

HIS 337
F 2019

Final Paper Assignment

For your final paper in this course, you must choose an issue, question, or problem that has been central to U.S. culture during the Vietnam War Era or to the war's legacy in U.S. culture. Drawing on significant research in relevant primary sources (media coverage, government documents, archives of various groups, etc.) and substantial research in scholarly sources, you will develop a thesis and argument that provides an original analysis that addresses your issue, question, or problem. This paper should be about 4,500 words (15 pages), exclusive of footnotes and a bibliography. This assignment is worth 25% of your grade.

The range of topics is wide open, but ultimately I must approve your choice. Some issues that you might want to consider include:

- U.S. policy towards Indochina / Vietnam in the period before, during, and after the Vietnam War, including the activities of the Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations.
- Domestic attitudes towards the war (the anti-war movement, the pro-war movement, congressional attitudes and actions, the responses of particular groups or communities, etc.).
- U.S. military policy (recruitment, training, deployment, strategy, tactics, etc.)
- The representation of the war in U.S. media or popular culture.
- The legacies of the war in U.S. culture, politics, military strategy, etc.
- The political, military, or cultural response to a particular event or set of events (e.g. the My Lai Massacre, Agent Orange use, Kent State, etc.)
- The local (e.g. Washington PA, Pittsburgh, Western PA) dimensions of some aspect of the war.
- Local efforts to memorialize the war
- Veterans' issues

Any of these topics is sufficiently broad as to require that you narrow the topic to something more manageable while still ensuring that there is a sufficient amount of primary sources to develop an argument. As we will see "U.S. policy toward the Diem regime" is too broad – people have written competing books about that – so a much narrower topic is necessary. "How did Catholics in Pittsburgh respond to the Diem regime?" or "How did Pennsylvania's senators respond to the Battle of Saigon?" are much more manageable.

As always, I am happy to offer advice and suggestions at any stage of the writing process. Please feel free to contact me.

Due Dates:

1. Friday 9/13: A list of three possible topics for your research paper is due by email at 5:00PM
2. Friday 10/4: A one-page précis of your topic that identifies your argument along with a bibliography of five secondary sources is due via email by 12:00PM
3. Wednesday, 10/23: A 1,500-word review essay on at least five examples of recent scholarship relevant to your topic, with bibliography and textual excerpts. What are the major issues that scholars have addressed related to your topic? How have they done so (e.g. what sort of evidence have they used)? What issues, questions, or concerns does this body of work raise?
4. Wednesday, 11/13: A 1,200 word analysis of at least five relevant primary sources drawn from media coverage, government archives, and/or popular culture, with bibliography and textual excerpts due in the box on my office door by 12:00PM
5. Friday 12/6: COMPLETE Draft of Final Research Paper Due by 5:00PM– Schedule meeting with DK to discuss revisions
6. Saturday 12/14: Final paper due by 12:00PM