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Forum 1 CLOSED ► Determining the truth



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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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Conflicting information



by Andrew Tignor - Tuesday, October 15, 2013, 9:08 AM

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)?

Dealing with conflicting information that is given in the videos for the class or what we watch on T.V is sometimes very difficult for us to do. The way to best determine what is conflicting information or true about the history that you are trying to learn is; by going more in depth about the research and not just trusting everything that you see in the videos or T.V.

There are things that will never be broadcasted on T.V or most of the videos that we watch. The reason being that a lot of what happened in the war was just too horrible for the country to see. If this kind of information was put out it would have made many people go against what we were truly fighting for.

This site (<http://history1900s.about.com/od/vietnamwar/a/vietnamwar.htm>) happened to pull my attain because of the great truth that it shared and that it had other click able links that supported what was being stated on the site.

How can your two textbooks help you to approach this video information and be confident that you are learning accurate historical knowledge?

The books that or given in this class to read carry a great amount of information that would otherwise been hidden to us or lost forever. This is because it shares stories from people that were there and who were a part of it. With the information that is given in (PATRIOTS By CHRISTIAN G. Appy) it puts you in the minds and pain that many suffered during the war. It will help in the supporting of the videos if the amount of the events or what happens in these videos line up to what these people have shared. The readings in books give you a different way to look at a video of any historic event because it opens your mind to look for the things that would be over looked if you did not know what you were looking at or for.

Andrew Tignor.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Conflicting information



by Barbara Lay - Tuesday, October 15, 2013, 11:20 AM

I did look at your web site you posted and it looks to have useful information posted on it. Of course that information would have to be compared to other sources to determine if it is accurate or not. It is difficult to access or even know if you are getting the accurate information from media sources if they are not reporting the actual events. Plus what was the perspective of the person writing the events? Does one side of the war want to look better than the other side? Stretch the truth somewhat? These are issues we may never have the true answers to with historical writers, and the media. The best we can hope for that somewhere the true facts are documented somplace, and we have to almost make a judgement on our part of what we are going to believe. Not having been there during the war, we have no clue of what truely happened other than what we read or watch on video or television. The stories in the Appy book hopefully is our best source to the true events.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Conflicting information

by Andrew Tignor - Tuesday, October 15, 2013, 1:23 PM

You are quiet right about the site and not knowing if it has accurate information or not. It did seem though as a lot of the information that was on the site were pretty close to that of some of the information that are stated in the stories in the Appy book. It really is hard to try and determine what would be true or fiction in this type of situation because there is so many miss consumptions of these historical events, then there is the fact that we were not there and have to take what we are reading, watching or even being told to be real or not. There is some truth behind each story you just have to look for it, and in this case you have to look very closely at it to find it.

Barbara I appreciate the input it made me realize that I need to look deeper in to the sites that I researched and that I need to focus on finding the more accurate information before I chose a site as a source of information for any class. Thank you.

Andrew Tignor.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re:History: Fact or Fiction?

by Barbara Lay - Tuesday, October 15, 2013, 11:06 AM

In reading and listening to historical facts that we would assume should be accurate, it is difficult to determine what the actual truth is. History is written from the perspective of a person's opinion of what they feel the facts should be. History could be written to make one side look better than the other, or alter the truth a bit to make it not look as if one event was quite as bad as it actually was. To determine if the actual historical facts are true, you may need to access the same information from a variety of sources to compare. I found it appalling that a PBS documentary would not have shown the true facts of a historical event they are representing. They had the Americans viewed as the enemy in my opinion.

The stories in the Appy book are very interesting to read. But yet, so much was going on at the time, do the people telling the stories remember all the details of the events they are portraying in accurate detail also? How are we to not know if they are stretching the truth on some of those events also? Although the people that were there would probably be the most reliable source of information to the actual events that took place during the Vietnam campaign. To determine what the actual truth would be would take research and look for similarities in the texts written, and that would be the closest bet for the truth.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re:History: Fact or Fiction?

by Andrew Tignor - Tuesday, October 15, 2013, 1:30 PM

These are some really good points and I have to agree with you. Its just to hard to know what we can take in as the truth or not. Like you said the best information would come from the people that were there and even then it is hard to determine if they are over stating the events or reciting what they thank to have been going on because of the traumatic events that took place in their life.

Andrew Tignor.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re:History: Fact or Fiction?

by Barbara Lay - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 1:42 PM

Yes, I agree. My husband was in Vietnam, and he does not like to talk about events that went on during the time, but has told me a few details. I believe what he tells me as truth since he was there. He is proud to have been there, but I sence he does not like things that he had to do while he was there, and so I don't push at him to talk about it. I got the feeling in the Appy book that a lot of the folks in the stories did not like events they personally had to do during the war, but they had to do them for the countries they were fighting for. These are the people that do know more than anyone of what really occurred over there.

barb

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re:History: Fact or Fiction?

by Andrew Tignor - Thursday, October 17, 2013, 8:55 AM

I really appreciate what your husband has done for our country it is a honer to have people like him that put them selves out there for us. Thank Your Husband for the sacrifices that he's had to make! This also brought up a very good point to look at, as you said it is very hard for him to talk about and that is understand able. so what I am saying is all the stories that are shared in the (Patriots book) is that they most have been very hard times for them to share their stories and try to remember what occurred in those times. Once again Thank your husband for fighting for our country.

Andrew Tignor.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re:History: Fact or Fiction?

by Jonathan Rowlett - Sunday, October 20, 2013, 8:24 PM

I think that you are correct in assuming a level of difficulty when determining the accuracy of the events in question. As I read through both Appy and Herring's books I am reminded that it is very easy for a person to superimpose there biases on the content in which they are writing. Also with the war being so controversial it is hard even today not to wonder how much of those opinions have transcended through the years. I find that with time and many sources we are able to figure out the truth. As you put it, it is when we find the similarities that we find truth. I think that in the realm of journalists that a story must be supported by multiple reliable sources. I think that the big stress is, is what we are studying congruent among other sources or does it seem to only be true in one case? In light of what the PBS and the AIM's documentaries presented it seemed rather hard to believe that there was not some biases present. You are right in your opinion that America is painted out to be the true and only enemy. I find this to be a common theme in the Herring book.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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History: Who Knows?

by Matthew Schroeder - Tuesday, October 15, 2013, 8:55 PM

History is in the eye of the beholder. Almost without exception you can take a group of people who witnessed the same event, then ask each of them what happened and you will get a few quite different accounts of what happened. Historians have the hard task of determining what is fact or fiction because they were not actually there. They instead have to combine many accounts of what happened and then form a general agreed upon consensus.

After watching the AIM video and thinking about their comments towards the PBS videos, it seemed as if there were a greater number of facts being omitted than facts being incorrect. The explanation that the AIM video gave for most of these errors seemed to be that the PBS videos were trying to portray a hero and a villain. They were trying to turn a history video into a TV drama.

Academically we must be flexible in the way in which we process the information we learn. We must understand that every piece of information we look at will be biased, or have some other agenda other than simply stating history. The official records of history cannot be perfect because it is being retold by people who are imperfect.

Both the Appy and the Herring textbooks are valuable resources for this class. The

Appy book in particular gives a more broad understanding of the events of the Vietnam War. Having the mass compilation of interviews of people and there quotes who were actually involved in the war gives more assurance that what I am reading is pretty close to fact.

“Early in the attack, George Tuan, one of our Vietnamese interpreters, was running like mad to his assigned mortar pit. Part way there a 57-millimeter round caught him right at the knees and took his legs off. He just kept running on the stumps. Within about thirty seconds he was dead. That’s one of the things you’d like to forget.” (Appy Pg.14) When reading this quote in context of the rest of Roger Donlon’s interview, I would say with 99% accuracy that this really happened. I cannot imagine someone who had the experiences that he did making something like this up.

By having the interviews in the Appy book there is more of a connection to the people. The one on one experience is not the same or found at all when watching the videos.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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To Trust or Not to Trust



by Nicole Reese - Tuesday, October 15, 2013, 11:30 PM

This day and age it's hard to determine if what we are being taught or are learning are the concrete facts or are the modified versions. With all the internet articles, videos, and books, there's an abundance of resources to learn about a desired subject, and as great as it is to have all those choices to research from, it can also be overwhelming and confusing as each one often differs in the information given and at times can even be down right incorrect. The series “Vietnam a Television History” is a great example of that. It's a series that has been used in class rooms since 1983 and student's have used as a resource, and after watching Accuracy in Media we now know the series is tremendously flawed with inaccurate information.

Through my experience, as a student, I've learned to look at all my sources and apply the common knowledge I have thus far of the particular subject. I also tend to use books as my main sources because I feel like I can trust them more. That may be a little naive of me, but I just feel like when history is made into a documentary or a movie, things tend to be dramatized and can actually change the feeling towards the topic and the over all view of it. Douglas Pike of AIM proves my point when he described the PBS series by saying “ Like an episodic series of images, some are accurate, some are inaccurate, some are significant, some are trivial” (AIM Director of Indochina Archive “Pike”). I took this as him, more or less, saying that the way the series was presented was by going through the motions trying to fill the time slots to throw this thing together, without including true and factual content and regarding the emotions and lives involved.

The two text books we have for this class, I think, provide a great balance in information. In the Appy book we're given the insight of real lives that were impacted

by the war and an emotional and intimate recount of the events. In the Herring book, we get to learn more about the political and military events that took place.

“I was unconscious for just a couple minutes. I come around and I was laying in a hot hole with my arms up on the side. There was absolutely no pain, just numbness – total numbness. It was hot from the blast. That's the only thing I remember. I told them to get me out of that hole because it was hot. I got some burns on my back from that.” (Appy pg. 23) This is George Watkins retelling the moment he unknowingly stepped on a land mine which led to the amputation of both his legs and the loss of both his eyes. To me, this is as real as history gets. I have complete confidence in his experience, and how can I not? He lived it, and through it; he is the history.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: To Trust or Not to Trust

by Andrew Tignor - Thursday, October 17, 2013, 8:45 AM

The points that you have made are well thought and can be easily related to. The videos that we are watching do have flaw but there is some truth behind them. Like all great things that are hidden from us. But there are people out there that contain the truth of the events that transpired and it just takes a little extra work and research to find these truths. overall this is a good point on looking more deeply into the subject matter on these videos that we are watching to find the right information that we need to know.

Andrew Tignor.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: To Trust or Not to Trust

by Jonathan Rowlett - Sunday, October 20, 2013, 9:06 PM

I would have to agree with you when you write that we are bombarded by an abundance of sources that can both aid and hinder our search for truth. In this day and age it has become increasingly difficult to navigate through and determine fact or fiction. I would agree and tend to lean on the validity of published work rather than those sources that rely on multimedia. I have found that this form of communication is hard to confirm and has a tendency to manipulate emotions. Your quote from the AIMs movie describing the PBS series as a loaded series of images rings true. I would agree that having multiple sources is a valuable aspect of this course. I am compelled to agree both these books should keep a grounded perspective for this course. Your last quote from Appy's book telling George Watkins story reminded me of the Tran Thi Gung story. "They held his body and cried. They cried a lot. This made them sitting ducks. Very easy to shoot. From then on we knew that if we just shot one

American soldier others would rush to him and then we could shoot many more” (Appy, p.17) Although this recant is extremely difficult to read and most likely invokes some sort of emotion it is also able to reveal a side of the war that would otherwise be lost in a video. It also reveals a firsthand experience of a military tactic observed by the Americans.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Trust me on this, I've done the "research"

by Kristin Sledge - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 8:49 AM

First let me say how excited I am that not only accuracy seems to be a running theme for this class, but that we are presented with so many resources to compare and contrast what we are reading and watching. So many times I have taken history classes where I took out the message that the instructor wanted me to, and upon further readings I find that what I had come to accept as truth was an omitted and edited version.

With so many resouces today for use with academics it's hard to not come across conflicting information. When I am presented with this conflicting information I try to do further research on pieces that I do not understand. For example, while reading "America's Longest War" in Chapter 1, I was introduced to Ho Chi Min, a "communist" which I got the impression was only such because he was denied aid when he claimed to be a nationalist. "Ho emphatically denied that he was a "Moscow puppet", noting that he had recieved more support from the United States than from the Soviet Union"(Pg. 12, America's Longest War, Herring). Reading further into the chapter I read "Ho was no tool of Moscow, and while he was willing to accept help from the major Communist powers...he was not prepared to subordinate Vietnamese independance to them."(Pg. 22, America's Longest War, Herring). The PBS Episode that we watched in accordance with that week reaffirmed what I had read in the chapter, painting Ho as a man who was simply trying to do right by his country through any means. Based on these presented facts I found myself feeling sorry for Vietnam and feeling ashamed of the U.S. because we did not step in and provide aid. This week made it hard for me, hearing the experts in the 29 minute video tear apart the series was rough. Hearing about the darker sides of Ho didn't change my mind about his want for Vietnamese independance, only it affirmed my belief that he would do just about anything to gain independance for his people. I now think he was going the wrong way about it, but hopelessness does that to people, it makes them grasp at straws that others might find unacceptable.

The textbooks that we are reading have been increasingly helpful. I find that at the beginning of the week, I start with the assinged readings from "America's Longest War", then I follow it with the episode of "Vietnam: A Television History" to solidify the important points that the book presented to me. The stories assinged from "Patriots" I save for the end of the week as a treat. History can be hard to read through when it is just information put down on paper to read and try to comprehend. The emotions I feel and humanity I see in each story helps keep the Vietnam "real". It makes it

personal instead of clusters of information that was researched. It brings importance to individuals who fought instead of armies. These resources all work together in harmony to bring an experience that I find I can trust. I feel if it is brought up in both the series and the Herring book that the point they are making or the event they are describing is important, and I take away bits and pieces from each resource to form my own opinion of what happened based on the facts presented to me.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Determining the truth



by Elizabeth Bruno-Hibler - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 2:04 PM

There are always at least two sides to a story and each side thinks that they are right. The Vietnam War has many sides but I think the sides to listen to are that of the victims. It matters who was the good guy and who was the bad but it is more important that the stories of the victims are told. This is why I like books such as Patriots by Christian Appy. His book is told by all sides. Yes, there is a chance that some of the stories are exaggerated in order to make one side look worse than the other but in the end it is more trustworthy and reliable than basic college textbooks that are pretty much like the PBS documentary, in my opinion. I also find that the book by Herring is similar to the documentary. In the AIM video clip, it is pointed out that South Vietnam was made the enemy by the people at PBS. That was something I noticed while watching the PBS documentary. I think the videos and books we see and read this term will give us enough information to make our own conclusions about this war. The topic of media truth is certainly an issue today and will probably always be an issue. Who can we trust in the media today? With everything that is going on in this country, especially with the government shutdown, how do we know that the mass media is giving us the correct information and the **TRUTH**? Can you make a decision about who is telling the truth by investigating who funds them and how they get their money? Truth comes from pictures and videos of historical events but the problem is that both pictures and videos can be seen in multiple ways and distorted as well. The PBS documentary showed Ho Chi Minh in a positive light (mostly) and I saw that right away. Since when are communist leaders the good guys? Other communist leaders that I know of are portrayed as great leaders but in the wrong way. They showed that they were intelligent but that intelligence was controlled by ego, narcissism, manipulation, and the need to resort to violence to get rid of everyone who was not like them. That is how I see Ho Chi Minh. I don't think we have received enough information about Diem, the leader of South Vietnam during the war, in order to make an informed decision about who he really was. From what I gathered from the PBS documentary, Diem was pretty much a violent dictator just like Ho Chi Minh. I would like to see more on Diem from other sources. Does anyone else agree?

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Determining the truth

by Matthew Schroeder - Thursday, October 17, 2013, 8:10 PM

You really brought up some good points about the Vietnam War and history in general. I agree that a great amount of history can be accurately learned by interviewing the victims. While the degrees vary, I would say that a majority of the people who were in the country of Vietnam during these war years became a victim at one time or another, both American and Vietnamese. I agree with you that over the course of the term we will be given enough information to draw our own conclusions. Maybe I am wrong but I see history as merely an accounting of the events that took place. We as individuals must take the information provided to us and draw our own conclusions.

For the most part I see the news media that we have today as a complete waste of time. Everything that they say is the truth, until it isn't. They are free to say whatever they want and if they find out later that something they said is incorrect, they will correct it in a banner running across the bottom of the screen in 10 point font.

The PBS videos thus far have portrayed Ho Chi Minh in a positive light. From what I have read and watched he was just a person who was trying to fight for his country to be free. Yeah he gave orders that wound up with thousands of people dying. But so did the leaders of the US and France. Minh tried to get help from the U.S. but we just turned our back on him and started to support his enemy. When you back a person into a corner trying to kill them, their only options are to die or fight and Minh chose to fight.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3  

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Re: Determining the truth

by Nicole Reese - Friday, October 18, 2013, 5:25 PM

Elizabeth,

I totally agree with you about listening to the victims. I mean, how could we not believe them or trust what they're saying? They experienced it first hand and know better than any of us what really went on in Vietnam. As I wrote in my forum post, they essentially are the history. That's why like you, I enjoy reading the Appy book. I don't know much about the Vietnam War, which is why I'm happy to be taking this class, and having books like the Appy one has really helped me to connect with the stories on a different level than I would've had we only been given the videos to watch or just the Herring book.

As far as Diem goes, I feel the same way you do, I don't know enough concrete information about him to make a strong opinion about him and also would like to see alternative sources' point of view's.

Overall you made some great points and raised some valid questions! I

enjoyed reading your post, as I could relate to your thought process and questions.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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With Truth Comes True Understanding



by Ryan Bendel - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 2:46 PM

Its very difficult sometimes too determine whats truth and whats fiction. History is written by the victor so is hard to determine whats truth and whats not. Thats why its so important to try and get all sides of the story, dont just take one authors version of the "side of the story". Thats why its important to watch the PBS videos, the Accuracy in Media video, and the textbooks we are reading. Because if we just take one point of view we miss out on the truth. As stated in the PBS video, the Catholics left North Vietnam because they were sided with the French, and they were under the influence of the CIA (PBS Episode 1) but in actuality Ho Che Minh brutality murdered the Catholics (Accuracy in Media) another major flaw that is seen within the videos is the Geneva Agreement. According to the PBS video in 1956 there was to be an election held, this election never happened and it was an outrage against the Geneva Agreement (PBS Episode 2) but again this is false. In the Geneva Agreement no election was promised (Accuracy in Media) If we are to understand History we must truly study it, from all sides, we cannot just take one version as fact

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Re: With Truth Comes True Understanding



by Matthew Schroeder - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 7:55 PM

A clarification to your statement "In the Geneva Agreement no election was promised (Accuracy in Media)." My understanding reviewing the AIM video was that elections were agreed upon at Geneva with the understanding that they must be administered by the United Nations. However there was no requirement for the United States to abide by the Geneva agreement since they were not bound by it nor were they party to it. (AIM 25:00 min)

The statement "History is written by the victor" is a popular one. I however have to disagree and state that history is written by the one with the loudest voice. While harder to accomplish in recent years with 24-hour news networks and social media, During the years prior to and including the Vietnam war the country with the greatest presence on the world stage seemed to state what was happening whether it was true or not. Only in time are the errors brought to light. Using another common saying, history is like a fine wine, it only gets better (more accurate) with age.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Re: Thoughts on Bias in History

by Jonathan Rowlett - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 8:39 PM

If you are looking to determine the accuracy of a source for academic purposes, it is necessary to research the credibility of the author. Is the author a solo blogger, or are they affiliated with a well-known and trusted source such as a university or prestigious journal? Also, knowing the extent of the author's background work on the historical subject is important. Are they a grad student working on their doctorate? Or have they spent the better part of their life researching and writing on the subject making them experts in their field? If the author is credible, then it is much more likely that their findings are accurate. The pursuit of truth is highly valued among faithful historians. Another way that accuracy can be checked is by comparing the findings of one source to the findings of another source on identical subjects. Where there is consistency, accuracy is the most likely conclusion. However, within discrepancy you will find room for discovery and further research.

The interesting point that the videos and readings bring out is that even within prestigious scholars there is often heavy amounts of difference in the stories they tell. It can help you because it provides a lot of information, but there are also a lot of textbooks out there that have misleading information. However, because history is written by humans, it is hard to remove all emotion or bias. And education is not always the cure to these issues. In the PBS series, Ho Chi Men is portrayed as an innocent nationalist, but in the AIMS series it is nearly the absolute opposite. The books provide many more historical references to draw an opinion from which is most helpful. "Ho Chi Men was the best known nationalist leader in Vietnam." Herring, p. 56)

The best part of history is that it is not limited to the story of one person. The multi-dimensionality of history is created by the stories and findings of many people. Those people have many differing personal histories and have formed many different worldviews, all of which affect what they choose to include in their stories and how to include it. Appy's book is a great example of this. Being able to read the stories of those from the least to the greatest, those in low positions and those in high positions, lends excellent perspective to the history being told. The reader learns about the policies being enforced and the purpose behind those policies. The reader also learns about the implementations of policies and the reactions to them from those they affect.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Thoughts on Bias in History

by Matthew Schroeder - Saturday, October 19, 2013, 4:22 PM

I agree that accuracy is an important part of what makes history, well history. Without accuracy it is just a story of fiction. When comparing the AIM video and the PBS series it seemed more apparent to me that the PBS series was simply

leaving out pieces of information which distorted the views of events and people. It does not seem that they were intentionally changing facts.

Looking specifically at the information of Ho Chi Minh presented in both the videos, I would still look at him as a nationalist who is fighting for the independence of his country. This is what was presented in the PBS series. The AIM video simply adds more information that highlights some of the darker things that Ho Chi Minh did working towards the freedom of his country. As we progress through the term and I acquire more knowledge on the War my view might change.

As you mentioned what makes the Appy book so great is not just the vast collection of interviews, but the vast variety of interviews. From the highest leader to the lowest peasant, their views of what happened are included.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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"History is written by the victors" - Winston Churchill

by Matthew Alsin - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 9:08 PM

When presented with conflicting information in an academic sense, I find it prudent to keep an open mind to all the available sources until a reasonable conclusion can be made. When I say reasonable I mean, to the best of one's ability, however, any real conclusions are in the end still hearsay if one wasn't there to witness the event, and when I say that I mean to take logic to an extreme. We can more or less deduce what has transpired but in the end history is to some degree biased. Now, as far as motivation goes, such as Ho Chi Minh tricking Phan Boi Chau into getting arrested under false pretenses - The historians deduced that this is another weight on the scale of Ho Chi Minh being a communist first, and a nationalist second (AIM historian "Droge"). This is at far best a very educated guess, in my opinion. I mean, we can never really know someone's motivations, can we? We can only assume based off events. So I say if one is presented with two different "opinions" and by that I mean the conjecture that one can only make educated guesses at, then one must just use their own best judgement, but realize that it's in the end, just that.

I suppose when comparing the two textbooks with these videos, it would be useful to notice the added details that are missing from either, as well as the conflicting informations, and then to try to understand if it was cut to save space, or to slant the story in one direction. In many cases it could just be an innocent omission as there was a more useful event to include in preference to the one missing, and in such a situation the books and videos become like puzzle pieces that fit together. However, when the two textbooks and the videos don't fit together, like puzzle pieces that overlap and no matter how hard you try to smash them together they meet an impasse, then it would be extremely useful to begin a simple "Google" search and do additional research. It really all depends how badly the reader wants to know the "truth."

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: "History is written by the victors" - Winston Churchill



by Daniel Duerfeldt - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 9:54 PM

Mathew, I think you bring up some very good points. I also wonder about the intentions of Ho Chi Minh betraying Phan Boi Chau. I don't think that anyone can say with certainty. I also agree with you that in order to find the truth we have to avail ourselves to the most amount of information as possible to decide for ourselves what the truth is. For so very long we are taught that the textbooks don't lie and told to just keep drinking the kool-aid.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: "History is written by the victors" - Winston Churchill



by Ryan Bendel - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 11:15 PM

Matthew,

I really enjoyed your Churchill quote, its a bit overused but it couldnt be more true. and because of its truthfulness when studying History we can not simply take what we read/hear as fact because it probably is a biased fact. because of this additional reaserch must be done like you said, its unfortuante because most people will not do the additional research and just take what they hear for the truth. Just think about what your knowledge of History would be like if you took what you heard in Elementary School as the truth, talk about biased facts

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Who Knows?



by Daniel Duerfeldt - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 9:42 PM

When faced with the topic of war and politics, without having been there (and indeed having been there), it is difficult to ascertain a complete knowledge of events and of feelings of those directly involved. With regards to the Vietnam War, this is compounded. After reading a few chapters and watching a few videos, it seems that there are many conflicting reports that really murky the water on understanding what was real. For example, the PBS series seems to portray Ho Chi Minh as a pretty good guy that just wants independence and prosperity for his oppressed people, while the AIM video calls that a blatant lie; that Uncle Ho was not a nationalist, but an oppressive extension of the kremlin. Therefore, to determine the truth one must seek out and absorb as much information on the topic and as many accounts of the events as possible to sort out the truth. Out of the two textbooks, the

Appy book seems to lend itself to reconciling some of the conflicts. Through reading some personal accounts of the people that lived through the time it would seem possible to clear some of the fog that conceal the truth.

Dan Duerfeldt

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Who Knows?

by Ryan Bendel - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 11:22 PM

Dan,

I appreciate your thoughts and insights, the study of History is a difficult on. Its as tough as learning a second language but in this case different people tell you different translations for the same word. When studying History additional research is almost required. In the examples you gave, the two videos, they portray Ho Che Min as two completely different people, but those differences harshly define the Vietnam War, if hes a cruel dictaor then the war seems less hars but if he was this great nationalist that was beloved then the war truley was as harsh as everyone claims it to be

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Who Knows?

by Josey Grant - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 11:53 PM

Ryan,

I couldn't support what you said here any more than you said it perfectly.

Perspective is more often given by people that wish you to see things in a certain view or light. To truly understand history you HAVE to look outside of the box and do your own research. if you don't you may find yourself being confused as to knowing what to believe. I know that I was shocked at how little I knew about the Vietnam war... Like that the French were the ones to start it. and the first to draw blood. but after I read that I went and did the research on it because I was so shocked that I hadn't known that already.

I like that you made reference to Ho Che Min being portrayed as two completely different people too. it is a perfect example of which do you believe.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Who Knows?

by Kristin Sledge - Sunday, October 20, 2013, 2:01 PM

Ryan,

I greatly appreciated your analysis of history in reply to Dan's post. I never would have thought of it in that way and it makes perfect sense of what we're all trying to say. Different words having different meaning like different causes lead to different conflicts. I believe that Ho Che Min's intentions for Vietnam were pure, but you know what they say about the road to hell, which is what the Vietnam War became for so many people.

As far as the war being harsh, I feel like no matter which outlook of Ho that the American people were lead to believe that during this time of revolution back in the States, as well as the growth of intel available to people through television and media that it became one of the hardest wars to find the truth in. Voice overs can lead you to believe almost anything and it's really hard to pick through the images that they want you to see in order to see a clear picture of what's really going on. Who knows what they edited out in order to convey their message.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Who Knows?

by Andrew Tignor - Thursday, October 17, 2013, 11:23 AM

These are some very valid points that you have brought up. Both of these (PBS and AIM videos) completely contradict each other, making it very hard to believe either side. this is why we need to look at the other resources that we have and not fail to include every possible scenario from all of the sources we have or could obtain. This includes other books besides the ones we are reading, and the resources that we find on the web. I know some people that have been a part of the Vietnam war and they are very careful with the information that they share. This seems strange but then again these men and women have gone through so much you don't want to question them further then what they want you to.

Thank You for this eye opener and the but look in to our project.

Andrew Tignor.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Who Knows?



by Matthew Alsin - Sunday, October 20, 2013, 11:05 PM

Yeah, I agree there does seem to be a pretty big disparage of opinion on this Ho Chi Minh character. So whether he's a nationalist first or a communist first, is that the true question with regards to our motivation for a war with Vietnam? According to the segments of the president's speeches, this "threat" we call communism could destabilize the world. So then one would have to assume that the U.S. would have to agree that Ho Chi Minh was a communist first. Anyways, seems it could go either way.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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fair voice



by Tyler Kennedy - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 11:20 PM

I think when dealing with conflicting information all sides should be given a fair voice, then some research is needed in order to figure out which side is right. (However that doesn't necessarily make the other side wrong.) The both views could be published if you will; saying something along the lines of "most historians agree on scenario "A" but scenario "B" is also a possibility"

The text books can help us approach the information by giving us a better example of what actually happened. The video series thus far hasn't interviewed very many, if any ground troops that fought in the war, just the people in charge of it. The appy book gives us soldiers firsthand account of what was happening in the jungle. Their stories could also be skewed, but I don't see a reason for them to do that.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: fair voice



by Ryan Bendel - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 11:27 PM

Tyler,

While agree that we should have our History books comprised of all sides, to get a better sense of a particular issue I dnt think its possible. In many cases we would have so many views that it would be nearly impossible to get through it all. In the case of WWII we would need Germany's side, Italy's, Russia's, France's, Great Britain's, America's and those are just the main countries involed. Churchill did say it best when he said "History is witten by the victor" If we had all sides on every issue the study of History would become far to overwhelming

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: fair voice

by Andrew Tignor - Thursday, October 17, 2013, 11:28 AM

Ryan,

I could not agree more with your statement. This is so very true, if we had all sides it would be a little easier to compare to the others and find the truth to some of the things that are always being questioned. This was a great Fact.

Andrew Tignor.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: fair voice

by Daniel Duerfeldt - Thursday, October 17, 2013, 4:31 PM

Tyler,

I somewhat disagree with what you said about the soldiers not having any reason to fabricate stories or to change their accounts of events. In my experience speaking with my father about his involvement as a Marine Lieutenant in Vietnam, I've noticed some discrepancies in what he's told my mother and what he's told me over the years. We've discussed these discrepancies and my father has admitted to me that he told my mother that he had very limited involvement and was "in the rear with the gear," as he put it, just because most of his experiences, which vary greatly from being "in the rear with the gear," were too difficult or painful for him to speak of or to think about. So, sometimes just because it is a personal account by someone that was there doesn't make it truthful.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: fair voice

by Tyler Kennedy - Saturday, October 19, 2013, 11:14 AM

daneil,

you have a point there. the soldiers could have changed their stories to cover up deep scars and omit things they would rather not talk about.

as for the other posts my idea about getting info from all sides certainly isnt the most feasible method of amassing information. i think if we were to have a complete and thorough study of something like the vietnam war we would have to do much more than film a few interviews with the people that were there.

**Truth and lies, Death and life**

by Josey Grant - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 11:37 PM

People too often academically react with conflicting information by either being a cynic and believing the worst or being an optimist and believing the best because no matter the topic, people tend to lean one way or the other without looking for evidence of any kind. People in general tend to go with the masses believing without real proof. Yet to truly know what truth is, you either need to be in the heart of the topic or do an enormous amount of research. Not just reading what is given to you but also seeking out different sides of the story for both the good and the bad. If at all possible do some of your own investigative work as well. For instance, I worked as a CNA for many years and on my breaks I sat with the veterans (Most of which were Vietnam Vets). Sometimes they talked of the war. And often it was of being led into horrible conditions that they were not prepared for. They don't regret their being soldiers but rather the outcome and the road to that outcome. I have gotten to be friends with men from four different wars: WWII, Vietnam, Desert Storm, and now this "War on Terrorism". The way these veterans speak about their experiences is something to reflect on. One could argue that "oh they mad it up", or "well that's just one man's experience. However when you do your research on the web, in books both given by an instructor and watch films and movies, you are better able to come to your own conclusion.

When I watch the AIM video I was kind of shock. They were tearing into the PBS show as if it was a hug failure. But how can't you be in a war like the men were and tell them that they are ruining history by showing to much drama or too much of one view or another. They are in a war. Their life in war is action, drama, small bouts of boredom, and tragedy on all sides. In the end there is death. Lots of it. It's hard to focus on the big picture when the PBS crew is amongst pawns in a war so much. They lived and breathed what these men were breathing eating fighting and dying for. No It was not perfect by the goals that PBS went out to meat, But they were trying to achieved something that had never before been accomplished. Perfection is not something that should be expected. Also if their work on Vietnam: A Television History was so bad then why is it shown in schools all over America? Obviously there is something substantial to be gained.

The Veterans are a great source both in our daily lives and for instance George Tuan, when he said "one of our Vietnamese interpreters was running like mad to his assigned mortar pit. Part way there a 57-millimeter round caught him right at the knees and took his legs off. He just kept running on the stumps. Within about thirty seconds he was dead. That's one of the things you'd like to forget." (APPY Pg.14). why would someone make that up? They wouldn't. The Appy book is a great way to truly keep a student or researcher wanting to read on and to learn more about the war when they put the Appy book down, even if it means looking outside of what a teacher has given them to read.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Determining the truth

by Karis Lindvall - Wednesday, October 16, 2013, 11:56 PM

When I find conflicting information in any situation, my natural tendency is to take a step back and examine the scenario or situation from a perspective where both sides are evident. In many cases in the interviews, information given can be validated through cross-examining in concordance with Vietnamese and American history. There are several stories in Part 1 of the Appy book where certain recollections of events can be backed up through official documents and records. Roger Donlon's interview is just one of out of many which have been affirmed through the statement of other's first hand experience.

When push comes to shove and I am looking for easily validatable information, or for the purest sources of information, I try to steer clear of films and dramas produced around the era. It has been my experience that in many historical films and documentaries, you miss out on incredible valuable perspectives as the minority opinion is hardly highlighted or given any credit whatsoever. I believe that the truest way to study history is not to seek an answer of what is right or wrong to any given situation, but to be able to truly see both sides with clarity of vision and a careful understanding.

Douglas Pike from AIM has an interesting perspective to lend on the PBS series, stating that the show is "like a series of images; some are accurate, some are inaccurate; some are significant, and some are trivial."

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Determining the truth

by Elizabeth Bruno-Hibler - Saturday, October 19, 2013, 11:20 AM

When it comes to history, especially in the cases of war, people just want to know who the bad guy is and who the good guy is in simple terms. Whoa re we supposed to be "rooting" for. In the case of the Vietnam War it isn't very clear who is good and who is bad. It's more like all sides have both good and bad qualities and ideas.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Determining the truth  



by Kristin Sledge - Sunday, October 20, 2013, 2:12 PM

I agree with you to a point. There is definately a look for a "good guy" and a "bad guy" but I feel there is a bias that pushes us farther than that. When we look at America in wars during this time we see a victor. Someone who has always comes out on top. Looking at it that way, along with a feeling of national pride I think that many people immediately labeled Vietnam with the "bad guy" label. I certainly found myself looking at the Iraqi War as something that was necessary to root out evil, even though 9/11 happened when I was in the 8th grade. I remember those feelings so vividly, but now that I'm older and time has passed I look at things differently. I wondered what was taking so long and felt that the agenda had changed so rapidly that rooting out evil wasn't even on the table anymore. I'm sure that with a 15 year war that many "coming-of-age" Americans felt the same way. Instead of a "terrorist" threat to the American way, it was a Communist threat to the same freedoms.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Re: Determining the truth



by Matthew Schroeder - Sunday, October 20, 2013, 5:45 PM

The way I look at the good and bad idea is that there are no good and bad sides. There are only good and bad people within each side. You can't (it happens so I should say we shouldn't) label an entire group based on the actions of a few. Are a group of soldiers who burn down an entire village bad people just because they are following orders, or are the people who gave the orders the bad ones. It seems to be a fine line and one judgment cannot be applied to every situation nor is everyone going to look at each situation the same.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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