

HIST 3453
Fall 2017

The United States And the Vietnam War

Prof. Philip F. Napoli

MW2, 2:15PM - 3:30PM
5145 Boylan

Course Information

I. Course Description:

This is an undergraduate course designed to introduce students to the American experience of the Vietnam War, covering the international and intellectual background to the war, French involvement, the conduct of the war, the composition of the American armed forces, war crimes, role of the media, the anti-war movement, and the consequences of the war. Using a wide variety of materials, including movies, fiction, primary documents and secondary sources, the class will allow students to see the connections that link the political, social, economic and intellectual histories of the Vietnam War.

In my opinion, this course contains some of the ‘hard stuff’ of historical study.

It is widely known that over 58,000 Americans lost their lives during the American War in Vietnam (1959-1975).

Fewer people recognize that, while estimates range widely, North Vietnamese sources assert that perhaps as many as 3.4 million Vietnamese were killed in those years.

Whatever the precise figure, it is obvious that in this course we must come to grips with violence; killing and dying on a *massive* scale.

As a result, it’s quite possible that you will find upsetting the images and films that we view, the readings that we do, and/or the subjects we discuss. Unfortunately, there’s no way for me to foresee what might prompt a negative or unpleasant response in you. That means that I can’t place “trigger warnings” on specific readings, films, etc. It’s just not possible. **All** of this course material is potentially “triggering.”

The interview-based assignment, which forms a central component of this course, could place you in conversation with individuals who have had difficult – even traumatic -- experiences. You might learn things that you would rather not know. I can't predict this either, because you select your interviewees.

This being so, I strongly encourage you to engage in what might be called “self-care” as we go through this class together. You should try to be aware of your emotional reactions to our course content. If you find yourself responding in uncomfortable or unusual ways to the things we encounter, I recommend that you find some form of support. This could be your parent/boyfriend/girlfriend/spouse, a study group you form in class, or something else. If you wish to talk things over with me, please come and see me in my office.

II. Learning Goals:¹

- At the conclusion of this course, students will be familiar with the topics listed above.
- Students will learn to communicate effectively in orally and writing.
- Students will learn to analyze primary documents.
- Students will learn to conduct, interpret and present oral history interviews.

III. Learning Objectives:²

- Given a topic drawn from the teaching calendar, students will be able to effectively write about the causes, nature of, and consequences flowing from decisions and behaviors of historical actors involved in the Vietnam War.
- Given a relevant document, students will be able to identify and articulate the context from which that document is drawn, and elucidate its meaning and significance.
- Students will effectively conduct, record and interpret at least two oral histories.
- Students will effectively present oral arguments about historical topics.

IV. What is expected of you?

- You are expected to know this syllabus and understand what it says. If you have questions, ask me.
- You are expected to take notes in class. These will be of assistance as you prepare for your final exam.
- Bring the *Major Problems* book to every class, unless I say otherwise.
- You must do the assigned readings **before** the class meeting. Remember to pace yourselves. TAKE NOTES.
- Unless a physical ailment precludes you from doing so, I ask that you maintain your seat throughout a class session.

¹ **Learning Goals** describe large-scale aims of the course. They answer the question: What will students know and be able to do at the end of the course?

² **Learning Objectives** describe the student behaviors that indicate that the students have accomplished the learning goals.

- I used to have a policy that said, “no electronic devices, including computers, cell phones etc.” Now I know that some/all of you use these devices to access course material. So, I no longer have this policy. BUT – if I find that you are using your device for things like Facebook, sending texts, etc., I will contact you personally and ask you to stop.

V. Evaluation mechanisms and rules:

Please note: No student who fails to complete all the papers and take the final will earn a passing grade.

Research Paper	200 points
Weekly Reading Journals	100 points
Oral History Essay	100 points
Final Examination	<u>100 points</u>
	500 points available total

Grade scale:	500-450=A through A-
	449-400=B+ through B-
	399-350=C+ through C-
	349-300=D+ through D-

Attendance and Your Grade

Students are expected to attend all class meetings as scheduled. Failure to attend class will have a negative impact on your grade.

After the 4th unexcused absence, I will lower your mark for this course by 1/3 of a letter grade for each additional day absent.

An excused absence is one documented by something – like a doctor’s appointment, a court appearance or something similar. If you miss class, you must be prepared to document the reason.

Students who miss more than four class meetings can, and likely will, fail the course.

Essay Rewrites, Drafts and Revisions

Papers can be rewritten if you earn a grade of B or lower. You may revise and resubmit an essay, one time. The revision is due *no later than one week* after I return the paper to you. No revisions may be submitted after the final exam date.

I am glad to read essay drafts. Just send them along to me.

Late Assignments/Late Work

I will not, under any circumstances, give credit for late journal assignments.

Late essays are accepted, with an academic penalty of 1/3 of a letter grade *per day*. A paper that might have earned an A, arriving late, gets an A-; a B+ paper that is 2 days late is a B, and so on.

Any work that that I do not receive by the end time of our final exam is recorded as a zero “0” in my grade book. To say the same thing in different words: The course ends with the conclusion of the final exam. Again, there will be no exceptions.

Incompletes

I am *extremely* reluctant to grant incompletes. In my experience, these are rarely converted into regular grades and frequently turn to F’s.

I will only grant an incomplete if there has been regular consultation between us, and I get a written commitment from you regarding the date on which all necessary materials will be submitted. In general, I will grant an incomplete only because of something like a physical illness or a death in the family.

VI. Intellectual Diversity:

The best classes are ones where a diversity of viewpoints is represented and articulated. I encourage students to form their own opinions about the issues raised in this course after investigating the evidence available and considering a variety of theoretical perspectives. Students are free to voice their viewpoints, and in fact will be rewarded for doing so, as long as they are respectful to others in the class. Students’ grades are based on their mastery of history, not their opinions about particular issues. In other words, students need not agree with the professor, the authors of assigned readings or other students; they simply need to understand their arguments.

I borrowed this paragraph almost directly (I changed a few words) from Professor Ryan Moore, Ph.D., SYP 6645: Sociology of Popular Culture Syllabus, Florida Atlantic University, Spring 2006 (graduate.fau.edu/gpc/110806/sociology%20of%20popular%20culture%20graduate%20syllabus.doc Accessed Dec. 28, 2008) because it expresses my sentiments exactly.

VII. Disabilities:

It is the policy of the City University of New York to comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 as amended, state legislation (Executive Law 296), local law, and applicable regulations promulgated pursuant to these laws to prohibit the exclusion of qualified students with disabilities, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in college programs or activities. Brooklyn College, as a unit of the City University, does not and will not discriminate against qualified students with disabilities in access to its programs and/or services. Disability, for purposes of this policy, is defined to mean a "physical or mental impairment that

substantially limits one or more major life activities," such as walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, or learning, for example.

In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services (CSDS). Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at [718-951-5538](tel:718-951-5538). If you have already registered with the CSDS please provide your professor with the course accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with him/her as soon as possible and at an appropriate time.

It is the college's policy that accommodation requests must be approved by the CSDS. Students are not permitted to bypass the office and go directly to a faculty member to request an accommodation. Faculty members are not permitted to grant an accommodation without receiving the Verification of Disability and Course Accommodations forms from the Center or revise an accommodation which has already been deemed appropriate by the Center.

VIII. Honesty:

The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for implementing that policy can be found at this site: <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies>. If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits the violation, the faculty member **MUST** report the violation.

This class will **strictly** adhere to the above policy.

This means that all work you turn in for this class must be your own. Any deviation from this standard will result in a "0" for the assignment.

According to the MLA style guide, plagiarism "is to give the impression you have written or thought something that you have in fact borrowed from someone else." [Joseph Gibaldi and Walter Achtert, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 3rd edition (New York: Modern Language Association of American, 1988), p. 21.] If you borrow an idea, a sentence, or more from a source, you must let the reader know what that source is. It's only fair to the original author.

If you do not know what plagiarism is, ask me, consult a work such as the MLA guide, or check out web sites like this one: <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>

IX. Nonattendance because of religious beliefs

No one will be penalized for non-attendance because of religious beliefs. Students are, however,

responsible to the course material covered while they are out. I will try to be helpful in this matter, but you should get class notes from a colleague. If you know that you will be absent because of religious beliefs, please notify me in advance.

X. Things You Get Graded On

See our Blackboard site for all the grading rubrics that I will use.

Journal Entries: 100 points

Ten times during this 14 week semester you must submit a work journal to me.

Your journal entry will respond to a writing prompt or assignment that I will provide on Blackboard, and I'll post one each week. Two or three journal entries, those that concern your research papers, will not be optional.

Each journal entry is worth 10 points.

Each journal entry must be 300 words, *minimum*. That's 1 ½ pages and yes, I count. Journal entries that are too short risk earning fewer points.

Additionally, and obviously, I award points based on the quality of the journal entry. My objective is to assess whether you are keeping up with the course assignments. Think of this as the equivalent of an open-book quiz. You want to show me that you are reading and working.

If you submit more than 10 journals, each additional one will be worth 5 extra credit points, for a total of 20 extra credit points available. It is, therefore, in your interest to submit a journal entry each week of the term.

Each journal entry writing prompt will have a due date or deadline and late journal entries and/or extra credit will not be accepted under **any** circumstances.

It is your responsibility to make sure that work is uploaded correctly. Double check your attachments. If I can't see it, it's not there.

Oral History Interviews and Essay: 100 points

Due October 23, by midnight. A paper arriving at 12:01am on Oct. 24 is late, and late penalties accrue.

You will conduct and record at least 2 oral history interviews (more are acceptable). On the basis of these interviews you will prepare a 5-7+ page paper (longer is fine, and indeed could be necessary). More information will be supplied about this as the term rolls along.

You will be expected to submit to me 2 oral history recordings and 2 informed consent statements, signed by your interviewees.

If you and your interviewee agree, the interview will be donated to the Brooklyn College Listening Project. Details to follow.

The recordings and the required associated paperwork will be turned in as part of the assignment.

Pro tip: Begin to look for willing interviewees *right away*. I will try to help you find interviewees, but speaking realistically, I won't be able to assist everyone.

Research Paper: 200 points

December 11, by midnight. A paper posted to Blackboard at 12:01am on December 12 is late, and late penalties accrue.

You will write a traditional research paper that will consist of 10+ pages of text (excluding title page and bibliography) on a topic of your choice, selected in consultation with me. That means I need to see *everyone* in my office at least once to discuss the topic. (Not at the front of the classroom before or after class!) I use a spreadsheet to keep track of these conversations, so it will be important for you to find time to get to me.

At roughly midterm, I will ask you to submit a written paper proposal as one of your 300-word Blackboard journal entries. It will take you some time to prepare this, so I recommend that you begin early to think about this assignment.

This paper will be based on both primary and secondary source materials.

Topic suggestions can be found on Blackboard.

Submitting Papers

All papers will be submitted via Blackboard. It is your responsibility to see that your paper is uploaded properly and on time. If I can't see it, it's not there. Double check your attachment.

You will also submit a "check list" reviewing the required elements of each essay along with the paper itself. This checklist is available on Blackboard. The checklist is required. Failure to submit the checklist with the paper will result in a 1/3 of a letter grade penalty.

That checklist forms the basis for my grading rubric, which is also available on Blackboard.

Format

- Essays must be typewritten, double-spaced, in a 12pt. font, and have one-inch margins. Fix the defaults on your word processor. I WILL deduct points for improperly formatted papers. You MUST follow instructions. (Anyway, it is easy.)
- Text on the 1st page must begin at the upper margin of the paper.
- Papers must bear a separate, standard title page.
- Other than the title page, each page must be numbered.
- Spelling counts. Use spell-check on your computer, or get someone to proofread for you.
- Citations, including footnotes and bibliography, must be in Chicago or Turabian style.

Note this well: failure to correctly cite your sources in the Chicago/Turabian format will result in an *automatic* deduction of 10 points from the final paper grade.

For help, see the Illinois Valley Community College Stylebook:
<https://www.ivcc.edu/stylebooks/stylebook5.aspx?id=14644>

Papers lacking these elements *will* be marked down.

Final Exam (100 points)

The final exam will be a take home, distributed at least 48 hours in advance of the due date.

The final exam will be submitted via Blackboard. It is your responsibility to see that the paper is uploaded properly and on time. Double check your attachment.

XI. Me:

Prof. Philip F. Napoli
Office Location: 1123A Boylan Hall
Office Hours: M, W 12:00PM--1:30PM
Email: Philip.napoli@gmail.com/pnapoli@brooklyn.cuny.edu.

XII. Required Texts:

- Title: America Longest War: The United States and Vietnam,
Author: Herring, George,
Publisher: McGraw-Hill Companies
Edition: 5
Year Published: 2013

- Title: Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War
Author: McMahon / Paterson,
Publisher: Cengage, Edition: 4
Year Published: 2007
- Title: The Sympathizer: A Novel
Author: Nguyen, Viet Thanh
Publisher: Grove/Atlantic, Incorporated
Year Published: 2016

**Fall 2017
Teaching Calendar**

*******Scheduling Notes*******

1. This fall there will be a mandatory trip to the New-York Historical Society to see their Vietnam war exhibition, which opens in September. Our tour date is November 17, 2017 at 10:00am.

We are being treated as a special, even exceptional, group because for the last 3 years I have served as an academic advisor to the exhibition. Come with us and get a 10% discount at the gift store!

If you cannot attend with the group, you must nevertheless go to the N-YHS to view the exhibition and you must provide me with photographic proof that you have done so.

2. “The Vietnam War,” a new 10-part, 18-hour documentary film series directed by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, will premiere September 17, 2017, on PBS stations nationwide.

I expect students to watch the entire thing this term. It will become a critical component of our class discussions and weekly journal postings, and one element of your final exam.

The first five episodes will air nightly from Sunday, September 17, through Thursday, September 21, and the final five episodes will air nightly from Sunday, September 24, through Thursday, September 28.

Each episode will premiere at 8:00 p.m. ET with a repeat broadcast immediately following the premiere.

Beginning Tuesday, October 3, the series will re-air on a weekly basis through November 28, at 9:00 p.m. ET.

On September 17, concurrent with the broadcast premiere, the first five episodes of THE VIETNAM WAR will be available for streaming on all station-branded PBS platforms,

including PBS.org and PBS apps for iOS, Android, Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV and Chromecast, and the final five episodes will be available beginning September 24.

All episodes will remain accessible until October 3, when the series begins its weekly rebroadcast.³

3. I am trying to bring several guest speakers to class. Because they are all busy professionals, their schedules may force changes to the calendar below. If I need to make changes, I'll announce it in class and post the information to Blackboard.

Class Schedule

Monday, August 28

Introductions

Wednesday, August 30

Vietnam: The Country and the War

- Major Problems, Chapter 1, “Vietnam and America” (Blackboard)

Monday, September 4 College Closed

Wednesday, September 6

French Colony and Vietnamese Nationalism

- Major Problems, Chapter 2 “Development of Vietnamese Nationalism” (Blackboard)

Monday, September 11

World War II

- Major Problems, Chapter 3, The Roots of the American Commitment, pp. 49-60.
- Herring, chapter 1, “A Dead-End Ally” (Blackboard)

Wednesday, September 13

The French Indo-Chinese War

³ Most of the language in this paragraph comes from the PBS web site: <http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/the-vietnam-war/home/> Accessed July 21, 2017.

- Major Problems, Chapter 4, Dwight D. Eisenhower and Vietnam, pp. 87-100.
- Herring, chapter 2, “Our Offspring” (Blackboard)

Sunday, September 17

Ken Burns program “The Vietnam War” begins on PBS, 8:00pm.

Monday, September 18

Oral History

- Tim O’Brien, “How to Tell a True War Story” (Blackboard)
- Jackson, “Perfect Informant” (Blackboard)

Wednesday, September 20 No Classes

Monday, September 25

From Nation Building to Assassination

- Major Problems, chapter 5, John Kennedy and Vietnam, pp. 123-137.
- Herring, chapter 3, “Limited Partnership: Kennedy and Diem”

Wednesday, September 27

Gulf of Tonkin and Escalation

- Major Problems, chapter 6, Lyndon B. Johnson’s Decision for War, pp. 158-176.
- Herring, chapter 4, “Enough, but not Too Much”

Monday, October 2 & Wednesday, October 4

Fighting the War, 1965-1967

- Major Problems, chapter 7, US Military Strategy, pp. 206-217.
- Jack Smith, “Death in the Ia Drang Valley, November 13-18, 1965,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 28 January 1967 (Blackboard)
- Herring, chapter 5, “On the Tiger’s Back”

Monday, October 9 College Closed

Wednesday, October 11 & Monday, October 16

The Big Year: 1968

- Major Problems, chapter 10, The Tet Offensive, pp. 314-332.
- Herring, chapter 6, “A Very Near Thing”

Wednesday, October 18

The American Combat Soldier’s Experience

- Christian Appy, *Working Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam*, chapter 1, pgs. 1 – 44. (44 pgs.) (Blackboard)

Monday, October 23

Guest Speaker: TBA

Oral History Paper Due October 23, by midnight.

Wednesday, October 25

Sex and Gender in Vietnam I

Guest Speaker Jeanne Christie (American Red Cross)

- Heather Marie Stur, “She Could Be the Girl Next Door: The Red Cross SRAO in Vietnam,” from *Beyond Combat: Women and Gender in the Vietnam Era*,” (Blackboard)

Monday, October 30

Sex and Gender in Vietnam II

Guest Speaker: Denny Meyer (US Navy)

- Steve Estes, “Ask and Tell: Gay Veterans, Identity, and Oral History on a Civil Rights Frontier,” *Oral Hist Rev* (2005) 32 (2): 21-47. (Blackboard)

Wednesday, November 1

Catch Up Day, because I’m likely to be behind at this point

Monday, November 6

War Crimes

- Nick Turse, excerpt from *Kill Anything that Moves*, chapter 4, “A Litany of Atrocities.” (Blackboard)
- Guenter Lewy, *America in Vietnam*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), Chapter 9, “Atrocities: Fiction and Fact,” pgs. 316 - 322. (Blackboard)
- B. G. Burkett and Glenna Whitley, *Stolen Valor*, (Dallas, TX: Verity Press, 1998), Chapter 6, “Atrocities: The Good War Versus the Bad War,” pgs. 130 - 137. (Blackboard)
- Symore M. Hersh, “The My Lai Massacre” St. Louis Post Dispatch stories, 1969. (Blackboard)

Wednesday, November 8 & Monday, November 13

The Anti- and Pro-War Movements

- Major Problems, Chapter 13, The Anti-War Movement, pp. 427-442. (Blackboard)
- John Prados, “The Veterans Antiwar Movement in Fact and Memory” (Blackboard).
- Joshua B. Freeman, “Hardhats: Construction Workers, Manliness, and the 1970 Pro-War Demonstrations,” *Journal of Social History*, Summer 1993 v26 n4 p725 (Blackboard).

Wednesday, November 15 & Monday, November 20

TV and The Press

- Andrew J. Huebner, “Rethinking American Press Coverage of the Vietnam War, 1965-68,” *Journalism History*; Athens 31.3 (Fall 2005): 150-161. (Blackboard)
- Chester Patch, ““Our Worst Enemy Seems to Be the Press”: TV News, the Nixon Administration, and U.S. Troop Withdrawal from Vietnam, 1969–1973.” *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 3 (June 2010): 555-565. (Blackboard)
- Charles Mohr, “Village Burnings Disturb Marines,” *New York Times*, 9 Aug. 1965. (Blackboard)
- Marquis Childs, “The Censor’s Role in Vietnam,” *Washington Post*, 24 Sept. 1965. (Blackboard)
- William F. Buckley Jr., “U.S. Troops in Vietnam Shouldn’t be Sniped at From Behind, Too,” *Los Angeles Times*, 16 Aug. 1965. (Blackboard)

Friday, November 17

Trip to the New York Historical Society

Wednesday, November 22

Nixon

- Major Problems, Chapter 12, Richard M. Nixon's Strategy for Withdrawal, pp. 386-404.
- Herring, chapter 7, "A War for Peace"

Monday, November 27

Fall of South Vietnam

- Major Problems, Chapter 14, Paris Peace Accords and the Fall of South Vietnam, pp. 475-491.

Wednesday, November 29 & Monday, December 4

Long Term Social/Political Impact & Vietnam Veterans

- Herring, Chapter 8, "The Postwar...."
- Start reading Viet Than Nguyen, *The Sympathizer*
- "A Peacetime Bill for the Warrior," from Mark Boulton, *Failing Our Veterans: The G.I. Bill and the Vietnam Generation* (New York: NYU Press), 2014. (Blackboard)

Wednesday, December 6 & Monday, December 11

Long Term Social/Political Impact

- Viet Than Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* (all)

Research Paper Due

Wednesday, December 13

Reading day

Thursday, December 14

Final exams begin