required to study these texts closely.

Besides learning critical thinking skills and acquiring knowledge about the war, what students will take away from the course is a set of multimedia skills and the ability to use them to share their scholarship and ideas with the general public.

The goals of the course for student learning are:
1) to provide a multidisciplinary overview of the history of the war and its afterlife.
2) to address a diversity of ethnic, cultural, and national memories about the war.
3) to actively involve students in engaging with history via multimedia.

4) to have students share their work with the general public via the course website, www.anotherwarmemorial.com. Later classes will also contribute to this site, which will be of scholarly and general use.
5) to prepare students to think critically and analytically, both in general and in relationship to the Vietnam War.

The development of the multimedia component of this course is made possible by a grant from the Fund for Innovative Undergraduate Teaching.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

Attendance and Participation via Discussion Sections	10%
Unannounced Quizzes	10%
Three Papers, 5-7 pages	20% each, 60% total
Team Multimedia Project	20%

Attendance is mandatory: in lecture, in discussion section and at film screenings. Discussion sections have their own attendance policy; see your section syllabus. For the class as a whole, attendance will be accounted for in a variety of ways, including quizzes (missed quizzes will count as an absence) and class participation (if I call your name in class and ask for your opinion and you are not present, that is an absence). Only two unexcused absences are allowed; a third unexcused absence results in a 10% automatic deduction from your grade. Every unexcused absence results in a further deduction of 3%. Participation in sections is both verbal and written; besides classroom participation, students are also expected to post weekly comments or responses that are *thoughtful* and *substantive* on Blackboard, an electronic resource for the class, which can be accessed at https://blackboard.usc.edu/. Blackboard comments are run through the discussion section, but I wll read them and draw on them for my lecture and will make reference to them in lecture. Come prepared to lecture with what you have written on your Blackboard comments. *Classroom and online participation is essential to the class, and will significantly impact your grade.*

Unannounced quizzes will cover only factual questions that are related to the reading. The reading will be paced proportionally by the number of allotted days. It is important that you keep up with the reading, as you will not be able to participate without having done so. The quizzes will have a significant impact on your final grade. *Quizzes cannot be made up, except in cases of documented illness and emergency.*

Quizzes will be conducted for the entire lecture using remote clickers, which each student should purchase from the bookstore and have ready by January 18th. Clickers will be used in lecture for ungraded polling and for graded quizzes. These polls and quizzes will also constitute the attendance record for each student. Students can anticipate daily polls and/or quizzes.

There will be three research papers of 5-7 page research papers. There will be a later handout with further information about topics. *Strict late penalties of 1/3 grade deduction per 24 hours of tardiness will apply*, except in cases of documented illness and emergency.

Using everyday technology like cellphone cameras or digital cameras with video functions, students will work in teams of three or four to either profile someone who died in the war or as a direct result of the war, or interview a witness to the war. Students will also provide contextual material for understanding the historical experiences of the witnesses or the dead. The class will produce about forty such oral histories or profiles of the dead per semester. Students will post interviews or testimonies to a public course blog, called "Another Vietnam Memorial" (www.anotherwarmemorial.com). The blog will be the archive for an expanding body of such work, which will be of scholarly and general use.

Plagiarism will be prosecuted to the fullest extent allowed, including failure in the class and reporting to student conduct. Further information about plagiarism and standards of citing others' work will be available in paper handouts. USC policy on plagiarism and academic integrity can be found here: *www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/forms/tig.pdf*

Disability Policy: Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with the Disability Services Program (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Electronic devices: You may not use your cellphone, PDA, iPod, or any other handheld electronic device in class. You may not text, IM, send email, read email, check your Facebook or myspace pages, etc. Please do not make me reprimand you in front of your classmates for using these devices, as I will. The only multitasking you can do in class is to use your laptop to take notes or to check information related to class online. *Students who wish to use their laptop must sit in the first five rows of the lecture hall.*

Syllabus is subject to change at the professor's discretion.

REQUIRED TEXTS and MATERIALS

Books

Christian Appy, *Patriots* (selections)
Graham Greene, *The Quiet American*
Le Ly Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*
Bao Ninh, *The Sorrow of War*
Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*
Kao Kalia Yang, *The Latehomecomer*
Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars, 1945-1990*

Anticipate about 100-120 pages of reading for Tuesdays and 50-60 pages of reading for Thursdays on the average

Films

Frances Ford Coppola, *Apocalypse Now* (outside of class)
Clint Eastwood, *Gran Torino* (outside of class)
Ellen Kuras and Thavisouk Phrasavath, *The Betrayal (Nerakhoon)* (outside of class)
Steven Okazaki, *The Conscience of Nhem En*
Rithy Panh, *S-21*
Socheata Poeuv, *New Year Baby*
Ham Tran, *Journey from the Fall* (outside of class)

Additional film clips and essays will be part of the required texts; essays cited in the readings below will be available on Blackboard.

All students should buy a clicker from the bookstore, register it under her or his ID number, and bring it to class beginning on Tuesday, January 18th. The cost of the clickers is $32, with a $15 buyback at the end of the semester if you return the clicker. Clickers are available at the cashiers.

Schedule

Week 1

Tues 1/11 –Introduction to Course

Thurs 1/13 – France and Indochina Before the United States

Readings: Young, Marilyn, *The Vietnam Wars*, Preface, Chapters 1-3 (years 1945-1956)

Film Screenings (attend one of these two; mandatory)
Thurs 1/13 Gran Torino, 5-7 PM, SLH 200 (Stauffer Science Lecture Hall)
Friday 1/14 Gran Torino, 2-4 PM, SLH 200

Week 2

Tues 1/18 – The United States in Indochina

Readings: Edward Said, "Introduction" (pp. 1-28) from *Orientalism* (in Course Reader); Panivong Norindr, "Filmic Memorial and Colonial Blues" (in Course Reader); Young, Marilyn, *The Vietnam Wars*, Ch. 4-5 (years 1956-1963); Martin Luther King Jr., "Beyond Vietnam"

Thurs 1/20 – Indochina in the United States Today

Hmong Representation and *Gran Torino* discussion with guest lecture by Professor Louisa Schein (Rutgers University) and Bee Vang (lead actor, *Gran Torino*)

Readings: Ly Chong Thong Jalao, "Looking Gran Torino in the Eye: A Review," in course reader; Thai Dao (from *Patriots*, 540-541); Graham Greene, *The Quiet American* (author's dedication to page 61)

Week 3

Tues 1/25 – The United States Arrives in Viet Nam

Readings: Graham Greene, *The Quiet American* (62-114); Young, *The Vietnam Wars,* Ch. 6-8 (years 1963-1966); Dennis Deal and Malcolm Browne (from *Patriots*, 130-134 and 64-71)

Thurs 1/27 – The United States Stays in Viet Nam

Reading: *The Quiet American* (63-189); Harlan Pinkerton, Philip Jones Griffiths, and Frank Maguire (from *Patriots*, 209-211, 240-242, 441-444)

Film Screenings (attend one of these two; mandatory)

Thurs 1/27 *Apocalypse Now,* 5-8 PM, location TBA
Fri 1/28 *Apocalypse Now,* 2-5 PM, location TBA

Week 4

Tues 2/1 - American Innocence

Readings: Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (1-84)

Thurs 2/3 – Hollywood's Cinema-Industrial Complex

Readings: Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (85-130); Charles Cooper (from *Patriots*, 445-448); Jo Collins, Jim Soular, Bobbie Keith, Nancy Smoyer, and Nguyen Quang Sang (from *Patriots*, 28-29, 156-160, 179-183, 188-189, 215-216)

Week 5

Tues 2/8 – American Literature of War

Readings: Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (131-207); Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, Ch. 9 (1966-1967); Tim O'Brien (from *Patriots*, 542-544)

Thurs 2/10 – Race, Gender, Class and Sexuality in American Culture and the War

Readings: Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried* (208-233); Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, Ch. 10 (1965-1967); Julian Bond, General Baker, Jr., James Lafferty, Yusef Komunyakaa, Vincent Okamoto, Charley Trujillo (from *Patriots*, 143-145, 146-149, 164-166, 257-258, 357-361, 366-370)

Fri 2/11 Midterm Paper #1 Due (consult TA for details)

Week 6

Tues 2/15 – The North Vietnamese Go to War

Reading: Bao Ninh, *The Sorrow of War* (1-100); Larry Colburn and Michael Barnhardt (from *Patriots*, 346-348, 349-353)

In class: screening of *The Sound of the Violin in My Lai*

Thurs 2/17 – The North Vietnamese Remember the War

Reading: Bao Ninh, *The Sorrow of War* (101-156); Vu Thi Vinh, Nguyen Thi Kim Chuy, Huynh Phuong Dong, Le Minh Khue (from *Patriots*, 103-104, 105, 330-331, 508-514)

In class: screening of *Tội ác chiến trận của Mỹ ở Việt-Nam / the DRV Commission for Investigation of U.S. War Crimes in Vietnam.*

Week 7

Tues 2/22 – Postwar Vietnamese Practices of Commemoration

Reading: Bao Ninh, *The Sorrow of War* (157-233) Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, Ch. 11 (1967-1968); Le Cao Dai, Duong Thanh Phong, Lam Van Lich, Tran Van Ban (from *Patriots*, 138-141, 247-249, 341-342, 515-516)

Thurs 2/24 – The End of the American War

Reading: Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, Ch. 12-13 (1968-1973); Anne Morrison Welsh, Vivian Rothstein, Tom Englehardt, Clark Dougan, Daniel Ellsberg (from *Patriots*, 150-155, 274-278, 268-273, 304-306, 432-435)

Fri 2/25 Midterm papers returned

Week 8

Tues 3/1 – The South Vietnamese Perspective

Reading: Le Ly Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* (acknowledgments, prologue, 1-101)*;* Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, Ch. 14 (1973-1975); Luyen Nguyen, Truong My Hoa, Oliver Stone (from *Patriots*, 94-98, 228-230, 252-255)

Thurs 3/3 – Southern Vietnamese Civilians

Reading: Le Ly Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* (102-164); Nguyen Ngoc Luong (from Patriots, 374-376)

Film Screenings (attend one of these two; mandatory)

Thurs 3/3 *Journey from the Fall* 5-8 PM, location TBA
Fri 3/4 *Journey from the Fall,* 2-5 PM, location TBA

Week 9

Tues 3/8 – The End of the War for the South

Reading: Le Ly Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* (165-291)*;* Phan Xuan Sinh, Vu Hy Thieu, Tran Ngoc Chau, Frank Snepp, Truong Tran (from *Patriots*, 25-27, 190-194, 475-479, 496-503, 504-507)

Thurs 3/10 – The Vietnamese in the United States

Reading: Le Ly Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* (292-368)*;* Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, Ch. 15 and epilogue (1975-1990); Nguyen Qui Duc (from *Patriots*, 295-297)

Spring Break 3/14 - 3/19

Week 10

Tues 3/22 – The War in Cambodia

Reading: Marilyn B. Young -- The United States and strategic bombing : from prophecy to memory, in *Bombing Civilians: a 20th century History;* Jonathan Schell, Judith Colburn, Loung Ung (from *Patriots*, 202-208, 407-412, 526-528)

Thurs 3/24 – The Khmer Rouge and Genocide

In class screenings: Steven Okazaki, *The Conscience of Nhem En;* Rithy Panh, *S-21*

Fri 3/25 Midterm Paper #2 Due (consult TA for details)

Week 11

Tues 3/29 – Cambodian American memory

In class screening: Socheata Poeuv, *New Year Baby*

Reading: DuBois, Thomas A., "Constructions Construed: The Representation of Southeast Asian Refugees in Academic Discourse," *Amerasia Journal* 19.3 (1993): 1-25; other readings TBA

Thurs 3/21 -- Post-Genocide Justice and Reconciliation in Cambodia

Guest Lecture: Rob Eap

Film Screenings (attend one of these two; mandatory)

Thurs 3/21 *The Betrayal,* 5-7 PM, location TBA
Fri 3/22 *The Betrayal,* 2-4 PM, location TBA

Week 12

Tues April 5 – Laotian Americans

Guest Performance: Teada Works

Thurs April 7 – Laos at War

Reading: Kao Kalia Yang, *The Latehomecomer* (1-60)

Fri 4/8 Midterm papers returned

Week 13

Tues April 12 – The Hmong at War

Reading: Kao Kalia Yang, *The Latehomecomer* (61-180); Fred Branfman (from *Patriots*, 217-220)

Thurs April 14 – The Hmong in the United States

Reading: Kao Kalia Yang, *The Latehomecomer* (181-274)

Week 14

Tues April 19 – Revisiting the War in the United States

Reading: McMahon, Robert, "Contested Memory: The Vietnam War and American Society, 1975-2001," pp. 159-184 (in Course Reader); William Westmoreland (from *Patriots*, 539); readings TBA from John Dumbrell, *Vietnam in Iraq*, and Gardner and Young, *Iraq and the Lessons of Viet Nam*

Thurs April 21 – Dark Tourism in Southeast Asia

Reading: Tai, Hue-Tam Ho, "Faces of Remembrance and Forgetting," pp. 167-195 in *The Country of Memory: Remaking the Past in Late Socialist Vietnam;* Kennedy, Laurel B. and Mary Rose Williams, "The Past without the Pain: The Manufacture of Nostalgia in Vietnam's Tourist Industry," pp. 135-163 in *The Country of Memory: Remaking the Past in Late Socialist Vietnam*; Hoang Van Thiet (from *Patriots*, 534-535)

Fri 4/22 Final upload of profiles to the course website

Week 15

Tues April 26 – Return to Southeast Asia

Readings: excerpt from Larry Heinemann, *Black Virgin Mountain;* Leroy Quintana, Huu Ngoc, Wayne Karlin, Duong Tuong (from *Patriots*, 538, 545-546, 547, 548-550)

Thurs April 28

student evaluations, final discussion/last thoughts, screening of sample profiles from website

May 4—Final paper due