




Jump to...

Fall 2010 ► HST 195 F10 (Escobar META 21581 24392) ► Forums ► Forum 1 Past Week's Discussions ► **Determining the truth**

Search forums

Display replies in nested form
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Determining the truth
by Joe Escobar - Sunday, 10 October 2010, 12:39 PM

This is a history class. We are trying to determine what really happened in history. How do you/should we deal academically with conflicting information? How can your two textbooks help you to approach this video information and be confident that you are learning accurate historical knowledge?

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Re: Determining the truth
by Ellen Haxby - Tuesday, 12 October 2010, 03:23 PM

First of all, the Vietnam War itself is the most confusing war in American history. Controversy will exist in a war that many still find unfamiliar. With that said though, experts on Vietnam should not be confused. True, opinions will still exist, but the foundation should be solid. Experts should not be arguing over who, what, when, where, why and how questions anymore. That is why I find it frustrating that the PBS show has many disfigured facts.

Knowing that there is such conflict in Vietnam War facts, anyone trying to educate themselves on the war must be skeptical. It's not that every sentence stated should be put under scrutiny, but when facts aren't matching up in the Appy, Herring, and Vietnam: A Television History resources, that is when skepticism should be applied. In my opinion, textbooks are much more trustworthy than a film. Therefore, I would take the facts in the Appy book more seriously than statement made in Vietnam: A Television History. The only way I see that I can be confident about an accurate education of the Vietnam War is if I am aware that opinion always comes out. The best way to resolve this is to take into account all three resources we are reading, and not fully rely on only one to educate us.

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Re: Determining the truth
by Jairus Godeka - Thursday, 14 October 2010, 08:51 PM

Point well taken. This was a confusing war. Where I beg to differ is when you mention that: Experts shouldn't be arguing over who, what, when, where etc about it any more. One might argue that because it was a sad chapter in our history, i.e. the first war we ever lost, it is our history and these questions will lead us to a better understanding of the facts surrounding this dark period in our history. You may also consider the fact that lessons learned from asking the above questions will give us a better understanding of decisions we made, poor or good that led to the loss of the war. These lessons will give us a better understanding of future wars (God forbid) and what decisions to make or not make.

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Re: Determining the truth
by Ellen Haxby - Friday, 15 October 2010, 11:40 AM

I see where you are coming from with this viewpoint. The conversation we are having gives proof as to how these different viewpoints can effect what is understood about a war, particularly Vietnam, and how there is always another side to every story.

The point I was trying to make with the arguments of all the basic questions was the frustration from the question I ask myself, and that is why? Why are we still unclear of the answers when the Vietnam War ended over thirty decades ago? I feel like the United States should already be clear on the basics of the war by now. George C. Herring's America's Longest War has several editions, showing how information is still being found out. In Christian G. Appy's Patriots, Part 2 has many accounts from officials. It doesn't make perfect sense why we cannot figure these questions out after several years with

books like Appy's that give accounts that are, declared on the cover, "Remembered from all sides."

I am not discounting your idea of learning from our history. I find that important as well. I am just wondering why we are still debating what has been done? Why can't we find the lessons that need to be learned and move on?

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Re: Determining the truth

by [Samantha Mccourt](#) - Tuesday, 12 October 2010, 06:37 PM

I am an archeology major, the subject of accuracy comes up in every class I take because as a historian you want to give others the most accurate information available. In my first anthropology class my teacher said: "No single document, artifact, picture or person can tell every side of a story. If you want to understand history you will need them all." History should never be viewed in a vacuum. In order to know the most truthful information you have to view everything, because obviously every person is bias. The people of PBS made "Vietnam: A Television History" to show history they believed was the most important and true, and to make this available to the general public. "Accuracy in Media" brought up good points as well, but just like PBS they were choosing information that showed their own opinions. They are right that historical censorship happens, but ironically I think that there was just as much censorship in "Accuracy" as there was in the PBS series we are watching. "Accuracy in Media" says that Ho Chi Minh is portrayed as a nationalist and in a positive light, even though he was in fact a communist and not working for the better of his country. They backed this with facts, but from all of our readings and the PBS series it seems that he was in fact a nationalist and communist, as a nationalist is any group that is trying to change their country for the better and are against the current rule. The accounts of North Vietnamese communist supporters seem to believe they are doing what is good for Vietnam and that Ho Chi Minh's (or Uncle Ho as they call him) communism would help them win back their own country first from French rule and then from America, and drive them out (Appy, 16). Does it make them right? Not necessarily, but it does seem that there were people in Vietnam during this era that believed in communism.

I truly believe the reason we continue to use this video series is because it appears to have mostly accurate knowledge which is the most we can expect from a television show. I find that the books information lines up at points with the series, but for the most part with each other. I trust these sources more because most of the information I have read previously (though this is also controversial and bias) seem to be similar to our books. Appy is comprised of first hand accounts, the best way to gain knowledge on any subject. These accounts are, of course, chosen by him and his bias is present in which stories are told. I still trust them because of how vastly different the stories are it shows different sides of the conflict. Herring has many footnotes, which show that his information comes from direct sources and documents of the era which is the only way that we can try and understand a past conflict. Vietnam will always be a topic of controversy, just like any conflict, because of the massive emotions on both sides. The best we can do is to find information from many sources and try to decide for ourselves what is truth.

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Re: Determining the truth

by [Nicholas Schultz](#) - Wednesday, 13 October 2010, 08:35 PM

I agree with you about the portrayal of Ho Chi Minh. So far, from what I have read in our books and watched in the PBS series, there are few arguments to suggest that Ho Chi Minh was trying to do anything besides liberate his own people. Communist or not, I can't fault him for that. I am interested to get farther into the books and the video series as I now believe that there is much more for me to learn of the Vietnam War than what I thought I knew.

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Re: Determining the truth

by [Melissa Price](#) - Wednesday, 13 October 2010, 02:37 AM

I believe that by compiling various forms of resources and comparing the information they have provided, it can give me a better understanding of what facts are true, and which ones may have been fabricated, so that I can easily deal with any conflicting information that may occur.

I am coming to the understanding that the information provided in the Herring and Appy books are more knowledgeable resources than that of the PBS video, "Vietnam: A television history", and that I should approach the information given in the video with a skeptical view, now knowing it may not all be accurate.

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Rate... **Re: Determining the truth**by [Kyle Hutton](#) - Wednesday, 13 October 2010, 02:24 PM

I believe that if you have conflicting information on something, such as the Vietnam war, you need to look at both sides of the argument, and decide for yourself what you believe. After all, everything is going to have multiple arguments for or against it, it is up to you to choose what to believe. I think the two textbooks can help validate what truly happened because I feel the information in them is for the most part truthful. I feel that the video may not be as truthful, and needs to be taken with a grain of salt.

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I find the idea of “deciding for yourself what you believe” is very interesting. I agree that there will always be some form of controversy. The problem is I think controversy comes from people who do what you said, that is, believe what they want to. How will we ever come to terms with the truth if there are tons of people choosing their own “truths” about the war? If we all think our own opinion is the “truth,” will we ever come to grips with reality?

I believe your idea is a good one if we want peace. The saying “agree to disagree” goes well with your proposal. Sometimes, doing just that is all we can do. So in another light, your idea might just be the best solution. If we all form our own opinions on how the war ensued, we can then individually find lessons to take from the war.

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That's the beauty with things, people can decide what to believe, it does not necessarily mean they are correct by any means, but people will interpret things differently than others. There are many things contributing to this. I agree with you that people should individually find whatever lessons out of it that their minds may form.

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I believe the first thing that needs to be done as the researcher is to put all prior opinions about the subject aside. Try to start out on a clean sheet like if you were learning about the topic for the first time. Having bias views is something that will overall hurt your research. The best thing to do is to base your decisions only off the information you have presented in front of you. Our texts books are a great way to cross reference things that are mentioned in the video. Not every source of information is as detailed as others but that is where the information will fill in the gaps of were another source might have left out. In the end it is up to the researcher to decide if he/she wants to believe this specific piece of history.

Personally I tend to trust books with well cited facts and details than videos, because videos tend to jump around a lot and leave to many gray areas. I think our books in this class do a great job at informing the students on all parts of the war. I know I have learned more from the books compared to the video. Now that we watched this clip informing us about the gray areas that the decision makers of the videos can choose to leave out. Again it comes down to having more than one source of information and being able to decide for yourself what you want to believe.

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I agree with most of what you said, in fact you are saying similar things to what I did. The only thing is that people are inherently biased. No one person can make write with a completely clean slate I think, because you will always have your opinion no matter how deep down. That is why your second point is so important. Having well documented information helps the reader to form their own opinion, even if the author is a little bias. An author whose bias shows through and isn't supported with documentation hurts their own research and credibility.

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Re: Determining the truth

by [Stephanie Orem](#) - Wednesday, 13 October 2010, 04:00 PM

Anything created by man is going to have a sway in the direction of the person writing it. The purpose of the Appy book is to show the stories of many different people and doing so has many different points of view; so the book does not have the opinions of the writer holding very much sway in the opinions being stated. The PBS series is not as in depth as the books about the Vietnam war and it is up to the people producing and writing it to decide what they think is important to educate the public about. Even as a viewer, a person can form their own views and choose to let certain information in while blocking other information out to fit their own beliefs and values. I think as opinionated people we should take into account others views and values and understand that we may not always like how others may see or even portray how they see history. The Appy book will help by always reminding that there are two sides to the story and Herring's book is full of supported information that can be researched back to its source for either side. While the videos may not be satisfactory to many people in regards to showing the history of the Vietnam War, it is a version of it. So to get accurate knowledge from the video I will just check the facts in my books and other sources and take into account everyone's views and make my own conclusion.

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Re: Determining the truth

by [Justin White](#) - Saturday, 16 October 2010, 12:06 PM

I agree with what you are saying, especially your opening statement about how anything created by man is going to have sway in the direction of the person writing it. It is hard to believe alot of what people say about history because of that very point you made.

I have basically the same view towards the books as you do. I feel that the books have more in depth information then the PBS documentary and arent as one sided.

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Re: Determining the truth

by [Nicholas Schultz](#) - Wednesday, 13 October 2010, 05:16 PM

As a computer science major and a fan of mathematics I have taken lots of math classes throughout my school career. In calculus you often deal with problems where the answer comes infinitely close to some number but is not actually that number.

Sometimes that is the way it can seem with history and especially in our particular case of the Vietnam War. With so many different views and opinions, sides of the story, and personal biases, it can sometimes seem like we can only come infinitely close to understanding what actually happened.

It is our job academically to gather as much information as possible on our subject of interest and put it all together as one complete picture. One of the biggest topics surrounding conflicting information is personal bias. In "[Bias in Historical Description, Interpretation, and Explanation](#)", an article written by C. Behan McCullagh, McCullagh tries to explain that personal bias is deplorable and avoidable following a set of standards of rational inquiry. I would state that, when researching history, biases should not be ignored but accounted for and used to help create an understanding, as history is not just about the easily verifiable dates and times but also the feelings and emotions of the people affected.

Our text books are able to help us in two very different ways. Our book by Herring can give us a nice, linear document to cross-reference all kinds of data. As we watch a movie we can move somewhat in parallel through the book, in essence, going through the information twice, and helping us to not only learn the information but more easily identify discrepancies and points that need further research. Our book by Appy, while filled with personal bias, can really help us understand that personal aspect that is history and allow us to use personal accounts to verify data presented in both the movie and the other book. We can be confident that we are learning accurate information by cross-referencing all three of

these given materials together to create that complete picture that I mentioned earlier.

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Re: Determining the truth

by [Molly Graham](#) - Thursday, 14 October 2010, 08:39 PM

I like what you said in reference to the McCullagh article that you believe "biases should not be ignored but accounted for and used to help create an understanding". I also think that it is nearly impossible to find a source that is not biased as we all have personal emotional investments into nearly every subject on some level. Even when learning about something entirely new to us, we will begin to relate certain facts back to personal information we find relevant and form certain opinions. I agree with you that it would serve us better to bring these biases to light instead of pretending that they may not exist when in fact they always do.

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Re: Determining the truth

by [David Verner](#) - Wednesday, 13 October 2010, 06:45 PM

History is one of those areas that will always be open to discussion, as even when the most hardest of facts are presented, there is almost always someone who can think of a way to question them.

As students of history, it is our responsibility to make of it what we will. Yes we can read the textbooks, we can watch the TV series, but we can't let that be our soul source. You need to take it in, and then think about it, and form your own opinion based on your readings. And then, find out from different sources, multiple ones, if what you have read is indeed the most factual account that you can possibly find on the subject.

This is what i have always done, so accuracy in media is something i have always been vigilant about. I don't hear one news report on anything, or read a newspaper, and immediately think that must be gospel on that particular story. I will search for the story online if i am interested enough, and see that i have all the facts possible for it. I am a big follower of English football (soccer) and their media is heavily saturated with badly sourced news reports, so this is how i have learnt to double and triple check sourcing. This is what we should always do with history.

And therefore, that is what I am doing with my reading of the books, as well as the PBS series. I am watching and reading and noticing the things that are being repeated between all accounts, and thinking 'Ok, that must have some basis' and continuing.

Just remember - the Appy book is full of accounts of individuals, thus although it is accurate from THEIR point of view, that does not make it an accurate representation of the whole war. We need to remember that. It would be like me as a passionate Liverpool fan writing a history of English Football. Sure, i could try to be as objective as possible, but such is my bias i probably could not write an accurate representation of every teams achievements. The Herring book is more of an objective look at the war, but we still need to remember it may not hold all facts and not take it as the bible of the Vietnam war.

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Re: Determining the truth

by [Jesse Long](#) - Saturday, 16 October 2010, 06:50 PM

I agree that history is a subject that can always be discussed no matter how many years have gone by. There will always be people to second guess that which has happened in the past but its like the saying "hind sight is always 20/20". Even to this day people will discuss and even argue over ancient battles that have happend a long long time ago.

I like how you talk about taking it all in and not using the books and tv series as the one source of influence. I think people especially students need to hear what your saying and develop there own opinion rather than just going with what is popular. Many people will agree with what is popular and when confronted on their opinion they have no idea as to why they feel this way. So staying informed is important.

Overall i like your approach to this class and the information we are recieving. Good job.

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Rate... **Re: Determining the truth**by [Benjamin Trautman](#) - Wednesday, 13 October 2010, 08:04 PM

The way we should deal with conflicting information is up to the one who is using the information. We are given information that does not know a wrong or right, but has sides. Every event that has happened on this Earth has two sides to the story. It is up to us to decide whether we agree with the information or not. The values that make us who we are as an individual, will be the deciding factor in either choosing to use the information or not. The best way for me to gain confidence that the information in our textbooks are true is to compare and contrast the two. Find out the differences each book has allowing us to make our own justification on stories. For example, there may be differences in the author's tone or vocabulary. If there are similarities between the two books on certain stories, this will help me narrow down if I believe the information is true. I take into account both my feelings and the majority in dealing with conflicting information.

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Rate... **Re: Determining the truth**by [Tony Francisco](#) - Wednesday, 13 October 2010, 08:05 PM

History is an immensely debatable topic as everyone that lived through the experience will have a different point of view. Every person leads a life different from everyone else and those experiences and events change us as people and they shape and alter the way that we view events. Perception is an incredibly important aspect to observe when you look at history.

I feel that history has a way of kind of inspiring a sense of child like wonder in people, well if you like history, and it lulls you into a false sense of acceptance. "This is how it went, this is what really happened," when really, you have nobody who can truly verify the events. People lie. It is a normal everyday occurrence. People will alter the truth and present something that makes them or someone they support look in a better light. Look at propaganda during war time, both sides in a war will present something that looks outlandish to the other- but it is what the government wants people to believe. That's how history is: side a, side b, and the truth. What really happens is too often lost in between.

Everybody in life is raised differently by their parents. Some parents throw money at problems, some refuse to see problems, some people are raised without parents. Some people are republicans, some people are democrats. Show a war topic to two different people of conflicting ideologies and they are going to see ridiculously different events taking place. There is something called "the gray fallacy" and it is something that occurs all too often. In an event there is only the truth, but somebody can take a position diametrically opposed to the truth and what happens, is that even though the oppositional side is completely false, people will assume that both sides have pieces of the truth. Somebody can blatantly lie as long as they sound informed and people will think that they are right about some of it. People become like what is around them, and what you surround yourself with is going to change the way that you view events.

The tools that we are given in this class, our two books, our dvd set, and our myriad of online resources enable us to better sift through the confusion that is conflicting opinions about the Vietnam war. The books and set show us both of the major sides in the war and help us to get a feeling of what it was like to be grunt in the war or a commanding officer or a secret operative. Through showing us what other people are experiencing we are gaining a wider range of understanding and able to truly comprehend the massiveness of war and all that that entails. Through using multiple sources we are able to see past conflicting information and better academically understand what we need to.

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Rate... **Re: Determining the truth**by [Ellen Haxby](#) - Friday, 15 October 2010, 12:30 PM

Many of the statements you said, in my opinion, say that the truth is unreachable, that reality will never be found, and that everyday life is just a big lie. I am not sure if you were trying to get this idea across, or at least not in such an extreme way, but that is what I found to be your underlying idea.

From that assumption, I want to focus on your last paragraph in relation to the three above it. You begin with (again, in my opinion) statements of pessimism towards ever finding the truth because everyone's life gets whiplashed with different cultures, religions, and political standpoints. You end with saying that we can "sift through the confusion" with various and multiple resources. What I am left wondering, is if there is any truth out there to sift through? Obviously not all of this is made up, but I am questioning that since every resource has its bit of lies injected into the truth, how will it ever be possible to come upon reality? Now, I know you didn't actually say we could find the truth doing so, but those are the questions that arose.

I really like your perspective. What I found especially interesting is that you never really did say, "This or that will give us the truth." What you did state is that we can use the information we have, although each with its own "lies," and *come to a better understanding* and *recognize how huge of a mess this was*. So maybe the search for the truth is a dead end road, but we can still press on knowing that with each resource, we can at least know how intricate the Vietnam War was. Well done!

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Re: Determining the truth

by [Molly Graham](#) - Wednesday, 13 October 2010, 08:10 PM

In any event in which humans are involved, there will always be both varying viewpoints as well as personal biases. As much as we would like history to be one hundred percent factual, this is almost impossible given that it is recorded by humans. In order to receive an extremely accurate account of any historical event that you yourself were not present at, one would need to hear the story from every person involved and apply Aristotle's Golden Mean, that when two things (stories in this case) are conflicting, the truth likely lies somewhere in the middle (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_mean_%28philosophy%29). This is also almost always impossible due not only to time constraints but also because many of those involved in historical events, especially those concerning a war, are no longer living. I believe this approach to history is basically what Appy, the author of our text "Patriots", was aiming to do. Here we are given firsthand accounts in somewhat raw format, meaning that they were not processed into one story but left instead direct from the sources. This leaves the reader the ability to take each history with a grain of salt and believe common themes throughout the book. While not everyone involved in the Vietnam War is included in the book, this source is still more reliable than a book written entirely from the perspective of only one person who was involved.

Our other textbook, "America's Longest War" written by George Herring, is recorded more as an overview of the events from beginning to end of the Vietnam War. This source appears quite reliable as it is constantly citing one source or another and is part of the Library of Congress. We can look at this source as reliable in the way that, though it might not be one hundred percent accurate, it most likely reflects the commonly accepted American viewpoint of what happened during the Vietnam War.

As students, the best that we can do when learning about a historical event is to read a variety of sources on the same subject in order to get a general idea of which facts seem to be common within the accounts, and therefore can more likely be trusted and which facts might only appear in one version, meaning that it may not in fact be as historically accurate. It is also important for us to keep in mind who the source is and whether or not they have any reasons to twist the story in such a way as to benefit themselves or someone else. As the video special, "Accuracy in Media Part One", pointed out to us, the PBS series which we have been watching each week may contain some biased information. We can still watch the series and learn from its images and descriptions if we couple it with the firsthand accounts found in Appy's book as well as the historical overview in Herring's "America's Longest War". By putting our three sources together, we can find a middle ground for the information they offer and be confident that what they share in common are most likely factual events as they have been verified by numerous sources.

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Re: Determining the truth

by [Kelley Allender](#) - Wednesday, 13 October 2010, 08:36 PM

History is much like religion in the fact that it is debatable. A while back I read about a study done where "x" number of people were led into a room (the same room but they went in one at a time) with brightly colored furniture and decorations. They were given a few moments to look around and after they left the room they were asked to give a discription of it. Every single person gave a different discription of the room. This variation reflects the idea that each of use views life through our own lense and filter. The same idea is true when people are giving their account of an event or experience. If a task as simple as describing a room gave varied responses, it's no surprise that accounts from an event as long and complex as the Vietnam War would also vary greatly.

History is complicated and multi-dimensional, just as Vietnam was. When people are retelling stories of an experience that greatly effected them, they give emotional accounts. This means that their stories will be a little biased. If you asked a Catholic North Vietnamese what his experience was like, he may tell you it was similar to the Holocaust, and that because of his religion he was living in constant fear of Communist leaders. If you spoke to an American veteran, he might tell you he didn't even know where Vietnam was until he got there, and that he for the duration of the war he simply followed the orders he was given, without ever knowing what the bigger picture or goal was. If you asked a Vietnamese Communist his opinion, he may say that originally he thought the US was there to help them fight the French, and that all the Communists wanted was to unite north and south vietnam and be independent of all other countries.

My point is that everyone will have their own personal bias, whether they mean to or not, and this is for several reasons. Soldiers stationed in South Vietnam, may have had a completely different experience from those stationed fighting in North Vietnam. Communists may have thought they were the heros, while Americans saw them as the villian, and civilians may have seen themselves soley as the victims even if they shot and killed soldiers. You also have to take into account the fact that any interviews, letters, ect, are all secondhand accounts, so in reality someone could falsify or exaggerate details of what happened but since we weren't there, we don't know fact from fiction. As I stated earlier, history is complex. It's like a giant puzzle, and each individual's account of it is one piece of the puzzle. The more pieces you get (i.e. interviews, pictures, videos, letters, records), the more accurately you'll be able to put the bigger picture together.

In order to get the most accurate information, we can gather it from multiple sources (such as our two textbooks in addition to the video). When you get aligning information from different sources, you can more confidently assume it to be true. When you see discrepencies in the information you gather, first it's a good idea to think about possible causes for the varation. Like I said earlier, I wouldn't expect a Vietnamese Communist to look back on the war with the same feelings as an American soldier, and therefore you'll get two different stories from them. Sometimes you might find discrepencies that you cannot explain. In this case the best thing we can do academically is acknowledge the fact that things in this area aren't quite adding up like they should. Maybe this is because there's a lack of knowledge in general, and we need more evidence before a solid conclusion can be drawn. Leaving out information can potentially be as misleading as lying, because it can paint an equally distorted picture. For this reason, I think it is important to acknowledge indiscrepencies when we see them, and represent all sides so that anyone reading your work can decide for themselves. There are also some types of evidence that should be given more weight than others. For example, you can assume an authentic document to be more factual and accurate, than a man that claims he single-handedly won the war.

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Re: Determining the truth

by [Nicholas Schultz](#) - Wednesday, 13 October 2010, 08:56 PM

I am interested to hear more on your opening statement that history is debatable. I will agree with you that everyone will have their own personal take on events that have happened due to the nature of the way individuals perceive events, but, I do believe that events either did or did not happen and that, given adequate proof, there is not much too debate. Honestly, I am just curious to see what, related to history, you would perceive as debatable.

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Re: Determining the truth

by [David Verner](#) - Thursday, 14 October 2010, 11:21 AM

I know what you mean as far as when there is adequate proof of an event, then there isn't much to debate. But with a lot of history, there is some proof but still holes in the stories so that leaves it up for debate.

One example is, of recent history, is 9/11. There are many out there who believe the whole thing to be a conspiracy, and that the attack was actually orchestrated by the US government, and they claim to have proof of that. So one side says it was 'Absolutely Bin Laden & Al Queda' and the other says it was 'Absolutely NOT Bin Laden & Al Queda' - debatable history.

This then also relates to Vietnam, for example some seeing Ho Chi Minh as a nice man 'Uncle Ho' who just wanted freedom for his country, and then those who see him as a cold-hearted Communist bent on taking the south.

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Rate... **Re: Determining the truth**by [Samantha Mccourt](#) - Thursday, 14 October 2010, 01:09 PM

I was about to write something very similar to you, but I think she means that historical events are surrounded by debate because of the fact that there is always going to be some conflicting information. History is debatable because new information can always be found which would change our perception of the event.

For instance, me and you learned in school that Christopher Columbus found America, this is opened for debate by many scholars. There are theories that say people as far back as ancient China discovered parts of North America (this was disproved, but still a solid debate) <http://www.examiner.com/cable-tv-in-san-francisco/the-history-channel-asks-who-really-discovered-america>

History isn't even going to just be one way or another because we will never know if we have all the information possible.

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I believe that we should deal with conflicting information in history by researching both sides of the argument and gathering as much factual evidence on the subject as possible.

I think that our textbooks can help us to approach this video because it gives us some prior knowledge and understanding of the war and what led up to it. Also it is good to have as many different sources as possible.

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Most information is generally biased, with the editor telling us what their take is on the story. Academically, when represented with this problem, one should consider using a variety of sources to get the same information. It is up to the student then, to pick out the main ideas of the story which should then be analyzed by the student. A good example is the political talk shows on Sunday morning. When big political stories break, debates with the same topic are most often discussed on all three major television channels. Because they occur at the same time, it is advisable to record them for later analysis.

Unlike the DVDs, I have found the textbooks to be more informative and true. APPY gives us accounts of the conflict by those who experienced them first hand. Unfortunately, first hand stories lack the overview of the big picture or the larger scope. For that, I turn to HERRING who gives us detailed accounts of the movers and shakers who made the final decisions. I particularly like the careful and calculated decisions that Kennedy made when faced with the Soviet threat in South East Asia. We are also told in HERRING of the great length the administration went to to gather the best minds in the United States to help mold these decisions. I believe it is accurate information because after the events have taken place and over, there is really no gain in misinforming the public. An exception may be among those who made mistakes and therefore covering up, in which case the student can benefit with more research and/or careful analysis.

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I think, by this point in the discussion, we can all agree that the telling of historical events are never going to be one hundred percent factual and that you must rely on as many sources as possible. However, for the purposes of this class, I think you summed up how we should be using our materials in your second paragraph. Use APPY for personal accounts and HERRING for an overall picture. Lastly, we should remember that both are up for debate and to keep questioning what we hear.

I like what you said about the current day political breaking stories and how each of us should really watch the news

from the different viewpoints presented by different networks. I know that I, myself, am guilty of watching most news on the network or networks that I feel reflect my own personal views and I feel can be trusted more than others but this is not at all a good practice as each network has an agenda and will more than likely be slanted. I would argue that it is even more important to question sources and search for the truth in present day situations than it is in history as we can not only learn lessons but perhaps do something to change the situation while it is still changeable.

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Re: Determining the truth

by [Jesse Long](#) - Saturday, 16 October 2010, 06:40 PM

I agree with that, most people when telling a story will have a tendency to be biased in the way they personally think. Its hard for anyone to keep there own feelings out of a discussion or story that should be un biased. As others have said about news networks, each one has there own "agenda" so it can be hit and miss depending on the topic. I too think the books have more information and as well are more truthful, but i am a visual person so i personally like the dvds and i feel the books and the dvds are doing there best to be as accurate and truthful but as i said before, it is hard to keep your own perspective out 100% when reporting in a book or dvd.

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Re: Determining the truth

by [Alexander Gilbert](#) - Saturday, 16 October 2010, 02:45 PM

- Ok...Charlton Heston? The synthetic persona Mr. Heston displayed automatically made me discredit "The Real Story".
- I felt the arguments brought up in the video were more opinion based than fact.
- Vietnam: A Television History = one sided, Television's Vietnam The Real Story = two sided, and the textbooks equal accurate interpretation of both sides.

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Re: Determining the truth

by [Deanna Middlestetter](#) - Saturday, 16 October 2010, 07:34 PM

We can deal with conflicting information academically by looking at other scholarly articles on the subject. You can use the two textbooks to compare information to the video to find what is consistent.

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