

Dr. Robert S. Robinson
Liberty Common High School
Department of History

Vietnam War Syllabus

Course Description:

Vietnam War, 1945-1975

This course will examine the U.S. role in the Vietnam conflict from 1945-1975. It will analyze the strategic and diplomatic decisions of each president during that period within the context of the global struggle against communism, decolonization, and domestic politics and culture in both Vietnam and the United States. Particular attention will be paid to the period from 1965-73 when the United States was a principal combatant in the war.

Book:

McMahon, Robert J., Editor. *Major Problems in the History of the Vietnam War*, 4th Edition. Boston: Cengage Learning, 2008. [Please bring this book to class every day]

Bernard Edelman, Editor. *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985. [Bring this book when warned in advance that we will be referring to it during discussion]

[Please note that the syllabus is a guide and not an ironclad contract. While I do not anticipate substantial changes, it is subject to change at the instructor's discretion.]

Grade Breakdown:

Participation: 10%

Discussion Leading: 15%

Major Paper: 30%

Midterm Exam: 20%

Final Exam: 25%

Weekly Schedule:

Week One: Vietnam and America: An Introduction

Major issues related to the war, the history of the war and American politics, overview and major figures.

Week Two: French Colonial Rule and the Development of Vietnamese Nationalism

Vietnamese history to 1880s, French presence, WWI and WWII, Ho Chi Minh emerges as a leader

Week Three: The Roots of the American Commitment

Declaration of independence, Americans and decolonization, the emerging cold war, deepening U.S. commitment,

Week Four and Five: Dwight D. Eisenhower, Ngo Dinh Diem, and the Deepening U.S. Commitment

U.S. military and other aid to French, Dien Bien Phu, Geneva Accords, U.S. aid to South Vietnam

Week Six: John F. Kennedy and Vietnam: Incremental Escalation

Election of 1960, crisis in Laos, growing number of advisors, would Kennedy have fought?

Week Seven: Lyndon B. Johnson's Decisions for War

Logevall and the long 1964, Johnson's political calculations, the Great Society,

Week Eight: U.S. Military Strategy

Attrition, search and destroy, engaging North Vietnam directly, the air war

Week Nine: Americans in Combat

Letter to America, army demographics, the draft,

Week Ten: The Enemy: North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front

The North's decision-making, communist tactics, loss rates

Week Eleven: The Tet Offensive

Political repercussions, the combat operations, strategic results, turning point?, nature of war in a democracy

SPRING BREAK

Week Twelve and Thirteen: Richard M. Nixon's Strategy for Withdrawal

Vietnamization, election of 1968, Kissinger and triangular diplomacy, detente

Week Fourteen: The Antiwar Movement and Public Opinion

Political aspects of the war, election of 1972,

Week Fifteen: The Paris Peace Accords of 1973 and the Fall of South Vietnam

Nixon and Thieu, terms of the peace, Operation Linebacker

Week Sixteen: International Dimensions of the War

Détente continued, China and USSR

Week Seventeen: Legacies and Memories of a War

The memorial, Vietnam Syndrome, War Powers Act, election of 1976

Week Eighteen: Wrap-up and conclusions

Course Standards and Expectations:

Your colleagues depend on your cooperation in maintaining a classroom environment conducive to learning. Late arrivals, early departures, and other disruptive behaviors are strongly discouraged. On the other hand, you are encouraged to ask questions and raise substantive issues at all times.

You are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarizing, or practicing other forms of dishonesty will not be tolerated and may result in a failing grade for the assignment and referral to the administration for further sanctions.