

**Brad Simpson, Ph.D.** Associate Professor of History and Asian Studies

## **Fall, 2013: Hist 3998: The Vietnam War as International History**

**Tu-Th 12:30-1:45, LH 110**

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**Office Hours : Tu 2-5pm or by appointment.**

**Course Description:** This course will provide participants with the opportunity to explore the Vietnam War through the lens of US foreign relations and international history. Students will read and explore a wide variety of primary and secondary sources, from recently declassified State and Defense Department documents to films and short stories. Over the course of the semester, class participants will develop, research and prepare a project exploring some aspect of the conflict – foreign or domestic, national or local, politics, art, culture, etc. – utilizing existing historiography and the wealth of locally available archival materials and primary sources. Rather than preparing formal research papers, each of you will produce an online teaching unit on some aspect of the Vietnam War which can be used by Connecticut high school teachers. The goal is to use historical methods to create a more interactive, usable history, and to get you thinking not only about how you learn about the Vietnam War, but how you might convey what you have learned to others. To successfully complete this project you will need to do all of the things good historians do – but you will produce something that may have real value outside of the class and may in fact be used by teachers around the state. We will publish and publicize your teaching units at the end of the semester and hope to see some of them used by local teachers.

For the purposes of this class we will focus on the period from 1945-1975, focusing on the ‘long 1960s,’ extending from 1958 to 1972 (the re-election of Richard Nixon). You may choose any topic you wish, as long as it has something to do with the Vietnam War. There is a tremendous amount of material in the UConn Library and archives (such as the Dodd Center), archives and libraries of other universities and colleges in the area, and the National Archives. There is also a tremendous amount of material online at Presidential Libraries, through the State Department's office of the historian, and through 'portal' websites on the Vietnam era, many of which contain extensive document collections.

The chief requirement for this project is that it be based on primary sources and engage with secondary literature on the topic, and that it ask a question that is amenable to being considered and answered by students and effectively researched and produced over the course of the semester. If you choose to develop a teaching unit about the Connecticut Congressional delegation and some aspect of the war, this means that you must conduct some research in the personal papers of a Congressperson or make extensive use of the Congressional record. If you want to write about campus anti-war movements, this means researching in local university archives, etc. Likewise any papers on the role of the media must be based on extensive engagement with newspapers, not books about the topic.

The key to success in this course is for you to plan and work continuously throughout the semester on your project. To help you do this, I will break down the class project into

manageable parts that will be due throughout the term. Each part is worth a portion of your total grade. We will work with folks from the Digital Learning Center to help teach you how to construct a basic wiki page (if you don't already know how), and hopefully talk to a local history teacher about how to write a learning unit appropriate to high school students. The syllabus is sort of work in progress that may change over the course of the semester in response to your evolving needs and those of the class projects you will be creating.

### **Required Texts (Available at the student bookstore) or used on Amazon.com**

Christian Appy, *Patriots: The Vietnam War remembered from all sides* (Penguin, 2004)

Marilyn Young, John Fitzgerald, Tom Grunfeld, *The Vietnam War: A History in Documents*

Andrew Rotter, *Light at the End of the Tunnel: A Vietnam War Anthology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (If you order from Amazon or someplace, make sure to get the third edition!)

Bao Ninh, *The Sorrow of War*

**STRONGLY ENCOURAGED:** Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 4th edition (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004).

### **Husky CT**

This course will make extensive use of Husky CT's online course system. Throughout the semester I will post directions and handouts here. Any change to the syllabus, assignments, or deadlines will also be posted here, so check our site regularly before class meetings. I will communicate with you through your U Conn email account, so please make sure to check this account or have your email forwarded from it.

There will be a series of articles posted to Blackboard which examine the historiography of the Vietnam Era in greater depth.

### **Class Project**

Remember that you need to begin conceptualizing and researching your project at the start of the semester in order to bring it to successful fruition by the end. I have provided a few examples of accessible materials you may want to consult in your research on the project page. I also encourage you to consult with me or with a research librarian about specific sources on your topic. The key is to get out and start digging early in the semester.

### **Writing:**

Full requirements for the final project are detailed under the above link. Here I will simply suggest that you work steadily throughout the semester on committing your thoughts to writing. Your teaching unit/project is the centerpiece of this course and it is expected to be a polished piece of work, so please **DO NOT** leave it to the last minute!

I expect all project components to be completed in on the assigned due dates. You should also read the useful recent article [Reflections on Plagiarism](#) in the American Historical Association magazine Perspectives. *Plagiarism will not be tolerated.*

#### REQUIREMENTS:

--Participation 30 %.

You are expected to attend and orally participate in class meetings and workshops. Additionally, you will write weekly reflective blog posts on the week's readings that will be shared and commented on by your peers.

--Bibliography/historiography 10%

--Narrative 10%

--Annotated Document Collection 10%

-- Teaching Plan 10%

--Final project 30%

#### Course Schedule

##### Week 1 – Course Introduction

Aug 27 Introduction to the course

Aug 29 Vietnam and the crisis of European colonialism

Reading: Young, et al., pp. 6-25; Appy, pp. 3-35

##### Week 2 The First Indochina War

Sept 3 WWII and the Origins of the US Commitment to Vietnam

Sept 5 – Americans and Asians at mid-century

Reading: Appy, pp. 35-60; Young, et al, 25-40; Rotter, Chapter 1 (3-33)

##### Week 3 The US moves in, 1954-1960

Sept 10 Vietnam and the US commitment to Diem

Sept 12 The Burgeoning Regional Crisis

Reading: Rotter, Chapter 2 (34-60); Young, et al, Chapter 2 (41-67); Appy, pp. 44-60

**Week 4 Escalation, 1960-1963**

Sept 17 – The Kennedy Administration and the Crisis of American Manhood

Sept 19 – The Deepening War in the South

Reading: Rotter, 61-70; Young, pp. 58-67; Appy 60-101

**Week 5 The American War – 1964-1968**

Sept 24 The decision for War

Sept 26 Constructing a Nation in South Vietnam

Reading:

Appy, 112-138; 200-262; Rotter, 70-109; Young, 67-89

**Week 6: Getting Out, 1968-1975**

Oct 1 Tet!

Oct 3 The Long Road to Paris

Reading: Rotter, 109-145; Young, 129-147; Appy 285-384

**Week 7 Representing the Vietnam War**

**Oct 8 – no class – watch film**

**Oct 10 Film discussion**

**Week 8 The Vietnamese Revolution, North and South**

Oct 15 The Revolution in the North

Oct 17 The Revolution in the South

Reading: Rotter, 145-196; Appy, 101-112, 138-142; 186-188; 190-195

## **Week 9 The Experience of War – the US**

Oct 22 Soldiers

Oct 24 Society

Reading: Rotter, 196-237; 384-395; Appy 162-195; 200-262

## **Week 10 The Experience of War - Vietnamese**

Oct 29 Soldiers

Oct 31 Society

Reading: Bao Ninh, *The Sorrow of War*, All

## **Week 11 International Dimensions of the War**

Nov 5 America's Allies and Vietnam

Nov 7 The Sino-Soviet Split and Vietnam

Reading: Rotter 237-279;

## **Week 12 The War at Home**

Nov 11 The Politics of War and Peace

Nov 14 Antiwar Movements

Reading: Rotter, pp. 395-416; Young, 117-129; Appy, 142-156; 262-285; 328-346

## **Week 13 Legacies**

Nov 19 The Legacies for Vietnam

Nov 21 The Legacies for the US

Reading: Rotter, 416-453; Young, 147-161; Appy 515-551

**Week 14**

**NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING**

**Week 15 Wrapping Up**

Dec 3 Presentations of course projects

Dec 5 Presentations of course projects

<http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/teachers/pages/teachers07.php>