

HIST 70603 Seminar in U.S. History: The Vietnam War
Kara Dixon Vuic



Spring 2019
Reed Hall 135
Tuesdays, 1:00-3:40 PM

Office: Reed Hall 304
k.vuic@tcu.edu 817-257-4136
Office Hours: MTW 1-2 and by appointment

Course Description

This reading seminar will explore America's Vietnam War in the larger context of Vietnamese history and the Cold War, American political and military strategy, and the American social and cultural climate of the 1960s and early 1970s. A history of the war both at home and abroad, the course will consider the broad and lasting influences of the war on Vietnam, on American political institutions, and on American national identity. Our readings will thus introduce us to such topics as military strategy, diplomacy, gender, class, race, ethnicity, and memory. The class coincides with the 2019 LCpl. Benjamin W. Schmidt Symposium on War, Conflict, and Society, which will focus on the Vietnam War.

Assignments and Grading

- ◆ **Participation** (35%) Informed, constructive participation in discussion is vital to the work of historians, and it is central to your performance in this course. I expect that everyone come to class prepared to engage in thoughtful discussion about the week's readings, to draw connections between readings in the course and others in your field, and to consider the ways the course readings shape a broader historiography of the Vietnam War.
- ◆ **Leading Class Discussion** (10%) Everyone will help to lead class discussion for one book. Your task for this assignment is three-fold: provide context and background, outline relevant historiography, and frame discussion. 1) At the beginning of class, the discussion leader will introduce the week's reading by providing useful background information on the author, her/his credentials and scholarly work, and professional reactions to the book. 2) Discussion leaders will also provide a brief synopsis of the historiographical debate into which the work fits. Bring to class for distribution a briefly annotated bibliography of approximately ten related works. You need not have read every word of every book you reference in this bibliography, but you do need to explain clearly the trends in historical writing about the subject. 3) Discussion leaders will then frame the class discussion by posing prepared

discussion questions (which should be typed and submitted to me, along with your thoughts). Be sure to keep your questions open-ended so that we can collectively consider important elements of the work's thesis and evidence, its contributions to the historical literature, and its relationship to other works in the course.

- ◆ **Book Reviews** (10% each) Everyone will select two books to review (one before Spring Break, one after, and not the book for which you lead discussion). Reviews should follow the format of those in the *Journal of American History* or the *American Historical Review* and should address the following questions: What questions does the book address? What is the author's argument, and how does s/he use evidence to establish that argument? How effectively does the author make her/his case? What are the book's strengths and weaknesses? Reviews are due in class on the day the book is discussed and should be 750 words.
- ◆ **Historiographical Essay** (35%) Everyone will select a topic related to the readings for the course and write a 5000-word essay that describes and analyzes its historiography. Your essay should describe the origins of the field of inquiry you choose, describe the major debates that have shaped its historical literature, analyze scholars' approaches to the field, and evaluate the reasons for major changes in historians' approaches to the field. Your essay should analyze at least six works (no more than one from this class), but it should do more than merely review each book you choose. Instead, your essay should compare and contrast the works you describe, evaluate how the authors approach the subject, consider the various ways the authors use evidence to establish their arguments, and analyze the ways these works contribute to the broader historiography of your subject. You may choose any subject you wish, though you should meet with me early in the term to discuss your topic and the works you select. Essays are due the last week of class.

Course Schedule and Readings

January 15

Jim Wright, *Enduring Vietnam: An American Generation and Its War* (MacMillan, 2017)

January 22

Frederik Logevall, *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam* (Penguin, 2014)

January 29 (reschedule!)

Mark Atwood Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History* (Oxford University Press, 2008)

February 5

Pierre Asselin, *Vietnam's American War: A History* (Cambridge, 2017)

February 12

Gregory A. Daddis, *Westmoreland's War: Reassessing American Strategy in Vietnam* (Oxford, 2014)

—or—

Gregory A. Daddis, *Withdrawal: Reassessing America's Final Years in Vietnam* (Oxford, 2017)

February 19

Christian G. Appy, *Working Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (University of North Carolina, 1993)

Beth Bailey, draft of Chapter 1 in “The U.S. Army and the ‘Problem of Race’”

February 26

Lorena Oropeza, *¡Raza Si! Guerra No! Chicano Protest and Patriotism during the Vietnam War Era* (University of California, 2005)

March 5

Sandra Scanlon, *The Pro-War Movement: Domestic Support for the Vietnam War and the Making of Modern American Conservatism* (University of Massachusetts, 2013)

*****be sure to submit your first book review by this week**

March 12

Spring Break

March 19

Edwin A. Martini, *Agent Orange: History, Science, and the Politics of Uncertainty* (University of Massachusetts, 2012)

March 22-23

Symposium

March 26

Lien-Hang T. Nguyen, *Hanoi's War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam* (University of North Carolina, 2016)

April 2

Nick Turse, *Kill Anything that Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam* (Picador, 2013)

April 9

Meredith H. Lair, *Armed with Abundance: Consumerism and Soldiering in the Vietnam War* (University of North Carolina, 2011)

April 16

Jerry Lembcke, *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam* (NYU, 2000)
—or—

Jerry Lembcke, *Hanoi Jane: War, Sex, and Fantasies of Betrayal* (University of Massachusetts, 2010)

April 23

Penny Lewis, *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory* (Cornell, 2013)

April 30

Christian G. Appy, *American Reckoning: The Vietnam War and Our National Identity* (Penguin Random House, 2016)

***** be sure to submit your second book review by this week**

***** historiography essays due**