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Determining the truth



by Joe Escobar - Sunday, October 13, 2013, 12:36 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 (such as is being presented in the PBS videos, web videos, and AIM video this week)? How can your two textbooks help you to approach this video information and be confident that you are learning accurate historical knowledge?

Be sure to use SPECIFIC examples of conflicting or supporting claims from class materials to illustrate your point or to support your position.

Cite your sources in your posts and replies. Use parentheses.

Examples (PBS Episode 1), (AIM historian "Smith"), (Herring p.34), etc.

Change the subject line of your post to something more descriptive. DO NOT leave the subject line Re: Determining the truth

Sum of ratings: -

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Interpret The Truth



by David Lahy - Tuesday, October 15, 2013, 7:19 PM

As a reader or student of history, one will always come across conflicting accounts or differences in opinions and presented facts. To help determine the truth, you the reader need to think about the reasons behind the differences. Sources have to be interpreted as to what the true meaning is, especially if it is from a culturally different viewpoint or way of thinking. Historical context and conventional thought or way of thinking can distort the accuracy or the information presented.

I for one have learned a great deal so far on the complexity of the Vietnam War and appreciate the balanced accounting from the many different sources presented in the

Herring book. But from watching the AIM video, I am struck by the one-sided view as to why or how something is interpreted. It was if the information they presented was only to validate a view point. The AIM video lacks objectivity by not presenting or accounting for alternate reasoning and definitely comes off agenda-driven (conservative). For instance in the Aim video, historian Stephen Morris implies the basic underlying myth of the PBS video is Communists are not really Communists, but Nationalists. This type of Cold War rhetoric implies Communism is a solid monolithic block and everything is being directed from the Kremlin. (Herring p.13) Only later, did the U.S come to realize though Communist, Ho Chi Minh had nationalistic goals and historically, resisted all outside influence on internal affairs. A country can be Communist without being Soviet or Russian controlled. Additionally, the AIM video claims the PBS, Episode 3 (Americans Mandarin) attempted to paint a picture of the South Vietnamese as the bad guys and the title of the episode attempts to convey two negative message about Prime Minister No Dinh Diem: 1) Diem was a puppet, and 2) Mandarin was used to suggest elitism, privilege and selfish ideas (AIM narrator Heston). First, Diem was not a puppet and resisted many policies the United States wanted. Whenever U.S officials disapproved of Diem's mishandling of government affairs and stipulated further aid and assistance would be determined on undertaking suggested reforms, Diem would refuse. Diem once stated, that South Vietnam "did not want to be a protectorate." (Herring p.101) Additionally, there were fundamental differences in how to manage large scale economic relief programs. The U.S insisted developed be based on private enterprise and Diem denounced the U.S view and insisted on government ownership of major industries. (Herring p.75) It is common knowledge Diem was a staunch Nationalist and always had reservations about U. S involvement in terms of ground forces and the Americanization of South Vietnam. As for the second assertion, the term mandarin was used as a negative connotation is absurd. According to Merriam and Webster, the definition of mandarin is, "a public official in Chia in the past". The PBS video was simple trying to convey that Diem was Americas Asian official in South Vietnam. Furthermore the term mandarin is not that all misplaced when referring to the traits of Diem. Diem was not born in poverty but from came upper an upper class family, was well educated and shared the mandarin's contempt for business and the nationalist's distrust of foreign capital. (Herring p.58,75)

As you can see, history is not all black and white and historians sometimes disagree and come up with a different conclusion or interpretation when presented with the same information. It is up to the reader to interpret the validity of the information and to use more than one source to prove or disprove conflicting information. By using the two textbooks in this course you can be your own interpreter by evaluating and analyzing the information presented.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Interpret The Truth  

by Jacob Nelson - Sunday, October 20, 2013, 11:35 PM



David,

I couldn't agree more with your response. The idea you shared about needing to think about some of the reasons for differing accounts of history when reading really stuck with me. For the remainder of this class I am going to use this technique to form a more educated viewpoint after reading or viewing our class materials. Thank you for your insight!

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Multiple Sources of Information

by Erik Johnson - Tuesday, October 15, 2013, 10:45 PM

As a student it is difficult to know what information is reliable. The main complaint by the Accuracy in Media clip is that the Vietnam video series doesn't describe Ho Chi Minh as a big enough Communist or a bad enough guy. I agree that the video series doesn't highlight negative aspects about him. It seems to downplay his connections with Communist super-powers and executions of opponents during his rule. However, by referring to multiple resources, we can fill in these pieces to get a more complete picture of the events. For example, our book, America's Longest War, describes Ho Chi Minh's strong devotion to Communism and that "he was willing to sanction the most cold-blooded methods to achieve his aims" (Page 5). The textbook also explains the executions that took place in North Vietnam (Page 81). Every resource is going to have some flaws, but we can bridge the gaps by using numerous sources. The Vietnam series adds great visuals to the learning process while the textbooks fill in the details.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Interpretation

by Kaedyn Drake - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 10:48 AM

It is hard, when dealing with history, to get honest and accurate information. Over time many details are lost or transformed and what we end up with is a big mixture of conflicting information that the historians leave for us to decipher and put into the right order. By looking at the source of where the information is coming from and seeing how reliable that source is, you can either take the information from that source as the truth, or you can read from other sources, find out how reliable they are, and then put the pieces together to come up with the information that makes the most sense. By using the textbooks given we can use the information to fill in missing pieces of

information from the videos. We must also be aware that the information given to us from the textbooks may also be distorted, so we may need to look deeper into where the information is coming from.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Interpretation

by Tracy Tunnell - Friday, October 18, 2013, 2:31 PM

Learning about history is always a touchy subject. Which is fact and which is fiction? There are many sources to get our information and it is up to us to decide what to believe. I think we are learning a lot about this war with resources that have been given to us, but many facts are left. I agree with how over time details are lost or stories have been changed. I feel we are given facts that people want us to know and not the whole truth about what really happened.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Interpretation

by Erik Johnson - Saturday, October 19, 2013, 4:35 PM

Well said Kaedyn. Studies have shown that witnesses to crimes or events will often tell slightly different stories, but a fairly good picture of the events can be assembled by putting together the shared details. Similarly, history is certainly susceptible to bias, prejudice, and nostalgia, but we can get a decent understanding by reviewing numerous sources. You make a good point that the accuracy of the textbooks should be evaluated as well as the videos. It can be difficult to fully know what the intentions of an author or director truly are, especially when considering politically charged subjects. They may say that they only want the truth to be revealed, but it may only vindicate their own biases. The background of author George Herring adds credibility to his work in my view; however his account should still be scrutinized. He was a member of the U.S. Navy and went on to teach history for decades at universities and military academies (Herring page xvii). It could be said that his military background may bias him toward favoring the U.S. policies, but his book does not seem to reflect that.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Determining the truth

by Camren Bernico - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 2:53 PM

Firstly and meaning no disrespect but what exactly did I watch? I was rather appalled

to see Charlton Heston zinging us with rude verbal slams and quips like some middle schooler between shots of "historians" who would complain about a small detail and then overburden us with their annoying inflated historical egos.

The whole video reeked to me of some amateur and immature counter video and even left me with the sour biting taste of a South Park or Family Guy episode in just how cheesy it was, I was waiting for the punch line hoping this was some satirical spoof.

I am a Christian who knows full well that Christianity is based in Judaism. I know how many times the bible was re-written, how the most widely read version has entire parts removed or totally rewritten to fit the society then.

I enjoyed the "Lord of the Rings" movies having read the books before, knowing how much was left out of the films but I enjoyed the films just the same.

I mention these things as examples, showing that while what is seen as a whole may still be lacking in details the grand picture is complete.

With the bible I take it as a whole picture that teaches life lessons, morality and faith. I know not all of it may be true or perfectly accurate. I know things may be left out and others over inflated. I know all of this but the grand message is the same and is enough for me to understand and appreciate it.

It is the same for "Lord of the Rings". The movies gave me the big picture, fully and wonderfully so that I knew the world, the history, the start and the end. I missed out on details, some battles were touched on too much or too little but the end result got me to the same place. Unless I chose to be historian of "Lord of the Rings" and Middle Earth's history I find what the movies gave us to be more than enough.

So to bring it back to this class video I feel the same way. I am learning history and while some things may be omitted or not 100% accurate the big picture and message is clear to me and using my brain I can deduce details or what I feel about things.

This video reminded me of some nerds who got upset over minute details and

jumped at the chance to act superior on video for us and tell us how horrible this PBS show is and what an injustice it was to not include some vets personal story and opinion about things or some historians ramblings about a part of history left out that would take up another 10 hours to explain to people and for what?

History like many things in life needs to always be taken with an open mind and a grain of salt. History while dealing with reality also deals with image and ideas. Watching videos in Nazi Germany made them look like the good guys and showcased we Americans as evil and wrong. If Nazi Germany was still looked back upon with fondness by the Germans then I am sure the account of history, accurate as it may be would no doubt include personal German details, omit many other details and glorify things personal to them.

Memory, human emotions, affiliations, politics, motives, all play a huge role in telling of history.

I feel as viewers and learners of history our job is to cut the fat and be objective in our viewing. We must be able to see and even embrace all side to truly understand what is truth at least a truth we ourselves can agree upon.

We need to use our God given brains to know that history we learn about is only a telling of that history from the view points we are being given. If we then piece together multiple books and videos on Vietnam we should be able to work our way through the data and come up with a reasonable deduction of truth.

In a more general sense the PBS show while having some issues was never meant to be a show for historians, those guys know all of this and far more. It was made however to teach those of us who know little and to be a good educational program and a deep yet general and practical sense for the normal everyday people in the world.

Most people do not need or want every time detail or fact. Most people do not need to hear every single story and even that happened then. Lets be honest, a ton of stuff was happening during that time, far to much to record for one show or book for the everyday person. This is why we have multiple sources to use as we wish and further more this use of multiple sources of course creates jobs for the people who wish to dedicate their lives to this.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Determining the truth

by David Lahy - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 5:07 PM

Carmen,

I too felt the same way when I was watching the Accuracy In Media (AIM) video. I definitely came away feeling there was a rather heavy bias favoring the neo-conservative interpretation of the history of the Vietnam War and this exercise was meant as a teaching tool, to not take all sources of information at face value.

For me the PBS video was a middle of the road view point meant as a balanced, true to the overall consensus. Some facts about history are open for debate and historians have different values or beliefs about the world and often arrive at different interpretations of the same event. Many times it may be for the simple fact someone wants to push an agenda or they differ in their political, philosophical, or cultural assumptions.

For instance, when the AIM video mention that the PBS didn't use "20/20 hindsight" and missed the most important lesson of the Vietnam experience; the impetuous of Communism rule inevitable results in great human tragedy." (AIM historian Reed Irvin) It was aimed at pushing Communism bad at all costs and a secondary goal may have been to deflect the fact original assumption of Communism was a monolithic block and run from the Kremlin, proved partially false in reference to the Indo-China area. They failed to consider the Indo-Chinese wars were nationalistic in nature, wanting to drive out the foreign occupiers or colonial rule. Just look at China and rivalry they shared between Russia.

I think the best advice is to compare what historic information is out there and compare it with others written on the subject and were you find disparity, investigate for yourself.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Determining the truth

by Morgan Magill - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 9:38 PM

I found the AIM video to be kind of funny because the historians were doing exactly what they were accusing the PBS series of doing, but the opposite. Their major problem was that the PBS series was leaving out information that made the Americans look good, and the Vietminh look bad. While I could see where they were coming from, to a point, I could not help but feel that they were

just as guilty, for they did not care at all about the Vietnamese side of the story being shown as something to be sympathized at all.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: Determining the truth



by Rhonda Garcia Mondragon - Thursday, October 17, 2013, 7:52 PM

I agree watching the AIM video was like the finger pointing the other way at PBS. The AIM was showing how everything that PBS said was twisted or had some kind of information left out yet this video was doing the same thing just in the other direction. The whole story needed to be redone not just picked apart for errors in one direction. It would be nice to know exactly what happened without all of the finger pointing and politics.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: Determining the truth



by Kaedyn Drake - Friday, October 18, 2013, 7:50 AM

Camren,

I felt the same way when I watched the AIM video. It was all just a bunch of finger pointing, and was exactly what they were criticizing PBS of doing. What that video showed me was that no matter where you're getting your information from it's probably going to be biased and have many things taken out or put in so that it leans one way or the other.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: Determining the truth



by Tracy Tunnell - Saturday, October 19, 2013, 6:45 PM

Carmen, I really enjoyed the examples you used when comparing facts and fiction. I found it to be quite humorous that Charlton Heston was narrating the AIM video. He came across as biased and felt that he didn't have all the facts or was leaving things out. I also thought PBS really went a roundabout way when describing what happened during this war and time period. It really wasn't portrayed that it should have been, especially for the Vietnamese people. It didn't show how much suffering they went through during this time or what the Americans really did. I agree that it is up to us to use multiple resources to get as many truthful facts when learning about this.

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Sum of ratings:1 (1)



Corroborate Our Stories

by Chels Staton - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 4:46 PM

Since it was first presented for approval to our government and “Vietnam experts” it’s no surprise that some people (Charlton Heston) considered it one-sided and inaccurate. Especially in our current political situation, is it all that shocking that one would question the information approved for our viewing by the government? Any surprise that our nation would be represented somewhat as the heroes in the Vietnam War by the very people who sent us there in the first place?

Academically regarding History, any student should always keep an open mind and understand the 3 sides of truth in story telling; my side, your side and what really happened. Most likely no one person will ever know all 3 sides of this War, we can hope to get a general idea and be aware of certain facts that are proven but we will never know it all. Regarding conflicting information it is best to do extensive research and find *facts*, if still in conflict then choose a side and always remember that we may never know it all because we weren’t there!

Appy and Herring both in their own right sought to bring light to what really happened by writing books. Appy present first-hand accounts from multiple sides so that readers can differentiate and acknowledge that this was in fact *not* just “ours” or “their” war. Herring on the other hand presents historical perspective with facts and information available from his own research and curiosity. By referring to these books we can plug more information into the PBS series and relate real people’s personal account to what we’re seeing unfold in the series.

The first supporting claim that comes to attention from the combined information is a fact and it’s acknowledged twice by two different accounts. First in Episode 1 of *Vietnam: A Television History*, “The French controlled the cities. The Viet Minh controlled the countryside. The French controlled the day. The Viet Minh the night.” Le Lieu Browne mirrors this information and expresses her thought, “The French controlled big towns while the Viet Minh controlled the countryside” (Appy 72).

This specific story also seems to correlate with the sentiments of Episode 1, that although Ho Chi Minh had a large and extensive following, there was a population that disagreed. Those who fled the country, either to avoid the draft or for a French education, were seemingly on the side of the South. Le Lieu Browne speaks in her story about having to censor books that were considered “Pro-Communism” (Appy 73). Hers is a story of a Vietnam citizen who wanted to fight for her country, but the Southern part of it where it was “peaceful and free” (Appy 73), not for the Socialist or Communist North.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Corroborate Our Stories

by David Lahy - Saturday, October 19, 2013, 12:08 PM

Chels,

All good points and I especially like your "three sides in truth" analogy.

Additionally, to provide more information for the setiments in Episode 1, that although Ho Chi Minh had a large and extensive following, there was a population that disagreed. Hanoi's heavyhanded measures did provoke widespread opposition, however between 3,000-15,000 dissidents may in fact been executed, and resistance in Ho Chi Minh's own Nghe An province had to be suppressed by the army (Herring pg. 81).

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Corroborate Our Stories

by Chels Staton - Sunday, October 20, 2013, 2:23 PM

Thank you David, I do realize that there was an opposition to Ho Chi Minh and am intrigued especially by their part in the war. I always root for the underdog and am finding the assignments in this class more and more interesting. I appreciate your response and feedback!

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Corroborate Our Stories

by Camren Bernico - Saturday, October 19, 2013, 2:35 PM

Chels,

Like my fellow student above me pointed out I really like your "3 sides of truth" approach to story telling or I would assume most things in life.

Your principal is a good way to keep yourself grounded with a clear head. In history and even modern news and media we see such conflicting and biased reports.

Take our own President and the government shut down. I could browse online and flip through many televsion broadcasts that all put a different spin onto the matter with different tidbits of information.

So what would I think in this maelstorm of confusion? Like you just said. Take a look at all the sides, take a look at the obvious known facts and then how you yourself piece it all together and somewhere in all of that is a truth. A whole truth? A simple truth? Doubtful but a truth none the less.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Never trust anyone. Historians included.

by Amanda Day - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 5:25 PM

A good rule of thumb to have as a learner is to double-check your sources always. When taking in accounts of history we often forget to consider that just because someone was present or involved doesn't mean they had a 360-degree perspective on the issue- that is the only true way to get FACTS. Everything else documented are stories rather, swayed by personal emotions and tainted by time. The best way to avoid misinformation is to simply go into a source or publication with an open mind, always keeping in mind the flipside to each and every argument. The textbooks are a great way to guide your mind free of biased thinking by taking the information in at your own perception (which can also have an inaccurate effect at times). Without the many hints of tone, visual aid, and spliced up interviews our written sources can offer a right-in-front-of-your-nose approach to the information where it is given to us at our own discretion without the discrimination of editing.

One blatant example of misinformation so far is the portrayal of Diem in the PBS series. Displayed very openly as the US' puppet, Diem was in fact rather defiant of the US and the PBS series fails rather horribly at relaying this. Throughout the first three episodes Diem has been viewed as a less known nationalist while the nationalistic focus has been placed on Ho Chi Minh. This however seems to be false after watching the *Accuracy in Media* video. The source in this video is a soldier who was stationed over there in the midst of the Vietnamese people for years. This would be where logic takes over as mediator and we can see the big picture of PBS' spin on the matter. They were just sticking to the inaccurately proud notion that the US had control over Diem when in fact as the soldier states, Diem lived by his own policies and denied much of the US' advice. The soldier also states that among the people of Vietnam Diem's nationalistic status was way above that of Ho's.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Figuring out the truth when it comes to history

by Rhonda Garcia Mondragon - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 5:31 PM

By reading the information in the textbook and then listening to the AIM talk about the truths that actually happened in Vietnam, and not how PBS depicted the happenings it makes a person stop and think about what the real truth is. I think that over time stories get twisted and parts get left out and that is how the truth slowly starts to get turned into something that isn't exactly historically correct. Another thing to take into the story telling is in the eyes of the beholder and how they say what happened and what actually happened. The best example is how in the AIM documentary it was stated that "Ho Chi Minh was being portrayed as the hero and the United States and South Vietnam were the villains." (AIM) It said how PBS was trying to show that Ho Chi Minh was the legitimate ruler of Vietnam, and was trying to

legitimize the aggression that he was doing towards all that didn't see his way. (AIM) How to deal with conflicting information when it comes to academics is to do research from trusting sources and if the stories are all telling the same thing then there must be some kind of truth behind it. Being able to get accurate information is one of the hardest tasks when studying a topic that doesn't have an obvious answer or has a way to figure it out.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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facts vs fiction

by Tracy Tunnell - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 5:45 PM

After watching the AIM video, I was really surprised at how one sided it was. I felt it was biased on peoples own opinions and that was what really mattered. It talked about how things were omitted from the series, "Vietnam: A Television History" when it seems to talk and show how things really were while this war was going on. The first supporting fact is "The French controlled big towns while the Viet Minh controlled the countryside" (Appy 72). I felt this was important based on everything I have read and watched so far. Appy and Herring both in their own right sought to bring light to what really happened by writing books. Appy with firsthand accounts of what really happened during this horrible time as I read these stories and think did this really happen? How could people go through this and survive? Then I read about Herring's side and see the more logical part of the war and part of me is confused or conflicted on how I feel about this war. As students we need to keep an open mind academically. There is always three sides to every story, yours, mine, and what really happened. I find myself wanting to side with the people that suffered the most and not listen to the other side. This is where I have to keep an open mind to all sides. We will never know the whole truth about what happened and many things are covered up in hopes to keep what really went on a secret. I am learning a great deal between the books and the series. They seem to coincide with each other and where one leaves out details, the other fills it.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Facts Are Subjective

by Courtney Waterman - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 8:08 PM

It's always interesting to me that facts can be very subjective. The way two people feel about a single historical event may differ even though the facts are the same. In order to create your own perspective of history it's best to look at information presented from as many different points of view as possible. For this class, when I hear something conflicting in the videos I turn to the Herring book, and if I still can't piece it all together I turn to google, and look at different articles.

One thing I've learned about the Vietnam War is that people feel very passionately about it in one way or another. Even if PBS included, or did everything in the way the

AIM video wanted it to, a historian or civilians somewhere still would not be happy. When something is so emotionally charged, there's no way that everyone will be pleased. If you start out looking for flaws in something you will find them.

While talking about Ho Chi Minh the video series says that he was "the first Vietnamese communist." (PBS Episode 1) They established that in the beginning and then went on to call him a nationalist as well. In the AIM video it's said that the "basic underlying myth is that the communist aren't really communist at all, they're just nationalist." (AIM narrator Heston) This is something I'm still confused on. Why does he *have* to be one more than the other? Isn't a threat to national security a threat no matter how much that threat loves their country? This argument by AIM seemed to be reaching a little bit, but maybe I'm not fully understanding it.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Facts Are Subjective

by Chels Staton - Sunday, October 20, 2013, 2:35 PM

Hello Courtney,

Your reply caught my attention because of when you said, "One thing I've learned about the Vietnam War is that people feel very passionately." This war is one that our generation is still affected by. One way or another a large population is the children of those who were involved in Vietnam. I too find myself fact checking everything that we're learning so that I can get a more complete idea of what had happened.

I think that you did understand the AIM video and what Mr. Heston was saying. It seems that his main objective was to cast doubt on the the PBS series, and the easiest way to do that was add more confusion and contradict himself. One person can have several labels and personalities, it's not a perfect box that we all fit in saying that we are or are not one thing or another.

-Chelsae

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Seeing Through the Opinions

by Morgan Magill - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 9:23 PM

The AIM video this week had a lot of opinions on how poorly put together the PBS series *Vietnam: A Television History* was. Historian Douglas Pike reviewed the proposal of the television series and the particular promises that were made to PBS as to what the television series would deliver and contribute to history. He then pointed out all of the ways that the series did the opposite of what had been promised. One of the promises made was that the series would contribute to the

healing of American pride, which Pike says was not followed through, for the series did not exemplify anything that the United States could be proud of. This is all just opinion, and nothing more. His opinion should not be the final word on whether the PBS series showed the United States in a positive or negative light. Everyone in the AIM video was very outwardly disapproving of the way the video series painted the history of the Vietnam War, but they were also obviously pro-American only historians. Charlton Heston points out that historian Dolf Droge of the Agency for International Development was "appalled... by the general ignorance of Ho's dedication to the communist cause," (AIM, Heston). He claims that the series painted Ho Chi Minh as the hero, and the United States as the villain. This is not an accurate way to teach history, however being absolutely on the other side of things does not either. It is just two disagreeing views: one heavily on the American side, and the other trying to defend the Vietnamese. I have not found, so far, that the PBS series has been so one sided that I am not learning the history of the Vietnam War objectively.

I feel that the most academic way to deal with conflicting information is simply to not believe everything we read or hear the first time around. Our books can very much help us be confident in what we are learning by, hopefully, giving the same historical information. At that point the opinions and versions of how the history is told is not important, so long as the factual information can be verified. It will be easy to identify what is true and what is not once we see how many times we come over the same information.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Seeing Through the Opinions

by Courtney Waterman - Saturday, October 19, 2013, 12:38 PM

The AIM participants were very one sided with their critique of the PBS series. Like you said, they were pro-American. They seemed to feel that the American side of the war is the only side of the war worth talking about, and because the PBS series wasn't 110% on the American side it was inaccurate.

I really like the point you made with your last sentence. The more times a piece of information comes up in other sources the more credible it is.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Seeing Through the Opinions

by Morgan Magill - Sunday, October 20, 2013, 7:39 PM

Thank you. I suppose that multiple sources we encounter could be incorrect, but I would hope that that is not the case! Especially since we are using so many different sources. I just think that with all of the different articles we read, and the videos we see, not to mention the book reading,

we will be able to see what it fact, as apposed to just opinion.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Seeing Through the Opinions

by Amanda Day - Sunday, October 20, 2013, 3:58 PM

First of all I would like to start by discussing the phrase “contribute to the healing of American pride” as mentioned Douglas Pike. The fact that the AIM video highlighted this point is indication of their patriotic sourness. Don’t get me wrong, patriotism is no problem, but it should by all means be left out of our history’s telling. In order to “contribute to the healing of American Pride” the PBS series would definitely have to do some twisting of the truth. Can you think of a way to “heal our pride” that involves the horror and mismanagement of Vietnam? Any source of information such as the PBS Vietnam series should leave any and all healing to the songwriters and talk shows and stick to the raw facts for viewer interpretation. Ultimately, this will never happen as long as someone is in charge and swaying public opinion, but ideally the absence of opinion in these educational programs would lead to more public-wide open-mindedness.

Overall this AIM video seemed a little surreal and unnecessary.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Seeing Through the Opinions

by Morgan Magill - Sunday, October 20, 2013, 7:36 PM

It is so true that if a series is supposed to be healing the pride of Americans, then they had a loss of pride. That means that they did something, or multiple things that resulted in the loss of pride. This alone says that the Americans could not have been the 100% successful heroes in the war, as it seems the Historians of the AIM video felt they should have been shown as. I am a personally a patriot. I love this country, however, I can at least admit when mistakes have been made, and you will not find me criticizing a series with critiques like, “they failed to try to make us all feel better about ourselves,” or, “they didn’t make us look good, like they promised.” That is just ridiculous, in my opinion.

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Re: Seeing Through the Opinions

by Erik Johnson - Sunday, October 20, 2013, 5:54 PM

I also felt that the AIM video had a weak argument about whether the PBS series fulfilled its intended purpose. They begin their video with claims that PBS failed to accomplish these four promised goals while dramatically crossing them out, but they do little to give legitimate details as to how they failed. As you said Morgan, it seemed to just be opinion and nothing more, lacking legitimate facts to back up their position. I felt that it was a childish way to begin a counterargument. They would have been better off if this whole section was edited out, but they lead with it as if it was an appalling revelation.

However, I did find some of the information from the other AIM historians to be interesting. Dolf Droge stated that Ho Chi Minh had betrayed one of his teachers and counselors to the French government in Vietnam and then protested the arrest for political gain. This is a strong statement about Ho Chi Minh's character.

The strongest testimony in the AIM video is the protests by Vietnamese Americans against the PBS series. This indicated to me that there were legitimate disagreements with the PBS portrayal of the war by those who lived it, but AIM didn't give much detail about what caused such passionate disapproval.

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Re: Seeing Through the Opinions

by Morgan Magill - Sunday, October 20, 2013, 7:44 PM

You are definitely right about the fact that the video did have plenty of legitimate arguments, but like you said, they failed to elaborate on almost anything. The entire segment with the broken promises just seemed whiny and like they were grasping for straws, yet they spent a long time on that particular point. I would have enjoyed the video much more if they would have spent more time on the stories about Ho Chi Minh's betrayal, or the opinions of people who lived through the war. If that would have been the case, I would have left the video feeling like I learned something valuable, and didn't just listen to a bunch of complaining for half an hour.

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Re: Seeing Through the Opinions

by Jacob Nelson - Sunday, October 20, 2013, 10:30 PM

Morgan,

I agree with you that the AIM video offered some interesting arguments but suffered to elaborate further on these points. However, I was even more intrigued with the point you made about the AIM video lacking a local perspective on the war. It would have been far more interesting to hear the opinions of all the parties involved in the Vietnam War. This would have given us the opportunity to learn about the war on a more personal level. If we had heard stories from individuals on the war we could then decipher the validity of what they were saying.

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Finding Truth in History

by Jacob Nelson - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 11:33 PM

Trying to determine what really happened in history can be difficult at times. There are generally many different viewpoints and sources of information which can make it hard to formulate an accurate interpretation of historical events. With that said, it is generally advantageous to consider different views and opinions when studying history. Hearing more sides of the story helps to create a more rounded and educated view of what happened in the past. When studying history it is also important to consider objective versus subjective accounts because it is imperative to refrain from any sort of bias. While it is still helpful to gain knowledge from first person accounts of various historical events it is important to recognize that there can be an emotional attachment to what has happened in the past. Thus, it is important to take into consideration that these stories might not be completely truthful, but it is also important to fact check and ultimately form an educated opinion about what actually happened. History textbooks are a good source of unbiased historical information, since they are written by objective historians whose aim is to inform and not persuade. This means that our books can generally be regarded as unbiased and far more accurate than these videos.

It was interesting how it seemed like the whole objective of the Accuracy In Media video was to discredit the PBS series on the Vietnam War. For example, I thought it was odd how the AIM video chose to villainize the Ho Chi Minh and Viet Cong by describing violence committed by them against fellow Vietnamese. I didn't personally view Ho Chi Minh as the hero in the PBS series after watching it so it gave me the impression that the AIM video was made to discredit the PBS series.

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Re: Finding Truth in History

by Tracy Tunnell - Saturday, October 19, 2013, 6:56 PM

Jacob, first of all, your title says it all to me. It really is all about finding the truth in history. I find it hard to be unbiased at times when learning about what really happened in past events. I have to take a step back and look at all sides and all the information given to me and determined what is truth and what is lies. I thought the AIM video was based more on lies and telling people what they wanted them to know. I also found it surprising how they discredited the PBS series on the Vietnam war. So far I find this one to be more educational than the AIM video. I also think our text books has a more understanding than the AIM video. I would go as far as to say that i think Wikipedia may have more accurate information than they do, but i could be wrong. Like its been said many times, gather facts and come to your own conclusion on the truth of what really happened during this horrific time.

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Re: Finding Truth in History

by Jacob Nelson - Sunday, October 20, 2013, 10:21 PM

Tracy,

Thank you for your response. I definitely agree with you and how you said that history is difficult to be presented without any bias. It is indeed very important to learn all the sides of a historical event before determining what you believe to be the truth. With that being said some sources of information can be more accurate than others. For example, the AIM video contained some information that simply was incorrect or presented in a matter that was biased. This is why it is so crucial to fact check and to have other learning materials readily available when learning about history. This can be especially true when learning about wars because there is such an emotional attachment to what happened in these awful events.

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What is right versus what seems right

by Enya McKinnon - Sunday, October 20, 2013, 10:05 PM

History is a huge subject to cover. There are many wars, revolutions, discoveries and inventions that will never be completely understood because as William Ralph Inge said, "Events in the past may be roughly divided into those which probably never happened and those which do not matter." Everyone has a different opinion as to what exactly happened in history and just who you ask will greatly impact the answer you will receive. As we are growing up we are taught to believe that what we read in our textbooks is the one and only truth because well, if it wasn't, why would someone be taking the time to teach us it? Yet as we venture out and come to understand that

there are always two sides to a story, we begin to understand that history is not always as black and white as it seems. Academically, we have to learn to be assertive and pick and choose our battles when it comes to historical arguing. It is not always going to be necessary to jump into a heated debate as to whether the chicken came first or the egg did. As scholars, it is our job to filter through the presented information and create our own opinions and beliefs on history. No two people are the same so why should we be expected to all fit into the same academic mold. The same freedoms that keep our nation free give us the freedom to believe whatever we want. While watching the AIM video, I could not help but feel that just about everything I was learning about was being presented from a one sided viewpoint. I just felt that the information presented as facts were more in the category of opinions and that they were withholding evidence that would have otherwise swayed viewers away from believing their facts. According to one of our history books, the United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) claimed victory in a very misguided joint attack all because "...the enemy had abandoned the field. Those in the field and the reporters who covered the action knew better." (Herring pg. 98.) This example just shows how controversial history can be because although some sources give credit to one side, others give credit to the MACV. The main reasoning that I could conclude as to why we have such varying differences between what each side of a battle says is pride. Why go home whining of defeat when you could just as easily go home boasting of a glorious victory and any one who was not there would not be any the wiser. Unfortunately, we cannot go back and rediscover the past. All we can do is learn from it and make sure we do not repeat our forefathers mistakes.

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