

Vietnam War History AY23

Course Syllabus

COURSE INSTRUCTOR:

Michael E. Weaver,
Ph.D. ACSC/DEA
Room 187
953-2667
Michael.weaver.1@au.af.edu

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- A. This course helps officers comprehend the history of the Vietnam War.
- B. Officers critically analyze four books and communicate their findings to the class.
- C. Officers will relate the experience and lessons of the Vietnam War to 21st century security challenges.

REQUIREMENTS

This elective is a colloquium, a class in which officers read and discuss a wide range of books on a particular subject—in this case, the Vietnam War. Student-led discussions and instructor lectures comprise the format of the class. The discussions focus on the individual readings officers will complete, while the lectures give a broader overview of the topic.

There is no research paper.

Every one reads the common textbook, plus four additional books from the attached list on pages 3-6 of this syllabus. We select books on the first day of class.

Officers write four evaluation papers, one for each selected book. The evaluation papers have to convey the author's argument, explain how the argument is made, evaluate his or her success in doing so, and summarize your overall evaluation of the book; a successful essay evaluates and analyzes a book's arguments.

Each paper is due at noon the day prior to the seminar; officers will send electronic copies to everyone in the class by that time. Everyone needs to read each paper before class and develop a question for discussion. Each officer prepares a 5-minute tabletop presentation on his or her book that not only covers the high points of the written assignment, but also covers elements not covered in the essay. Everyone will field questions about the book they read.

Professor Weaver is the author of *The Air War in Vietnam*. Texas Tech University Press, 2022 and *Guard Wars: The 28th Infantry Division in World War II*. Indiana University Press, 2010. He has been teaching this course since 2003 and updates it every year.

EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS:

Book evaluation 1	10 percent	4 pages	January 24
Book evaluation 2	25 percent	4 pages	February 28
Book evaluation 3	30 percent	4 pages	April 4
Book evaluation 4	35 percent	4 pages	May 3

COMMON TEXT: Charles E. Neu, *America's Lost War. Vietnam: 1945-1975*. Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2005.

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LESSON STRUCTURE

Jan 4 – Introduction to the Vietnam War

Lesson Description: the background of the war prior to 1964, historiographical debates, how to write an evaluation paper, tabletop presentation methods.

Officers select books from the lists on pages 3-6 of this syllabus.

READING: None.

Jan 11 -- Communist Strategy

Lesson Description: discussion *America's Lost War*. Lecture on communist strategy.

READING: Charles E. Neu. *America's Lost War. Vietnam: 1945-1975*. Pp. vii-232.

Jan 18 – American Strategy

Lesson Description: Lecture on American strategy during the war.

READINGS: Books selected from list 1.

Jan 25 – Book Evaluation 1 Presentations

Lesson Description: officers discuss their book evaluations.

READINGS: Books selected from list 1.

Feb 8 – The Air War and Air Power Effectiveness: Air Superiority

Lesson Description: Lecture on the contest for air superiority over North Vietnam.

READINGS: Books selected from list 2.

Feb 15 – The Air War and Air Power Effectiveness: Air Support

Lesson Description: Lecture on the effectiveness of air support.

READINGS: Books selected from list 2.

Mar 1 – Book Evaluation 2 Presentations

Lesson Description: officers discuss their book evaluations.

READINGS: Books selected from list 2.

Mar 8 -- The Air War and Air Power Effectiveness:

Lesson Description: Lecture on the effectiveness of air interdiction.

READINGS: Books selected from list 3.

Mar 29 – The American Home Front

Lesson Description: Lecture on the American home front during the war

READINGS: Books selected from list 3

Apr 5 – Book Evaluation 3 Presentations

Lesson Description: officers discuss their book evaluations

READINGS: Books selected from list 3

Apr 19 – Nixon's Vietnam War, Cambodia, Laos, Linebacker I & II.

Lesson Description: Lecture on the war from 1969-1972.

READINGS: Books selected from list 4.

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May 3 – Book Evaluation 4 Presentations

Lesson Description: officers discuss their book evaluations. Discussion of relevance of the Vietnam War to national security in the 21st century.

READINGS: Books selected from list 4.

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Book option list 1

- Bilton, Michael. *Four Hours in My Lai: A War Crime and Its Aftermath*. New York: Viking, 1991.
- Daddis, Gregory A. *Westmoreland's War: Reassessing American Strategy in Vietnam*. Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Hennessy, Michael A. *Strategy in Vietnam: The Marines and Revolutionary Warfare in I Corps, 1965-1972*. Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 1997.
- Herring, George C. *LBJ and Vietnam: A Different Kind of War*. University of Texas Press, 1994.
- Laslie, Brian. *Air Power's Lost Cause: The American Air Wars of Vietnam*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2021.
- McNamara, Robert S. *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*. New York: Times Books/Random House, 1995.
- Michel, Marshall L. *Clashes: Air Combat over Vietnam, 1965-1972*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1997.
- Moise, Edwin E. *Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- Moore, Harold G. and Joseph L. Galloway. *We Were Soldiers Once, and Young*. New York: Random House, 1992.
- Nguyen, Lien-Hang T. *Hanoi's War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam*. University of North Carolina Press, 2012.
- Tilford, Earl H. Jr. *Setup: What the Air Force Did in Vietnam and Why*. Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1991.
- Wagner, William. *Lighting Bugs and other Reconnaissance Drones*. Fallbrook, CA: Aero Publishers, 1982.

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Book option list 2

- Barrett, David M. *Uncertain Warriors: Lyndon Johnson and his Vietnam Advisors*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993.
- Brigham, Robert K. *ARVN: Life and Death in the South Vietnamese Army*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006.
- Daddis, Gregory A. *No Sure Victory: Measuring U.S. Army Effectiveness and Progress in the Vietnam War*. Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Krepinevich, Andrew A. *The Army and Vietnam*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.
- Lewy, Guenter. *America in Vietnam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- McMaster, H.R. *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies that Led to Vietnam*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1997
- Moyar, Mark. *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: The CIA's Secret Campaign to Destroy the Viet Cong*. Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1997.
- Reardon, Carol. *Launch the Intruders: A Naval Attack Squadron in the Vietnam War, 1972*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005.
- Shaw, John M. *The Cambodian Campaign: The 1970 Offensive and America's Vietnam War*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005.
- Shay, Jonathan. *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.
- Sherwood, John Darrell. *Afterburner: Naval Aviators and the Vietnam War*. New York: New York University Press, 2004.
- Wilkins, Warren. *Grab Their Belts to Fight Them: The Viet Cong's Big Unit War against the U.S., 1965-1966*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2011.

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Book Option List 3

- Berman, Larry. *No Peace, No Honor: Nixon, Kissinger, and Betrayal in Vietnam*. New York: Free Press, 2001.
- Clodfelter, Mark. *The Limits of Air Power: The American Bombing of North Vietnam*. 2d ed. University of Nebraska Press, 2006.
- Duiker, William. *Sacred War: Nationalism and Revolution in a Divided Vietnam*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994.
- Freeman, Gregory A. *Troubled Water: Race, Mutiny and Bravery on the USS Kitty Hawk*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Gilbert, Marc Jason. Ed. *Why the North Won the Vietnam War*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.
- Graham, Herman. *The Brothers' Vietnam War: Black Power, Manhood, and the Military Experience*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003.
- Kimball, Jeffrey. *Nixon's Vietnam War*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998.
- Robbins, James S. *This Time We Win: Revisiting the Tet Offensive*. Encounter Books, 2010.
- Sharp, U.S. Grant. *Strategy for Defeat: Vietnam in Retrospect*. San Rafael, CA: Presidio Press, 1978.
- Summers, Harry G. Jr. *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*. San Rafael: Presidio Press, 1982.
- Westheider, James E. *Fighting on Two Fronts: African Americans and the Vietnam War*. New York University Press, 1997.
- Wiest, Andrew. *Vietnam's Forgotten Army: Heroism and Betrayal in the ARVN*. New York: New York University Press, 2007.
- Willbanks, James A. *A Raid too Far: Operation Lam Son 719 and Vietnamization in Laos*. Texas A&M University Press, 2014.

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Book Option List 4

- Canh, Nguyen Van. *Vietnam under Communism, 1975-1982*. Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1983.
- Kulik, Gary. *War Stories: False Atrocity Tales, Swift Boaters, and Winter Soldiers—What Really Happened in Vietnam*. Potomac Books, 2009.
- Lepre, George. *Fragging: Why U.S Soldiers Assaulted Their Officers in Vietnam*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2011.
- Kuzmarov, Jeremy. *The Myth of the Addicted Army: Vietnam and the Modern War on Drugs*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2009.
- Lind, Michael. *Vietnam The Necessary War: A Reinterpretation of America's Most Disastrous Military Conflict*. New York: The Free Press, 1999.
- Michel, Marshall L. III. *The 11 Days of Christmas: America's Last Vietnam Battle*. Encounter Books, 2002.
- Payne, Kenneth. *The Psychology of Strategy: Exploring Rationality in the Vietnam War*. Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Randolph, Stephen P. *Powerful and Brutal Weapons: Nixon, Kissinger, and the Easter Offensive*. Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Sorley, Lewis. *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999.
- Walton, C. Dale. *The Myth of Inevitable US Defeat in Vietnam*. London, Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass, 2002.
- Whitcomb, Darrel D. *Moral Imperative: 1972, Combat Rescue, and the End of American's War in Vietnam*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2021.
- Wilbanks, James H. *Abandoning Vietnam: How America Left and South Vietnam Lost Its War*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004.