Pol. Sci. 329 Mr. Grow

Fall 1997 Mr. Levin

The Vietnam War and American Foreign Policy

Thur Sep 11 Introduction

The Early Years

Tues Sep 16 The War Nobody Won
  Karnow, Vietnam, Ch. 1
  FitzGerald, Fire in the Lake, pp. 1-39

Thur Sep 18 Vietnamese Nationalism and the Cold War
  Karnow, Vietnam, Ch. 2, 3, 4
  FitzGerald, Fire in the Lake, pp. 40-89

Tues Sep 23 Eisenhower and the American Presence
  Karnow, Vietnam, Ch. 5
  FitzGerald, Fire in the Lake, pp. 90-172

II. The Kennedy Years

Thur Sep 25 Diem, America, and Kennedy’s ”New Frontier”
  Karnow, Vietnam, Ch. 6
  Sheehan, A Bright, Shining Lie, pp. 3-126, 387-499

Tues Sep 30 The Best and the Brightest
  Karnow, Vietnam, Ch. 7
  Halberstam, The Best and The Brightest, pp. 3-302
  Sheehan, A Bright, Shining Lie, pp. 127-200

  Evening: Movie

Thur Oct 2 McNamara’s War (1)
  Sheehan, A Bright, Shining Lie, pp. 201-66
  FitzGerald, Fire in the Lake, pp. 173-285

Tues Oct 7 The End of Diem and Kennedy
  Karnow, Vietnam, Ch. 8

III: The Johnson Years

Thur Oct 9 America’s Deepening Involvement
  Karnow, Vietnam, Ch. 9
  Halberstam, The Best and The Brightest, pp. 302-482
  Sheehan, A Bright, Shining Lie, pp. 499-586
  Herring, LBJ and Vietnam, Ch. 1

  Discussion: Caputo, A Rumor of War

Tues Oct 14 McNamara’s War (2)
  Karnow, Vietnam, Ch. 10
  Halberstam, The Best and The Brightest, pp. 482-610
  Herring, LBJ and Vietnam, Ch. 2
Evening: Movie

Thur Oct 16 Escalation and the Darkening Tunnel
Karnow, Vietnam, Ch. 11, 12
Sheehan, A Bright, Shining Lie, pp. 587-790
Herring, LBJ and Vietnam, Ch. 3

Tues Oct 21 Disorder at Home and in Asia
Karnow, Vietnam, Ch. 13, 14
Herring, LBJ and Vietnam, Ch. 4-7

Thur Oct 23 Mid-Term Examination

Tues Oct 28 Nixon's War
Karnow, Vietnam, Ch. 15
FitzGerald, Fire in the Lake, pp. 505-532
Discussion: Bao Ninh, The Sorrow of War

Thur Oct 30 Negotiating America's Withdrawal
Kissinger, Memoirs (Handout)

Tues Nov 4 TBA
Thur Nov 6 TBA

V. Aftermath

Tues Nov 11 The "Fall" of South Vietnam
Karnow, Vietnam, Ch. 16

Thur Nov 13 Vietnam and the United States in the 1990s
FitzGerald, Fire in the Lake, pp. 533-554

The Vietnam War and American Foreign Policy

The war in Vietnam was a defining moment in American history. This war has been seen as the first defeat for the American military, the beginning of a process of disillusionment with institutions of authority, and the onset of a cataclysmic change in the way citizens think of (and relate to) politics. The Vietnam war stands as a sort of watershed event for American politics, foreign policy, culture and values for the second half of the 20th century in much the way that the Civil War was in the 1860s or the Great Depression in the 1930s.

The war had a similarly wide ranging impact in Southeast Asia. The war altered the geopolitical balance of power in the region. It marked a turning point in western involvement in the region and has been hailed as one of the turning points in Asian history. It also set in motion a series of events that saw the emergence a murderous regime in Cambodia and the exodus of hundreds of thousand of people from Vietnam.

This course examines the events that brought the United States into the conflict in Southeast Asia. On one level, the class sessions will look at the chain of events that shaped this period. At a more important level, they will evaluate the processes by which American foreign policy was formed, and the perceptions and mis-perceptions that shaped the making of this policy. The underlying goal is a critical analysis of the forces that shape the making of American foreign policy.

Readings

The readings present historical information and analytic perspectives. Students are responsible for all of the assigned readings, even those not discussed in class. Readings should be completed before coming to class on the date indicated in the syllabus.

The following books will be used as texts for this course:

Stanley Karnow, Vietnam: A History

https://acad.carleton.edu/curricular/POSC/classes/Posc329/F97/index.html
Frances Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake*
George Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam*
Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie*
David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*

There are also two novels on the list:
Philip Caputo, *A Rumor of War*
Bao Ninh, *The Sorrow of War*

Finally, your final assignment will be based, in part, on an interpretation of the following:
Robert McNamara, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*

**Grading**
Grades for the course will be based on a mid-term examination, an interpretative paper, and class attendance and participation. The weight of each is as follows:

- Mid-term exam: 40%
- Interpretive Paper: 60%
40%
Attendance, participation
20%