

**FRPG 189L: The American Experience in Vietnam in Film and Culture**  
Spring 2007  
Karl Schonberg  
Monday 12:00-3:00, Wednesday 12:00-1:30

Office Hours: Wednesday 1:30-3:00, Hepburn 206  
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***Course Description:***

The Vietnam War profoundly affected Americans' view of themselves and the world and continues to shape political discourse about war and peace today. Frequent comparisons of the war in Iraq to Vietnam are just one example of the powerful effect that memories of this era continue to have in American society. The history of the conflict in Vietnam from the late 1940s through the mid-1970s and Iraq from 1991-2006 will be examined in this course. Students will be asked to think critically about the similarities and differences between these conflicts, to consider what Americans have learned from the war in Vietnam and what they should have learned, as well as how individuals and societies use history to understand the world of the present.


This First Year Seminar will help students develop and refine the research, communication, and critical thinking skills that will be necessary for success in upper-level college courses. Students in this course will complete a research paper of approximately 17 pages, and significant class time will be devoted to the process of academic research and writing at every stage of this project. Students will also be required to give oral presentations of their research at multiple points as it progresses.

***Required Texts:***

James P. Davis, Guide to Writing with Sources, (Roman and Littlefield, 2004).  
George C Herring, America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975, 4th edition, (McGraw Hill, 2002).  
Thomas Ricks, Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq, (Penguin, 2006).  
Andrew Rotter, Light at the End of the Tunnel: A Vietnam War Anthology, Revised Edition, (Scholarly Resources, 1999).

***Grading:***

Research Paper #1 (9 pages, due Friday March 2): **20%**  
2<sup>nd</sup> Research Paper Outline with Thesis Statement and List of Sources (due April 4): **10%**  
Research Paper #2 (17 pages, due May 12): **30%**  
Research Presentation: **10%**  
Writing Portfolio: **15%**  
Class Participation: **15%**



January 22-24: Introduction/Historical Background  
Rotter, Introduction (xiii-xxxiv)

January 29-31: 1950-1954  
Herring, 3-51.  
Rotter, 3-18.  
Film: *The Quiet American* (2003)

February 5-7: 1954-1963  
Herring, 53-129.  
Rotter, 31-46, 65-75.  
In-class discussion: writing a thesis statement

February 12-14: 1963-1965  
Herring, 131-169.  
Rotter, 76-104.  
Film: *Path to War* (2002) [excerpts]  
In-class discussion: finding and using academic sources

**February 14: Final Research Paper Topic Statement Due**

February 19-21: 1965-1967  
Herring, 171-223.  
Rotter, 115-123, 314-322.  
Film: *Path to War* (2002) [excerpts]  
In-class discussion: using citations

February 26-28: 1968  
Herring, 225-271  
Rotter, 105-114.  
Film: *Full Metal Jacket* (1987)

**First Research Paper Due Friday March 2 by 4:30 p.m.**

March 5-7: The War from Soldiers' Perspectives  
Rotter, 195-221, 249-263.  
Film: *Platoon* (1986)

March 12-14: 1969-1973  
Herring, 271-321.  
Rotter, 126-160.  
Film: *Apocalypse Now* (1979)

**March 18-24: Spring Break**

March 26-28: Lessons of Vietnam: Causes and Consequences  
Herring, 323-368.  
Rotter, 224-248, 297-313, 343-362.  
Film: *The Fog of War* (2004)  
In-class discussion: outline organization

April 2-4: Iraq: Containment and the Decision for War  
Ricks, 1-111.

**Thursday April 4: Research Paper Outline/Preliminary Thesis/List of Sources Due.**  
Be prepared to discuss the concept of your project for 5 minutes in class.

April 9-11: Iraq: The War Begins  
Ricks, 115-297.

April 16-18: Iraq: The Current Conflict and the Future  
Ricks, 301-440.  
In-class discussion: giving an oral presentation

April 23-25: Research and Writing at ODY Library

April 30-May 2: Research Presentations

May 12: Final Research Paper due by 4:30 p.m.

### ***Guidelines for 1-Page Reactions to Readings***

Each Monday students will be expected to submit a written response to the readings assigned for that week. These essays should reflect your response to the entire assignment. Read carefully and thoroughly and think critically about both the events being described and the author(s)' perspective on them. Feel free to agree or disagree with the authors, to offer your own views of the evidence in the readings, or indicate questions or ideas not addressed by the authors which the assignment raises for you. These assignments will be graded on a  $\sqrt{-}/\sqrt{/}\sqrt{+}$  scale and will be included in your final writing portfolio which will receive a numerical grade.

### ***Research Paper Guidelines***

Students will write two research papers for this course. The first, due Friday March 2, should be roughly 9 pages in length and should address the history of the Vietnam war. The second, due May 12, should compare and contrast the historical experience of the United States in Vietnam with the current war in Iraq. Students are encouraged and expected to use some or all of the research and text of the first paper in composing the second.

The 17 page final paper should focus on a particular aspect of the political, social, or military history of the Vietnam and Iraq conflicts, assessing whether and how they are similar or dissimilar and the importance of these similarities or differences. One approach to this assignment might be to ask what the lessons of the Vietnam war for the United States should be, and whether and how those lessons apply to the war in Iraq. Students should compare and contrast a particular aspect of these conflicts; the following are suggested as possibilities:

- Domestic and electoral politics and the causes of US intervention
- The importance of public support or opposition to the war
- Government/media relations and war reporting
- Anti-war and social protest movements
- Civilian political control over military strategy
- Personalities of US leaders and consequences for policy
- Effects of the war on the US and world economies
- Ideology and strategic interests as causes of US intervention
- Ethical and political criteria for the use of force
- Military technology, strategy, and doctrine
- Effects of the war on world perceptions of the US
- Effects of bureaucratic and institutional politics on policy
- The president, congress, and constitutional war powers since Vietnam
- The influence of public opinion and the media on US foreign policy
- The Vietnam "syndrome" and the war as historical analogy
- Depictions of Vietnam and Iraq in the media: film, TV, literature, music

For both papers, consult with me early and often as you consider possible topics and begin to write. I can't tell you what to write about, but I will give you my opinion of ideas you may have, and possibly suggest other approaches to the topic you want to discuss. I'll be happy to meet with you during my office hours or by appointment for this purpose, but please feel free to call me at home as well if you have a question or idea you'd like to discuss. This assignment requires you to assert your thoughts and opinions in a knowledgeable way, and to support your argument with substantial research. Significant evidence from a variety of scholarly sources (journals and texts) is expected. While research on the internet is expected and encouraged, it is not sufficient. You will need to go to the library, check out books, and find articles in scholarly periodicals.

As you begin to write, your first and foremost concern should be, "what is my argument?" Do not start to type until you know what your paper is about and you have a clearly formulated thesis statement. This should be one sentence, stating concisely and specifically the point your paper will be trying to prove. It should be a precise, detailed, debatable point--a good thesis is not obvious or self-evident. This statement should appear very early in your paper--ideally in the first paragraph--and every sentence that follows should be intended to prove it. After letting the reader know what you intend to prove, let them know how you intend to prove it in a few sentences. Do not spend time

on general introductory or concluding paragraphs which are only loosely related to your thesis.

Proofread your essay carefully before you submit it, or better still, have someone else read it and critique it. No matter how well you write, any paper will benefit from a trip to the writing center. Note that proofreading and spell-checking are not the same thing, and both are required. You are not being graded primarily on style, but a disjointed, muddled presentation can very definitely make your argument unclear and ineffective, for which you will lose points.

Provide citations if you directly quote a source, paraphrase an argument found elsewhere, or refer to factual information which is not common knowledge. Citations may be parenthetical in the paper's text, footnotes, or endnotes. Form is your choice; I have no preference as long as it is consistent throughout the paper. Citations should include (or refer to a bibliographical reference which includes) the author's full name, title of the work, publisher and date of publication, and page number. Citations from the Internet should provide, in a footnote or endnote, the site name and date accessed.

Your paper will be graded on the coherence of your argument and the effectiveness with which it is asserted and proven. It will not be graded on the amount of material you include. If you feel you have made your case concisely and effectively, do not feel compelled to write more, make the fonts or margins bigger, or otherwise change your paper to get onto the next page. Use 12 point type, and one inch margins on the top, bottom, and both sides of the page. Number your pages, and start counting with the first page of text.

Papers submitted after the assigned due date and time will be considered late and penalized one half grade (.5 on the four-point scale) per day late. Extensions will be given only in cases of very serious illness or family emergency. Computer problems are not an acceptable excuse. No extensions will be given on the assigned due date under any circumstances.

### ***Guidelines for April 30-May 2 Research Presentations***

In about 10 minutes, you should discuss your research topic and findings. Mention the reasons why you became interested in the subject and why it is important. Tell the audience what your main argument will be, then discuss some of the supporting evidence you will include in the paper.

Do not read to the audience from your paper. Instead, have notes which include only your main points and discuss these with minimal reference to additional notes. In order to give an effective presentation, you need to know the material well enough to be able to talk about it fluently. Your notes should serve to remind you only of the order of your main points, not the details of your evidence.

Make eye contact with the audience and speak confidently. Remember that on the subject of your research, you are the leading expert in the room.

Your presentation should take as close to 10 minutes as possible. In order to make sure that it is not significantly over or under, you will need to make careful choices about what to include.

Include some visual aid (PowerPoint or copies of an outline for the audience) to guide listeners through your presentation.

PRACTICE your presentation well before you have to give it. Then practice it again. After you've practiced a second time... practice it again. Give it exactly as you will to the audience, and keep track of time.

### **First-Year Program Philosophy and Goals 2006-07**

The First-Year Program (FYP) and First-Year Seminar (FYS) are the first steps in a four-year process of helping you meet the University's Aims and Objectives and the broader goals of a liberal education. The faculty of the FYP and FYS see themselves as partners and mentors in the process of working with you to acquire the intellectual habits of mind, the writing, speaking, and research skills, and the ethical self-reflexiveness that are at the core of a liberal education. The FYP and FYS will ask you to consider new perspectives on the world and your place in it and will challenge you to confront many of the hidden assumptions you bring to college with you. We hope to open you to new ideas, help you to see the complexity of the way in which knowledge gets produced and used in society, and encourage you to see yourself as an active contributor in making the world a better place. The course topics, the texts you will read, listen to, and watch, the in-class and out-of-class activities you will engage in, and the writing, speaking, and research assignments you will work on are all designed to introduce you to the depth of critical thinking and the quality and complexity of the communication skills that will be expected of you at SLU and as a citizen of an increasingly diverse society.

First and foremost among our goals are those related to your abilities as a communicator. The work of the FYP and FYS asks you to design and deliver written, spoken, performed and/or visual texts that demonstrate basic skills in the relevant modes of communication and with an increasing degree of rhetorical sensitivity. Our focus on "rhetorical sensitivity" means that we expect you to cultivate the awareness that all of your communication, whether formal or informal, involves having to make choices about your messages, whether written, spoken, aural or visual. To become a good communicator, you need to recognize that the creation of meaningful and powerful written, spoken, performed, or visual texts involves both a creator and an audience, and that therefore the voice you adopt in your communication, the audience you imagine yourself communicating to, and the social and ethical context of the content, matter a great deal in creating such texts. One important way to become a better communicator is to become a better critical reader, viewer, and listener, which is why we will ask you to engage

challenging materials in a variety of forms and work with you to learn how to interpret them.

Learning to read, listen, write, speak, do research and/or perform well also requires feedback. As faculty, we submit our work for feedback from colleagues all the time, and giving and receiving constructive feedback from both friends and strangers is central to collaborative work in any field and is itself a form of critical thinking and learning. We further recognize that this feedback process is not linear and that good communication requires that you continually rethink, restructure, and revise your work in order for it to be your best. This is why we require that your writing, speaking, and performance assignments be “projects” that include preparatory exercises and multiple drafts or rehearsals, all of which ask you to continue to reflect critically on the choices you have made in the texts that you produce. Furthermore, we see all of these forms of communication as complementary and intertwined, which is why many of your assignments will ask you to integrate elements of the written, spoken, performed, and visual. Finally, developing good habits of critical inquiry and communication also means reflecting on the ethical dimensions of how your work represents that of others, thus one of our goals is to help you to understand both the nature of academic integrity and the social processes by which knowledge is produced and represented.

To ensure that the program is meeting its stated goals, all FYP and FYS syllabi are read by other faculty in the program to determine if they include a variety of assignments that foster the writing, speaking, research, and critical thinking goals of the program. All FYP and FYS courses have to be approved by faculty in the program before they are offered.