

THE SOCIOLOGY OF VIETNAM: CONFLICT, COLONIALISM, AND CATHARSIS

Class Meetings: Wednesday and Fridays, 3:00 p.m. - 4:25 p.m.

Office Hours: Monday and Friday 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon *and by appointment*

Trinity 302

Email: harris@hws.edu

Telephone -- Office: (315)781-3439 Home (315) 789-0438

Description

In this course we explore the social world of Vietnam. We will study the varied and complex history, culture and social relations of Vietnam. Through our study of their institutions, arts, and artifacts, we will find ourselves immersed in the life world of Vietnam, and are likely to achieve a fuller appreciation of the modes and meanings of what it means to be Vietnamese, and what it means to be American.

We examine the many forces of social relations that impinge on Vietnamese life. This includes geography and geographic location, social institutions such as kinship, village, religion, economy, education, and arts, tribal and ethnic history and the continued influence of ethnic groups, and the diversity of its urban and rural regions. In addition, we examine Vietnam's legacy of conflict and colonialism, including the American/Vietnam war and its human social, political and environmental effects on the nation.

Finally, we explore at how the Vietnamese are negotiating and seeking to reconcile and resolve the contradictions of socialist and capitalist theory and practice, as they seek to improve the lives of its people, and position themselves as a significant Southeast Asian political and economic force.

Course Objectives

- (1) Develop a sophisticated sociological imagination as students engage in study of a dissimilar culture;
- (2) Learn to appreciate societal, cultural and sub-cultural diversity and an interest in things and ways of life that are "different," acquiring the intellectual tools to understand these other ways of life;
- (3) Learn how their own national and social location influence their assumptions and how they view the world;
- (4) Become sensitive to issues of personal and social development, the distribution of power and rewards and how the quality of social relationships is everywhere a matter of concern;
- (5) Become aware of how "modernity" has affected societies all over the world and how the peoples of the world are becoming increasingly interdependent;
- (6) Become aware of the transformative power of sociological consciousness and their role as world citizens and seek to arrive at an understanding of social groups as well as exploring social problems and social-justice concerns;
- (7) Become more sophisticated as observers, readers, and writers.
- (8) Come to understand that ethics and morality require a careful and deliberate analysis in heterogeneous, multi-cultural societies and cross-cultural relationships.

Methods of Evaluation

Your work will include 3 short (5 page) papers (60%) and a fourth and final (10 page) paper (40%) and active participation and positive contributions to class discussion about readings.

Reading List

Borton, After Sorrow

Duiker, Sacred War: Nationalism and Revolution in a Divided Vietnam

Duong Thu Huong, Paradise of the Blind

Jamieson, Understanding Vietnam

Halberstam, The Making of A Quagmire

Kolko, Anatomy of a Peace

SarDesai, Vietnam: The Struggle for National Identity

Templer, Shadows and Wind: A View of Modern Vietnam

Course Outline:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. History and Cultural Patterns | Readings: | Jamieson, <u>Understanding Vietnam</u> , Chapter 1
SarDesai, <u>Vietnam...</u> , Chapters 1, 2
Duiker, <u>Sacred War...</u> , Chapters 1-4 |
| 2. Organization & Structure:
Tradition and Modernity | Readings:
Handouts | Jamieson, <u>Understanding Vietnam</u> , Chapters 2-4 |
| 3. The American War &
Its Aftermath | Readings: | SarDesai, <u>Vietnam...</u> , Chapters 5, 6
Duiker, <u>Sacred War...</u> , Chapters 3-7, Epilogue
Halberstam, <u>The Making of a Quagmire</u>
Jamieson, <u>Understanding Vietnam</u> , Chapters 5-7
Borton, <u>After Sorrow</u> |
| 4. Contemporary Assessments:
Is Vietnam on the Right Path? | Readings: | Duong, <u>Paradise of the Blind</u>
SarDesai, <u>Vietnam...</u> , Chapters 7-10
Kolko, <u>Anatomy of a Peace</u>
Templer, <u>Shadows and Wind</u> |

Paper Topics and Due Dates:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Paper One: “ <i>Distinctive Aspects of Vietnamese History</i> ” | Wednesday, February 5 |
| Paper Two: “ <i>Distinguishing Elements of Vietnamese Culture</i> ” | Wednesday, March 5 |
| Paper Three: “ <i>The American War: An Interpretation</i> ” | Wednesday, April 9 |
| Paper Four: “ <i>The Future of Vietnam & the Vietnamese</i> ” | Tuesday, May 6 |