

# Syllabus

HIST 4140, version 1.2

Updated: April 13, 2016

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## HIST 4140—The Vietnam War

**Course Description:** French colonial rule and Vietnamese nationalism; Ho Chi Minh and the war against the French (1946-54); Geneva Accords; Ngo Dinh Diem and South Vietnam; the National Liberation Front (Vietcong); process of American involvement and disengagement; counter-insurgency and the air war; anti-war movement in the United States; reasons for failure of American policy; Vietnam since 1975; lessons and legacies for the U.S.

### Textbooks and Other Materials

Students enrolling in ODL courses are *required* to follow the textbook ordering information provided in the syllabus. ODL is *not responsible* for student purchases that result in *the receipt of the wrong materials*. It is the responsibility of the student to order the correct textbook materials. Courses are written to specific textbook editions; edition substitutions *are not allowed*.

Mark Atwood Lawrence. *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

**ISBN-10:** 0-19-975393-8

**ISBN-13:** 978-0-19-975393-2

Michael H. Hunt, ed. *A Vietnam War Reader: A Documentary History from American and Vietnamese Perspectives*. Chapel Hill, NC: U of North Carolina P, 2010.

**ISBN-10:** 0-8078-5991-5

**ISBN-13:** 978-0-8078-5991-9

David Halberstam, ed., with Introduction by Daniel Singal. *The Making of a Quagmire: America and Vietnam in the Kennedy Era*. Revised ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008.

**ISBN-10:** 0-7425-6008-2

**ISBN-13:** 978-0-7425-6008-6

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Tim O'Brien. *If I Die in a Combat Zone, Box Me Up and Ship Me Home*. Dell: 1974 (First printing).  
**Any edition is acceptable.**

H. Bruce Franklin. *Vietnam and Other American Fantasies*. Amherst, MA: U of Massachusetts P, 2001.

**ISBN-10:** 1-55849-332-8

**ISBN-13:** 978-1-55849-332-2

See the "Other Materials" section below for information about supplemental online resources.

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### Ordering Information

Please review the following tips for ordering your course materials:

- Do not purchase your textbooks until your enrollment is approved. During the processing period, a new section may be opened that could require a different textbook or edition.
- Carefully follow the ordering information, especially if the course requires special access codes for publisher online materials.
- *Always order by the ISBN.* Publishers and vendors often offer the same textbook title under different ISBNs. You must have the correct ISBN to access your online website.
- Courses that require special access codes *require* that students use the direct links to the publisher microsites. (See the information in the syllabus and Getting Started Module for additional ordering instructions.)
- If you are having problems locating a textbook, contact us at [Answers@outreach.lsu.edu](mailto:Answers@outreach.lsu.edu) for assistance.

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### Other Materials and Resources

Certain modules will require additional readings or online viewing of film and video. These materials will be provided in Moodle.

**Software:** Web Browser, Adobe Flash Player, Adobe Shockwave Player, Adobe Acrobat Reader

It is recommended that you use Mozilla Firefox or Google Chrome as your web browser. Internet Explorer is not compatible with your Moodle course site.

Adobe Flash and Adobe Shockwave player are required for online testing. Adobe Acrobat Reader is required to view PDF document files.

**Hardware:** *Web cam with a microphone (built-in or external), headphones or working speakers*

Your exams are completed online and require that students have an account with ProctorU. The Getting Started Module contains information on creating your account. You cannot use an account created through another university, so if you already have an account, you will still need to create an account associated with LSU Online Distance Learning (ODL).

Students are encouraged to review the technical requirements provided on the ProctorU website and to perform a test on their equipment prior to enrolling in this course to make sure they have the necessary resources available.

**Technical Requirements:** <http://www.proctoru.com/tech.php>

**Equipment Test:** <http://www.proctoru.com/testitout/>

## Nature and Purpose of the Course

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Explain the deep roots of the Vietnam conflict in the nationalist rejection of French colonial rule
2. Describe the importance of World War II in bringing a definitive end to European empires in Asia, and particularly French colonial rule in Indochina
3. Discuss the complicated geo-political perspectives that drove American interest in Southeast Asia in the post-World War II era
4. Outline the political evolution of both North and South Vietnam in the 1950s and 1960s with a view to their overall stability and legitimacy
5. Detail the military and political strategies that emerged and developed on both sides from the early 1960s until the end of the war in 1975
6. Evaluate the larger global impact of the war, while also focusing on American society's troubled adjustment to this "lost war"

This course will examine the political and military conflict in Vietnam and Southeast Asia from roughly the era of World War II through the fall of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) in April 1975. While the American experience in Vietnam during this time period forms the core focus of the class, including analysis of American political motivations, military strategies, and home front anti-war activism, students also will evaluate the conflict through Vietnamese and international perspectives.

The coursework begins with a review of French colonial rule from the 1880s through the 1940s in the region then known to Western observers as Indochina (today's Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia). Students will assess the impact of French economic, cultural, and administrative policies on Vietnamese society, while also reviewing the emergence of Vietnamese anti-colonial and nationalist thought in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The course then proceeds through material on the Japanese occupation of French Indochina during World War II, the organization of a broad nationalist front movement under the avowed Marxist revolutionary Ho Chi Minh, and the ensuing struggle for power in the confusing aftermath of the war. The following modules will consider the nature of the “French War” in Indochina in the late 1940s and early 1950s; the strengths, weaknesses, and strategies of the opposing sides in this conflict; and the contours of the inadequate peace settlement signed at Geneva, Switzerland, in 1954. Students will appraise the relative success of both Ho Chi Minh in North Vietnam and emerging South Vietnamese leader Ngo Dinh Diem in building successful nation-states following Geneva, while also assessing the emerging American position in Southeast Asia during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Subsequent modules will examine the gradual evolution of American involvement in Vietnam, from the extension of financial aid to South Vietnam and the sending of military advisers in the early 1960s by President John F. Kennedy, to the full-scale deployment in 1965 and after of American air power and ground troops under President Lyndon B. Johnson. Students will be asked to evaluate the key players in the conflict, their evolving tactics and strategies, and the ultimate success or failure of each in achieving their goals for the “American War” in Vietnam.

The last modules in the course deal with the gradual move towards American disengagement under the administration of President Richard Nixon, a process known as “Vietnamization.” Students will assess the impact of anti-war activism in the United States, as well as Nixon’s own political goals, in the negotiation of a withdrawal from the conflict under the guise of an ongoing and ultimately futile “peace” process. Finally, students will analyze the last agonizing years of the conflict in Vietnam and Southeast Asia, the post-war international fall-out, and the long-term impact of the Vietnam War on the American psyche.

The historiography on the Vietnam War has shifted in recent years, especially in the United States, to include a more balanced international perspective on the subject, instead of the still useful, but certainly slanted, refrain from previous years of “how did we lose” or “what went wrong.” Such a more nuanced reading of the conflict helps us gain some insight on the larger global context of the war, including the latent power of Vietnamese nationalism, the complex interplay of geo-political interests (particularly those of the Soviet Union and China at the time), and the real limits of American military power, all worthwhile topics to consider as “lessons from the past” in today’s equally complicated world. The goal of this course then is not only to provide you with the basics of the historical narrative of the Vietnam War, but also to get you to think broadly about the nature of all wars, their costs, consequences, and haunting legacies, for both the victors and the defeated.

### Working with the Course Materials

Remember, this course covers an entire semester of work or the equivalent of a classroom course lasting 15 weeks. That means that each module in this course equals nearly a week of course work and will require the same time and effort on your part. *Do not expect to complete each module in a single study session.*

The two main books are Mark Lawrence's *The Vietnam War*, a very light but effective narrative, and Michael Hunt's *A Vietnam War Reader*. Each module draws a certain amount of its required reading from these works. You also have three other required books and an assortment of additional readings and viewings that will be provided in Moodle.

The other required books are a mixed lot. They include journalist David Halberstam's view of Vietnam in the Kennedy and Diem years, novelist (and Vietnam veteran) Tim O'Brien's fictionalized account of his tour "in-country" circa 1969, and noted Herman Melville scholar turned anti-war professor Bruce Franklin's loose series of essays examining the impact of the Vietnam War on American culture, particularly as the war continued to echo through American society in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Each has its own merits as well as flaws, but together they provide a good sampling of some of the best writing available on the American experience with the Vietnam War.

This course focuses by necessity on key people, crucial events, and big ideas. There are, of course, an almost limitless number of venues in print, film, or on the web for the exploration of the Vietnam War in excruciating detail, ranging from rather technical analyses of specific battles and tactics, to soldiers' memoirs, to subjects as varied as the experiences of Vietnamese civilians, the role of the American media during the war, and post-traumatic stress disorder among veterans. It is easy to get bogged down in the vast amount of material available for consumption. As a student, though, you must stay focused on the module at hand. Do not get lost in the minutiae or detail of the conflict; always stay tuned-in to the major themes and developments as discussed in the module introductions and highlighted particularly by the list of "key terms." In short, always think about *significance*. Is this event or person *really* important and if so, why? That does not mean you should ignore detail. You need to understand the interplay of events, personalities, and motives and should mark important turning points or trends. You will almost certainly want to keep a journal of your notes and thoughts as you move through each module.

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### **Suggested Study Techniques**

1. Carefully review the module objectives to help you focus on the information that will be covered on the exams.
2. Concentrate on the reading assignments, the module lecture material, and any additional resources provided. This review should include a detailed examination of any illustrative problems and examples. After an assignment has been completed, a rapid re-reading of the related text and other materials is strongly recommended.
3. Put yourself on a definite schedule. Set aside a certain block of hours per day or week for this course and work in a place where distractions are minimal.
4. Try to submit one assignment each week or at least every two weeks. Delays in submitting assignments usually result in lagging interest and the inability to complete the course.

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5. Review your module assignments after they have been graded and returned to you, paying special attention to any instructor feedback provided. (We suggest that you wait for assignment feedback before you submit subsequent assignments.)
6. Regardless of how you complete your graded assignments, keep in mind that module completion should not be your sole preparation for your exams. As with any college course, you should study for your exams.

## Reading Assignments

You will read an average of 50 pages per module. Specific reading assignments will be given for each module.

## Topic Outline

This course covers the following specific topics:

<b>Module</b>	<b>Topic</b>
1	The Roots of Conflict: French Colonialism/Vietnamese Nationalism
2	The End of Empires: World War II and the Post-War Settlement
3	The French War: To Dienbienphu, 1954
4	Nation Building: Geneva and After
5	Ngo Dinh Diem and the South
6	JFK and Vietnam, 1961–1963
7	LBJ's Dilemma, 1963–1964
8	The War Escalates, 1964–1967

## Mid-Course Examination

- 9 The Tet Offensive, 1968
- 10 Questions and More Questions: American Attitudes Towards the War
- 11 The Search for a Way Out, 1968–1970
- 12 The Soldiers' War
- 13 Bombs and Diplomacy, 1971–1973
- 14 The End Comes, 1973–1975
- 15 Vietnam and the Haunting of American Memory

## Final Examination

## Module Assignments

This course is composed of fifteen modules and two exams. The student will have specific reading and/or viewing assignments and must complete a graded assignment to receive credit for the completion of each module. Depending upon the module, you will have either a pair of short essays or a single longer essay. Ten of the modules also include a quiz composed of ten multiple-choice questions. The mid-course and final exams will be composed of multiple-choice and identification sections along with two essays.

For each module, start out by reading the introductory remarks. Consider the context and the questions posed before beginning work. Take notes. If it helps, try shaping an outline or flowchart to physically see the movement of people, events, and ideas. I often advise students to try interlocking circles and text boxes if the old-fashioned Roman numeral outline system does not seem to work.

Short essays should be no more than **three (3) pages**, typed, and double-spaced, using Times New Roman 12-point font. The longer essays should be in the range of **five to six (5–6) pages**, following the same style format. Write with clarity and appropriate detail. Be succinct, to-the-point, and authoritative. This is great exercise in the “art of communication,” which has value in whatever field of employment you find yourself. Look for relevant quotations and important statistical figures (troop numbers and casualties, results of bombing raids, amounts of imported supplies and equipment, etc.) to utilize in your writing. You *must* cite your sources, but simply as a parenthetical reference; thus, “quote here” (Lawrence 132). If you consult any outside works and use these for quotations or figures, please add a full-citation listing for the source at the end of the essay.

This is a college-level course. Quality work is expected. All the rules of proper usage (grammar, punctuation, and spelling) apply. Be sure to spell-check your essays and give them a thorough edit for common problems such as subject/verb agreement and correct verb tense usage. One more thing: in your writing, always strive to use the active voice as much as possible—“The American planes bombed Hanoi,” rather than “Hanoi was bombed by the American planes.” It reads better and helps with the overall flow of essays.

In the process of completing this course, you will no doubt explore other sources of information, including those on the web, some of which are quite useful. You also are encouraged to engage with me through our Moodle forums. However, I must in no uncertain terms warn you about taking the “easy” path of simply pulling down Wikipedia entries or other such sources for cut-and-paste type work in your essays. I’m interested in your thoughts, views, and opinions, not those of some anonymous, un-credited source. Also, of course, such cut-and-paste jobs, including verbatim copying from the readings in large, un-credited portions, is considered *plagiarism* and will be handled according to university policy. ANY suspected plagiarism will be reported.

After you turn in a module assignment, I will grade the work and offer thoughts or suggestions, if necessary, on style, organization, and content issues.

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You should submit each module as soon as it is completed. Some courses have restrictions that require that a grade be received before you can submit additional assignments. Specific information on assignment submission is included in the module instructions. Please be sure to follow these instructions, paying particular attention to file naming conventions if the assignment requires documents to be uploaded.

**Remember:** Once you *submit* an assignment, you cannot revise it, so be sure to check your work. Your instructor will post a grade for your assignment within *seven calendar days*.

One temptation you may have in an independent study course is to rely too heavily on textbook material when preparing your assignments. If you give in to such a temptation, you may not realize until exam time that the perfect response you prepared was possible only because you repeatedly referred to the textbook without really learning or understanding the material. Therefore, *you should attempt each assignment without referring to the textbook*, and if “thumbing back” is necessary, be sure you have actually learned the concept rather than merely reflected it in the answer.

## Academic Integrity

Students in Online Distance Learning (ODL) courses must comply with the *LSU Code of Student Conduct*. Suspected violations of the academic integrity policy may be referred to LSU Student Advocacy & Accountability (SAA), a unit of the Dean of Students. If found responsible of a violation, you will then be subject to whatever penalty SAA determines and will forfeit all course tuition and fees.

### Plagiarism

Students are responsible for completing and submitting their own course work and preparing their own modules. All work submitted in the course modules must be the student’s own work unless outside work is appropriate to the assignment; all outside material must be properly acknowledged. It is also unacceptable to copy directly from your textbook or to use published answer keys or the teacher’s edition of a textbook.

### Collaboration

Unauthorized collaboration constitutes plagiarism. Collaborative efforts that extend beyond the limits approved by the instructor are violations of the academic integrity policy. Students who study together are expected to prepare and write their own individual work for submission and grading.

For more information and links to the *LSU Code of Student Conduct* and the SAA website, go to the [ODL Academic Integrity](#) policy on our website.



## Examinations and Grading Policy

There will be two examinations. The mid-course exam follows Module 08, and the final exam, which is not comprehensive, follows Module 15. The examinations will consist of multiple-choice, identification, and essay sections.

You will have a maximum of *three* hours to complete the exam.

- Module assignments are worth 100 points each.
- Quizzes are 10 points each.
- Exams are 100 points each.

Course grade = average of module assignments + average of quizzes + exam scores, with each component weighted by the following predetermined percentages:

Course grade =

Component	Weight (%)
Average of Module Assignments	60%
Average of Quizzes	10%
Mid-Course Exam	15%
Final Exam	15%

The following grading scale applies for students who complete the course on or after October 15, 2015. Prior to that date, the scale will be the same, except that pluses and minuses will be dropped from the grade posted in the student's permanent record and transcript.

97%–100%	= A+
93%–96%	= A
90%–92%	= A-
87%–89%	= B+
83%–86%	= B
80%–82%	= B-
77%–79%	= C+
73%–76%	= C
70%–72%	= C-
67%–69%	= D+
63%–66%	= D
60%–62%	= D-
0%–59%	= F

**YOU MUST EARN A PASSING AVERAGE ON THE EXAMINATIONS IN ORDER TO PASS THE COURSE.**

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**IMPORTANT:** The final exam cannot be taken until you meet the following requirements. Under no circumstances may the final exam be taken earlier.

1. You must have been enrolled in the course for *at least three weeks*, regardless of when the modules and other exams are completed.
2. You must have *received an assignment grade for Module 15*.

To read the full exam policy and other policy statements, visit <http://cms.outreach.lsu.edu/cms/CEHomePage.aspx>. Click on *Extended Campus*, select *Online Distance Learning*, and then click the link for *Policies*.

## Taking Your Examinations

You are *required* to create an Louisiana State University ODL ProctorU account and to take your examinations through ProctorU, a remote proctoring service that allows you to take exams anywhere with internet access. Information on creating your ProctorU account can be found in the *Getting Started* module. The ProctorU website provides links you can use to find out how ProctorU works and to check your computer to see that it meets the technical requirements. In addition, to test using ProctorU, you need *access to a web cam with a microphone (built-in or external), headphones or working speakers, and high speed internet* to use this service. A complete list of technical requirements is available from the ProctorU website.

You should schedule your exams about a week before you are ready to take them.

## Transcript Information

After you have completed this course, your grade will be filed with the Office of the University Registrar. If a transcript is needed, it is your responsibility to make a request to the registrar. If you would like to order a transcript, visit the Office of the University Registrar Transcript Requests page to view your options at <http://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/registraroffice/student-services/transcript-request/>.

## Copyright

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BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

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