

VIETNAM

ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Dr. David Beisel, a full professor in Rockland's history department, is a nationally known authority in the field of psychohistory. Author of many articles on American and European history, his book, *The Suicidal Embrace: Hitler, the Allies, and the Origins of the Second World War*, is now in its second edition. Dr. Beisel enjoys working with Distance Learning courses; he has developed Rockland's use of VIETNAM, and WAR AND PEACE IN THE NUCLEAR AGE, and has designed special courses built around the televised mini-series "Inside the Third Reich," and "Space."

FALL 2009

HIS 219 VIETNAM: AN HISTORICAL STUDY

David Beisel, Ph.D., Professor of Social Sciences

Dear Student:

Welcome to the Distance Learning course VIETNAM: AN HISTORICAL STUDY. The viewing part of our course is based on the PBS series "Vietnam: A Television History," which is supplemented by in-depth reading in standard histories.

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

The Director of the Distance Learning Program is located in **Room 8302**, third floor of the Technology Building. Questions related to the operation of the programs, such as receipt of course materials, educational counseling or any technical difficulties should be referred to this office. **The hours are 8:00-4:00, Monday through Friday. You may call 845-574-4480, or 845-574-4713.**

Questions or problems related to the requirements and content of this course should be discussed directly with your instructor.

SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM

We highly recommend that you complete and submit our new assessment form, **IS DISTANCE EDUCATION RIGHT FOR ME?** We feel this will increase your chance of success in a telecourse or online course.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

1. Identify the main factual details about 20th Century Vietnam, the Vietnam War, and America's involvement in it.
2. Discuss in a written essay the political and historical controversies surrounding the Vietnam War at the time of and since the war's end.
3. Be able to critically discuss in a written essay, a selected topic, with demonstrated awareness of the varied interpretations offered by historians on the war's causes, consequences, and meaning for American and world history.
4. Demonstrate writing skills in the fundamentals of historical reconstruction and use of historical evidence and documentation.
5. Evidence the ability to reason in terms of complex historical cause and effect.

Note: It should be emphasized that students enrolled in this course are expected to spend approximately 3 hours per credit per week engaged in learning activities such as: assigned readings, viewing tapes, preparing and writing essays and making contact with me.

HOW TO CONTACT ME

Sometimes students feel the need to interact with the instructor, and I encourage such feelings. By all means call me during my office hours, **845-574-4497**, or stop in on the 3rd floor of Academic II, **room 2312**, if you need clarification on any aspect of your reading, viewing, and writing. Call anytime, leave a message on my voicemail and I'll get back to you as soon as possible. *(Do not send email. I receive about 300 emails per day and simply cannot reply to yours. This is a telecourse, **not** an on-line course.)*

My office hours are: Tuesday and Thursday from 11:00am-12:00, and Monday and Wednesday and Friday from 10:00-11:00 am.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Stanley Karnow, Vietnam: A History (NY: Penguin Books, 1995)

Christian G. Appy, ed. Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides, New York: Penguin Books, 2003.

Both texts are available in the College Bookstore. If you wish the books mailed to you, contact the Bookstore Manager, ext. 4752.

*****THIS IS IMPORTANT!!! A complete reading of both texts is a requirement of the course. You cannot fully answer the essay topics by viewing the videotapes alone. I will expect evidence in your writings that you have drawn upon the readings as well as the viewings, so be sure to fill out your comments and narratives with material from both books, not just the viewings. Failure to do so will result in an F grade.**

VIEWING SCHEDULE

At the College

Library and Technology Center **Hours:** 8am-10pm Mon.-Thurs. 8-5 Friday; 8:30-4:30 on Saturday; and 11:00am-4:00 Sunday.

Circulation Desk: 845-574-4408

Help-Desk: 845-574-4386

You may get videos at the **MAIN LIBRARY CIRCULATION DESK** and view them in the College Library.

At Home

THE MAIN LIBRARY CIRCULATION DESK IS HANDLING ALL BORROWING AND RETURNING OF VIDEOS AND AUDIOS. For further information, please call the Desk at 845-574-4408. Students with medical needs will have first priority. All tapes must be returned by **Dec. 21, 2009**. If you do not return tapes, your official grades will be impounded. If you are granted an extension or an IP, you must get a video renewal permission slip from your instructor, have it signed and dated, and return to the Circulation Desk. This is your responsibility.

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

FALL 2009

Program Titles

1. Roots of War
2. The First Vietnam War (1946-1954)
3. America's Mandarin (1954-1963)
4. LBJ Goes to War (1964-1965)
5. America Takes Charge (1965-1967)
6. America's Enemy (1954-1967)
7. Tet, 1968
8. Vietnamizing the War (1968-1973)
9. Cambodia and Laos
10. Peace is at Hand (1968-1973)
11. Homefront USA
12. The End of the Tunnel (1973-1975)
13. Legacies

ASSIGNMENTS

NOTE: As for sending in assignments, students usually send their notes after viewing two or three videos. Keep them coming in on a regular basis. (**Do not wait until the end of the semester to hand them in all at once**). I usually have a short turn-around time, mailing them back to you after a couple of days. You can deliver them by hand to my office (slip them under the door), or to my mailbox or, as most students find most convenient, send them through the mails.

Notes will be hand-written. (13 one-hour segments will mean notes on 13 segments or one summary each of all 13 programs.) **Hand in original notes, not reproduced copies.**

1. You will write three papers (and one more, see below, item 3), each paper between **3-5 typewritten double-spaced pages, 12-font normal print with regular margins**, dealing with three of the topics and/or questions outlined in the section "Topics" listed below (one paper for each of the topics; three topics equals three papers). The papers will be judged for comprehensiveness of understanding, critical ability, use of evidence (viewing, reading, documents) and expression (grammar, spelling, clarity).
2. A fourth paper, between 2-3 typed double-spaced pages, will deal with the ethical question of what we have learned from the Vietnam War and give some indication of how your views have changed by this course, if they have changed (and why not if they have not).

The **four papers** should be written approximately three weeks apart, after your reading and viewing has allowed you to amass enough data to fully handle the topics you have chosen.

The listed due dates are there as general guidelines, so if you'll be a few days late occasionally, that is all right. Just plan to get things submitted in a timely fashion so I can make an occasional comment – and don't have to grade everything at the end of the semester! Have a good time.

ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

I: Hand-written viewing notes will be handed in as follows:

Programs and Week of

1. Roots of War] – **Sept. 14, 2009**
2. The First Vietnam War (1946-1954)] – **Sept. 21**
3. America's Mandarin (1954-1963)] – **Sept. 28**
4. LBJ Goes to War (1964-1965)] – **Oct. 5**
5. America Takes Charge (1965-1967)] – **Oct. 12**
6. America's Enemy (1954-1967)] – **Oct. 19**
7. Tet] – **Oct. 26**
8. Vietnamizing the War (1968-1973)] – **Nov. 2**
9. Cambodia and Laos] – **Nov. 9**

10. Peace is at Hand (1968-1973)] – **Nov. 16**
11. Homefront USA] – **Nov. 23**
12. The End of the Tunnel (1973-1975)] – **Nov. 30**
13. Legacies] – **Dec. 7, 2008**

II: Schedule of written papers:

1. The first paper is due during the **week of September 28, 2009**
2. The second paper is due during the **week of October 26, 2009**
3. The third paper is due during the **week of November 23, 2009**

III: Fourth and final paper:

1. The last paper is due **on or before December 14, 2009**

EVALUATION

Assessment of the student's learning will be based on performance in the written work:

2. notes (original and handwritten, **not** copies)
3. three papers on list of suggested topics
4. fourth paper on meaning of Vietnam War

The criteria applied will be the standard criteria employed by historians. The student will be expected to demonstrate a comprehensiveness of understanding of the facts, an ability to critically judge opposing views, knowledge of how historical reconstruction takes place from documentary evidence, a knowledge of historical logic, and the ability to express her/himself in clear, simple, precise language which is grammatically correct, with a minimum of spelling errors.

LIST OF SUGGESTED TOPICS (Alternative topics may be chosen after consultation with me.) BE SURE TO INDICATE ON YOUR PAPER WHICH TOPICS YOU ARE CONSIDERING.

1. Discuss the historical background of colonialism and anti-colonialism in the region.
2. What were the roles of Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon in relation to the entrance, escalation and conclusion of the conflict?
3. How did the Vietnam War polarize American society?
4. What was right and what was wrong with the political, military, and economic strategy employed by the United States?
5. What was the war like in Vietnam and how did it affect those who fought it, both during the combat period and the years after their return? (Work from the resources provided rather than from personal experience.)
6. What ethical issues were (and are) raised by the conflict? How do you stand? (If you choose this topic be sure to justify your arguments by reference to specific events and documents. It is not enough to take a general "all war is wrong" attitude.)

7. Discuss the internal problems of Vietnam as cause and consequence of the war's course and outcome.
8. To what extent was the war a "mistake," to what extent a "design" on the part of American decision makers?

GRADING

Your final grade will be based on: 30% on note-taking and 70% on your essays.

DROP POLICY

In accordance with College policy, if you do not wish to complete this course, you are responsible for withdrawing from the course and adhering to the same deadline as other RCC students.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Leslie Gelb and Richard K. Betts, *The Irony of Vietnam* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institute, 1979)

Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977). Also available in paperback.

George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States in Vietnam 1950-1975* (NY: John Wiley and Sons, 1979)

Bernard B. Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams: A Political and Military Analysis* (NY: Praeger, 1967)

In the past several years, a number of novels and memoirs have been written about the Vietnam years. Any of these will supplement the factual documents and historical analyses by providing another perspective on events. Although these are not part of your formal course of study, you may find them rewarding and such titles are listed above. This includes the many new films which purport to depict Vietnam "as it really was." Be sure, if you make reference to these films, to use your required viewings and readings as your basic reference points.

Remember, be sure to contact me if you have any questions. Have a good semester. Enjoy your learning.

Dr. David Beisel

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