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Continuing the discussion



by Joe Escobar - Sunday, October 20, 2013, 7:39 PM

After reading the NYT article and watching the second half of the AIM program, discuss specific examples of conflicting information you have encountered in the provided class sources (from the Herring book, PBS series, and AIM program). More importantly, which source gets your "vote", on that specific issue, as having the more correct/accurate/truthful interpretation or reinterpretation?

Sum of ratings: -

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Re: Continuing the discussion



by David Lahy - Tuesday, October 22, 2013, 2:50 PM

After reading the NYT article I agree with the argument that each series is polemic and interested mostly in its own argument (NYT). It is if each series has polar opposite viewpoints and presents information only from a single source or expert opinion to justify their respective views.

One specific example of conflicting information encountered in the AIM video which conflicts with the information provided in the Herring book is the assertion by Douglas Pike that the PBS portrayal of South Vietnamese was unkind and referred to the North and Vietcong as "Americas" enemy rather than "Americas & South Vietnams enemy." Pike further related the reference that America brought Vietnam to the Paris Peace Accords was meant as a slight against South Vietnam, showing contempt for the government, the people, and ARVN forces. What Pike fails to point out is just how fragile the government of South Vietnam was during the years of the war. In the PBS episode 3, LBJ, puts forth the question of how can we fight a war under the direction of others whose government topple like bowling pins? Up until the time of the accords South Vietnam underwent several coups and three different leaders, so how could the government be expected to take the lead in negotiations? Even the former ambassador Bui Diem, noted the absence of communication

between allies and the impotence of the South Vietnamese. Further stating, "The South Vietnamese followed their lead without a word of dissent, for the most part without a thought of dissent." (Herring p.190) As for the opinion and performance of the ARVN, Herring points out some of the problems it faced. First, they lacked training and experience, suffering humiliating defeats when up against NVA forces for the most part. Even General Westmoreland expressed doubt in the battle worthiness of the ARVN forces and once the Americanization began was relegated to primarily a security function. This is not intended to condemn the entirety of the ARVN, but to point out they were largely unsuited for unconventional warfare based upon their training and experience. And secondly, morale and leadership had always been its curse. (Herring p. 190) The ARVN suffered major desertion problems which effected optimal troop strength numbers, thereby limiting the operations they could undertake.

In my opinion, the Herring book gets my vote for the source with the most accurate interpretation on the history of the Vietnam War. He presents his opinions backed up with multiple viewpoints and source materials which the videos lack. In defense of the videos, the televised formats and time constraints severely limits the amount of information that can be provided to the viewing audience. By no means is the Herring book complete, nor provide all the answers, it does a good job providing an in-depth analysis on the war.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Tracy Tunnell - Saturday, October 26, 2013, 8:03 PM

I found it interesting the reference you used with LBJ and this war and the questions that arise with it. This government was fragile to begin with and to be dragged in so many ways made them even more fragile in the fight against Communism. I also agree with you on the book aspect. It is very hard to get all the facts on television, even books can be somewhat restricted when telling this story. I do like the the job Herring does in writing this and giving in-depth information on the war. I also think Appy's book is good too, because it is base on the people who were there and recall what happened during this tragic time.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Jonathan Rowlett - Sunday, October 27, 2013, 8:26 PM

You bring up a very interesting point toward the end of your post: the limitations of both broadcast and books. This had not entered my mind before, but it really is quite profound. I began to think of all the movies that I have been disappointed by because the book was "so much better". However, I have also reviewed movies by telling people that they were the "best a producer could do

given the time constraints of a film". I think it is really important that we remember this when viewing movies, or public broadcasts of an event; there is a truly limited amount of time to present information and the information must be presented in such a way that the audience comes away with an understanding. Unfortunately this often means that only one perspective can be presented or that a conflicting perspective is limited in broadcast time. I think that the blessing of watching both the PBS and AIMS documentations is that they are conflicting in perspective. Clearly there was controversy over this war and these two publications are proof of that. In comparison, it has also been really great to read Herring and enjoy a balance of perspective to help weed out the truths of the story.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Herring Gets My Vote



by Erik Johnson - Wednesday, October 23, 2013, 12:12 AM

If it were not for the AIM video, I would probably not perceive that there is a conflict between the Vietnam video series and our books. The AIM video repeatedly mentions that the PBS depiction of Ngo Dinh Diem was demeaning. They claim that PBS portrayed Diem as a puppet of the United States by showing him exit a plane and step up to a podium. I did not get this perception from the PBS episode, but the Herring book gives significant detail into his Nationalist stance and resistance to American involvement in his country. My "vote" would definitely go toward the Herring book when sorting out these details.

The AIM clip primarily highlights additional information that the PBS series omitted and therefore, in my opinion, doesn't necessarily overtly conflict. The New York Times article points out that the AIM video offers "intelligent criticism" for the PBS series, however it summarizes that AIM is "expressing their opinion on what are essentially political questions". Both sides have their opinions and biases as to how the information should be depicted, but I can't say that any of it is false. The conflict seems to be more about the presentation rather than the information itself. The AIM program leans to one side, preferring to point out the positives of American involvement and the negatives of Communist advances in Indochina. The PBS series leans to the other side, portraying the North Vietnamese as undertaking a patriotic struggle while U.S. soldiers killed civilians and destroyed villages (episode 4). Although it is unpleasant, I do not find the information conflicting. They are accounts that are being told from different perspectives and must be taken as a whole.

It is becoming clear to me that the majority of our historical record of the Vietnam War comes from American accounts and documents which lay our soul

bare and expose the good, the bad, and the ugly. We may wish to hide the bad and ugly, but they occur in every war. The North Vietnamese do not seem to be scrutinized with such depth.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Herring Gets My Vote

by Tracy Tunnell - Saturday, October 26, 2013, 8:08 PM

Until i read what you said about the accounts of this war, i was thinking it was from all sides. Now that i look at everything we are reading and watching, it is all american based. It would be very interesting to find out how the others in this war describe what happened. I think the would tell a completely different side. It is being told from different perspectives, but mostly from the american side and somewhat the south vietnamese side. This makes me want to research what the north side would say. Would it be the same? How much would be altered and how much would be truth?

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Herring Gets My Vote

by Jacqueline Collins - Sunday, October 27, 2013, 4:30 PM

I as well was caught off guard about any conflicts. PBS has always been a channel that I would watch and get "facts" from. Makes me wonder what else I/we were lead to believe that was less than truthful. However your suggestion that the PBS was simply leaning to one side, is intriguing. What if both AIM, and PBS are just sharing their opinions? AIM is taking a direct approach and accusing PBS of pushing their propaganda however, and that seems like less an opinion and more an accusation.

I do agree that war is an ugly thing, with ugly actions and no matter how hard we try we cannot hide the ugly.

J~

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Elizabeth Bruno-Hibler - Wednesday, October 23, 2013, 5:11 PM

I was already catching on to the patterns in the PBS documentary that were pointed out in the AIM video before I watched it. South Vietnam was to be a country of freedom and democracy with the help of the American government and military but

the PBS documentary portrays both South Vietnam and American involvement in negative ways. In episode three of the PBS documentary a few minutes in, a pilot is shown and his radio conversation with other pilots is heard, "Good job, I saw you splatter one right in the back with a rocket". This part puts American soldiers in a dark light, along with images of American soldiers smoking pot and such in the previous episodes. Instead of showing positive attitudes and talking about good deeds done by American soldiers, the people at PBS decided to show the negative. After watching the AIM video, I have been paying closer attention to all the negativity in the documentary and it just seems to be one thing after another. Interviews with James Thomson, Bill Moyer, and two Vietnamese were anything but positive. Thomson says that for American, the presidency is more important than "a little Asian country". The interviewees use have only negative things to say about American decision by using words such as lies and fabrication. Bill Moyer states that LBJ just wanted to "prove he wasn't a softie". It was either Thomson or Moyer who said that the president made decisions without waiting for intelligence detail. If that was the case, do we know what the reason was? It is never brought up. I have been using the word 'negative' a lot in this post but that is all I am getting from the PBS documentary. I agree with the AIM video for the most part about the attitude of the documentary but I when it comes down to the facts that AIM throws out, how do we know those or true? It's the same conflict with PBS. Whether the information is negative or positive, how do we know what is true, false, or exaggerated? My vote still remains with Appy's book. It has both positive and negative attitudes but it's from all points of view and because of that I think it is the most trustworthy out of all of the resources we have for this class so far.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Amanda Day - Wednesday, October 23, 2013, 8:07 PM

I spent most of my post speaking in opposition of the accuracy of the AIM video...and that's great!! But after reading your post I realize that I perhaps was a little too one-sided myself in the fact that I failed to point out one obvious flaw in the PBS series as well: the portrayal of soldiers. Now of course we could not possibly know without being there just how our troops were holdin' up but the PBS series has failed pretty miserably so far in placing any sort of positive light on them or showing us much more than their failure against the "better suited" Vietnamese in their "wild" territory.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Elizabeth Bruno-Hibler - Thursday, October 24, 2013, 8:09 PM

I think that is the most important part, the picture painted by the PBS

documentary of the soldiers. At least that should be the most important part for Americans. All parties involved did their fair share of good and bad things but the good things done by soldiers, so far, aren't mentioned. There is nothing about honor or bravery of American troops and that is very disappointing. I can't remember if this was something pointed out by the AIM video or if I noticed it myself while watching the PBS documentary but I found it written in my notes that the PBS documentary portrays the Vietnam veterans as "haunted", like they are victims or losers. In certain ways they are victims but that is not how I would describe the Vietnam veterans that I have met over the years. Of course I have only met a handful but they were proud of their service and it's sad that our country doesn't show them more respect. I am getting a little off topic here but the topic of the health and respect of soldiers is important to me.

It all boils down to politics and which political party is in control. I would say PBS is more liberal and AIM is more conservative, but no matter who is in charge, they always think they are right and they will do what is necessary to prove that they are right.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Amanda Day - Saturday, October 26, 2013, 3:45 PM

Exactly! And it's interesting that you bring up the liberal and conservativeness of each program. It's almost funny how BOTH are just as guilty of being heavily one-sided! That right there just goes to show you how *no* humans can be considered entirely accurate in the re-telling of history! We are too emotionally complicated to leave feeling out even when we're only the ones re-telling or writing it down. Every historian secretly has a slight lean toward a side. A huge part of that is how we receive our information too. Just as we watched the PBS series first, some of us were more more inclined to believe that the AIM video was laying it on thick (to say the least) because we saw it *after* our first impression of PBS' side. In reality who really knows which video was more accurate? They both seemed to have long lists of legitimate sources. They both seemed to have a passionate interest in the matter and involve sources from both sides (or so it appears). So how can we really ever know when it's all a bunch of muck pushed together by emotionally tied-down *humans*? I think it best if history were recorded by a totally unbiased and uncaring outside source: Think about it "The War: As Told By The Trees Of Vietnam" *or* "Nam: A Black Bear's Perspective"--I would venture to say sources like these would be more of a neutral point than we are. =D

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Elizabeth Bruno-Hibler - Sunday, October 27, 2013, 2:13 PM
that last part made me laugh haha 😄

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Tracy Tunnell - Friday, October 25, 2013, 6:08 PM

After reading your post on the AIM video and the PBS series, it really made me think. I have been really harsh on the AIM video and didn't think to look at the flaws in the PBS series. I would have to say there are flaws in every story no matter how its portrayed. It is up to us to determine what is truth and most times the truth will come out several times in different formats. It doesn't matter if it is in a book or on TV. I still believe we are being told what the governments want us to hear. I too like Appy's book for information. the stories are from the people who fought or suffered during the war. They know what it was like there. Thank you for opening up my mind to a different side.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Erik Johnson - Saturday, October 26, 2013, 10:43 PM

Well said Elizabeth, I cringed when the helicopter pilot was shown complimenting the other pilot for his shot. I don't judge the pilot because I believe that war gives soldiers a perspective on life and death that cannot be understood by those of us who have not experienced it. What bothered me was that PBS seemed to be using this like propaganda to show how calloused and cold blooded the Americans were. Targeting the enemy is the goal of war and complimenting a fellow soldier for a job-well –done may be the only way to keep a positive attitude and preserve your sanity.

Although I gave a thumbs-up to the Herring book in my initial post, I have begun to notice very subtle wording that concerns me. For example Herring writes, "In late 1965, North Vietnamese leaders mobilized the entire nation to "foil the war of aggression of the U.S. imperialists." Recognizing that their very survival was at stake, the North Vietnamese developed a sophisticated strategy ... "(Herring 183). Who were the aggressors? We need to keep in mind that the North invaded the South. Was their very survival at stake? If

survival was their concern then they should have returned to North Vietnam, the brutality was centered in the South. Therefore, I am starting to see the merits of the Appy book for the reasons you mention.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Elizabeth Bruno-Hibler - Sunday, October 27, 2013, 2:30 PM

"I don't judge the pilot because I believe that war gives soldiers a perspective on life and death that cannot be understood by those of us who have not experienced it." – I agree with that completely Erik, well said. There was a mini series on HBO called The Pacific, I'm sure our instructor has heard of it. It's from the creators of Band of Brothers (Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg) and it's all about the true story of a group of Marines, Robert Leckie, Eugene Sledge, Sgt. John Basilone, and some others. I watched a little of it while it was showing on HBO but ended up just buying and watching the whole thing and it's an amazing story. It really shows the truth of what the soldiers went through and your reply reminded me of it Erik.

The Herring book is very informative but it's how all the information is worded. The communists were the aggressors in the eyes of everyone who wasn't for communism and in this case, The North Vietnamese were the communists and the "issue at hand". I believe the real stories are with the people of Vietnam (the victims) and the ones who fought in the war and that is why I like Appy's book.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Erik Johnson - Sunday, October 27, 2013, 10:27 PM

I'll have to check out The Pacific, thanks for the suggestion. Our appy book has a story by Dennis Deal (page 130) about a battle in the Ia Drang Valley during November of 1965. I recently watched the movie We Were Soldiers, which recounts this battle. It's Hollywood, so it's more for entertainment than for education, but it gave me a good image of the desperate position that Deal and his fellow soldiers were in as I read his account.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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And the vote goes to Herring

by Amanda Day - Wednesday, October 23, 2013, 7:54 PM

As far as sources go, the Herring book is without a doubt the most reliable when compared to the egotism of both video series. Any human being who feels comfortable accepting facts without any inclination of the source should be considered gullable and even ignorant. This is why I much prefer written historical sources. Everything I read in the Herring book is backed by a footnoted citation. That source can then be investigated by will and the truth determined for yourself. All of that aside, when it comes to taking in video information I can barely even digest that of the AIM video. Yes, they do have a point in that the PBS series seemed to waiver quite often on the status of Ho Chi Minh. One minute he was a communist threat and another he was slightly more nationalistic...As a matter of fact the series seemed to do the same back and forth with Diem as well.

Aside from some clearly misguided observations, the PBS series did not seem nearly as flawed as the AIM video. Through both video segments I found myself repeatedly laughing at how incredibly hard they were trying to put down the PBS series, and while I'm sure it has its fair share of flaws, it comes nowhere near the disgustingly stubborn, one-sided, pro-America stance that the AIM videos have.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: And the vote goes to Herring

by Jonathan Rowlett - Sunday, October 27, 2013, 8:06 PM

US Senator Hiram Warren Johnson was once quoted as saying, "The first casualty when war comes is truth." I believe this is appropriately applied when considering the differences between the perspectives of the PBS and AIMs producers. Truth is often slaughtered simply based on pre-formed biases which are established years before the actual event occurs. The joy of participating in a history class decades after the fact is that we are given the unique privilege of reading and listening to so many different perspectives of the same event. And then, we get to sort through it all to determine what is truth and what is fiction. I do appreciate the contribution Appy brings to the table. They are stories that might otherwise be overlooked and yet they offer a more well-rounded perspective of the war. In particular I think of Tran Thi Gung and Vu Thi Vinh.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Courtney Waterman - Wednesday, October 23, 2013, 8:26 PM

One of the biggest examples of conflicting information I've encountered so far is the role the Ngo Dinh Diem played in South Vietnam. PBS doesn't necessarily portray

him as an “American puppet” like the AIM video claims but the series does make it seem like he had less of a presence than he did. “Diem and Nhu were increasingly troubled by the growing number of Americans and their apparent efforts to run the war.” (Herring, p112) If Diem was truly an American puppet he wouldn’t have cared, and he would’ve done anything he was asked to do, no questions asked. When it comes to conflicting information or just information in general I rely on the Herring book. It doesn’t feel like it leans to one side or the other.

I really liked the closing sentence of the New York Times article, “The opposition to broadcasting the AIM program suggests that the producers of the Vietnam series and their supporters feel this way about history too. It cannot be reinterpreted unless the reinterpretation has their approval.” Even though at times it seemed like finger pointing I appreciate that AIM video brought up another point of view. This is an incredibly multifaceted war, and it’s definitely a good thing to be introduced to as many of those view points as possible.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by David Lahy - Friday, October 25, 2013, 7:01 AM

I too agree with you about the portrayal of Diem in the PBS video. I didn’t get the feeling he was an “American puppet”, more of a politician who had very favorable western views. I think the AIM producers wanted to take a very narrow view of Diem and misrepresent the whole of his actions. The Herring book goes into detail about Diem and even relates, Diem was always concerned with the Americanization of Vietnam and was actually more of a Nationalist than Ho Chi Minh.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Courtney Waterman - Saturday, October 26, 2013, 10:04 PM

For the first couple weeks of this class I watched the videos before reading the chapters in the Herring book and after watching the episodes I didn’t think much of Diem. To me, it appeared that they appointed a weak person who had a hard time connecting with people. (I’m not sure that weak is the word I’m looking for here but I can’t currently think one that fits better.) Reading pages 58-63 changed the way I viewed him. Those pages also highlight his nationalist point of view.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Amanda Day - Sunday, October 27, 2013, 8:54 PM

It's really interesting that we form almost a close, personal opinion of historical figures. A persons action can have a varying effect on those learning about them. Aren't we all raised with slightly different morals? These morals and the way we view others decisions in history influence each of our opinions and ultimately our perception of each historical event. The bias is endless. And it's not really our fault.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Tracy Tunnell - Friday, October 25, 2013, 6:16 PM

I also felt that Diem being portrayed as an "American puppet" was conflicting. In fact he was completely opposite of what they called him. He cared about what was happening. I always find it interesting to watch documentaries on actual events and wonder how much is true. I always have in the back of my mind which facts were altered and which weren't. That is why i prefer to read instead of watching something so serious. I like Appy's book, because i feel the stories are true and we can get a feel on what really happened. Herring's book is a good one for information and doesn't seem one-sided.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Erik Johnson - Saturday, October 26, 2013, 10:14 PM

Courtney, I feel the same way about the Ngo Dinh Diem issue. It seems that the Herring book is the best source for information on him. I also agree with your appreciation of the AIM video. At first, I wasn't sure what to make of their argument. However, I have come to agree with their premise; that PBS shows a negative bias toward America's involvement in Vietnam.

The interview of John McCain was a strong testimony to me about the legitimacy of the AIM program. Whether or not you agree with McCain's politics, you cannot dismiss the fact that he was a POW during the Vietnam War and experienced first-hand the brutality and propaganda used by the Communist North. Is the PBS series an extension of this propaganda? The New York Times article says that a member of the public television community stated that airing the AIM rebuttal is "to show people what bad propaganda is like." Would he say that PBS produces good propaganda?

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Courtney Waterman - Sunday, October 27, 2013, 9:06 PM

I agree, McCain's interview was a strong point in the AIM video. It really makes you think about what was going on in the Northern POW camps, and how it effected the war, and it's prisoners. You asked two really good questions. I don't think that the PBS series meant this to be an extension of propaganda. They took a more liberal stance on the war. That in its self is enough to upset a number of people. They're also presenting the information in a format that's meant to be easier for viewers to grasp. It's an introduction to the Vietnam War sort of thing. The speakers in the AIM video were not beginners when it comes to Vietnam information, so I can see why it would be easier for them to find weak points in the series, and why those weak points would be upsetting to them. Those two things combined ruffled a lot of feathers. As for "Would he say that PBS produces good propaganda?" I'd guess yes, because they're both delivering information on the same subject. The only difference is the stance that they're taking to deliver it. Since the sides are doing the same thing, you can't accuse the other side of propaganda without accusing your side of propaganda as well.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Which is Truth?

by Tracy Tunnell - Wednesday, October 23, 2013, 8:40 PM

After watching the second half of the AIM video and reading The New York Times article, it just seems to me that everything we have learned or thought we knew about the Vietnam war is wrong. The more i read and watch, the more it seems everyone has their own opinion of what really happened. AIM seems to think they have the "real story" and that the PBS series left out many important details, but as i watched it, it seemed they left out things that the PBS series covers in more detail. "No new interperatation of history is allowed." I think this is a bit obsessive and i think historians can take what has been learned and talked about and add it to the new information that has been presented. I agree with the article when it talks about the controversy surrounding this whole thing. Pubic television is a touchy thing, especially when explaining a war and the politics that go with it. There is conflicting information about Ho Chin Minh and who he really was. He is portrayed as this wonderful nationalist by one source and another source shows him as a communist. I would have to say that the Herring book gets my vote. It has more accurate information and the details seem to be more truthful as to what really happened during this time.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Which is Truth?

by Jacqueline Collins - Sunday, October 27, 2013, 4:38 PM

Yes, when I read about Ho Chi Mihn at first and then watched the PBS series talk about, him I was surprised to hear the way AIM described him. Both were very different. As were the descriptions of Diem. I also believe that these were the opinions of the people reporting the stories.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Appy and Herring have my vote

by Jacqueline Collins - Wednesday, October 23, 2013, 9:32 PM

Watching the PBS series, the AIM video, and reading the NY times article all gave me the same opinion about the media. It's all based on the opinion of the people reporting it. And yet they were all bashing the other one for being over opinionated and reporting the "wrong" thing. AIM was citing PBS as casting the American soldiers as druggies and heartless bastards. And the NY time's article was citing that both PBS and AIM were pushing their own propaganda. All I see between the 3 was a lot of finger pointing.

Appy and Herring on the other hand take a very different and real approach to reporting the war. Appy lets the people who were actually there tell the story. They tell them without political hopes and dreams. They tell their stories with glossed over eyes and sad faces.

Herring offers citations in the footnotes so you can research the information yourself and make a determination of the truth from that point. This book does not seem to take on any form of opinions. It seems very dedicated to facts. It reminds me of an encyclopedia excerpt.

All of that being said, what I realize is this; from the Guerilla warfare to the humanitarian fighting the same battle on different sides and for different reasons. This is where the real stories are. Somewhere in the depths of the memories and tragic loss of the people directly involved is what the war was really about, what really happened. Therein lies the elusive truth.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Herring: The Better Choice

by Jonathan Rowlett - Wednesday, October 23, 2013, 10:05 PM

The Accuracy in Media team argues that the media's focus on Vietnam War protest –

and subsequently a lack of interest in war support – directly prompted the failure of American endeavors in Vietnam. Furthermore, it supports the idea that the protesting played a major role for the lack of support for the war. However, according to Herring, a sudden drop in war support may have had little to do with the protests of a minority population and more to do with government decisions which affected the masses, namely a 10 percent surtax. “Polls taken shortly after [the surtax initiation] indicated that for the first time a majority of Americans felt the United States had erred in intervening in Vietnam...” (Herring, pg. 211). Suffice to say that the American masses were not so much protesting our involvement logistically as they were protesting the legal and moral aspects of the war. Realistically, American minds were not as persuaded by the loss of 13,000 lives or increase of draftees per month as they were the failure of “the system” (Herring, pg. 207). As an example, Herring uses the African-American population’s increasing discontent in government subsidy contribution because of the costs of war. Martin Luther King, Jr. said in 1967, “The Great Society has been shot down on the battlefields of Vietnam” (Herring, pg. 211). African-Americans did not make up a large percentage of the protesters that the media highlighted during the war; however, their draft resistance and displeasure while in the military contributed substantially to the overall decrease in war support (Herring, pg. 212). In summation, these factors added far more to the general discontent of Americans toward the war than any of the “hippie” protests that PBS so proudly displays in its documentaries, or the credit that AIMs gives to the media’s representation of the war to the American public.

In general I find PBS and Accuracy in Media to be extremely biased. Both use infrequent blips of photos and video to secure a chosen emotional response from their audience. On the other hand, Herring is able to support his claims with a more in depth explanation and even explain why conflicting information is irrelevant or wrong. George Herring absolutely has my vote for accuracy and reliability amongst our class sources.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Herring: The Better Choice

by Courtney Waterman - Saturday, October 26, 2013, 12:10 AM

I definitely agree with your vote for Herring. I am glad that you pointed out the use of certain footage and music for emotional responses in both the AIM and PBS series. It's nothing out of the ordinary. All types of media do it. As a viewer you have to expect it to some extent. This is a big subject and because of that any sort of documentary on it will be slightly biased and sway to one side or the other, so it's nice to have books like the Herring one that we can use to check the facts presented in TV series. It's also a bonus that he uses so many resources and highlights more than one side.

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Re: Herring: The Better Choice

by Tyler Kennedy - Saturday, October 26, 2013, 1:22 PM

i like your insight on why you belive the book to be the better choice, i especially like the point you made about how the PBS series and AIM used immages of protests to get a response out of people.

I also like your point about how the governments decisions led to lack of war support on the home front. I think another thing that led to low support of the war was the images comming back from the battle field, and no evidence of progress in the war except NVA body count, because unlike World War II there was no way to map the progress. Everytime the us forces would "take a hill" or a village they abandoned it a short time later.

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Re: Herring: The Better Choice

by David Lahy - Sunday, October 27, 2013, 11:04 AM

Exactly, the lack of anything tangible to show for in winning the war had a greatly reduced the morale of both the troops and people back home. All they had to go on was "body count" numbers to gauge their effectiveness and even that didn't tell the real story. Herring writes about how the numbers were inflated from the bottom to top of the military food chain and didn't reflect an accurate number of enemy killed. The sheer destructiveness of combat miade it difficult to distinguish between guerrillas and noncombatants (Herring p. 187). Additionally, the statistics show North Vietnam had 200,000 people reach military age each year. I could just imagine how the soldier felt, always being told we are winning the war beacuse of numbers with nothing to show for it. All he knows is he lost a lot of buddies for hill or a few square miles and then turn around give it back to the enemy, just to retake the same ground next month.

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PBS FMV!

by Tyler Kennedy - Wednesday, October 23, 2013, 11:13 PM

One example I noticed was how the pbs series portrayed the south Vietnamese and how the AIM video did. According to Charleton Heston the pbs video series made it sound like the south Vietnamese were un able to do the job at hand, which was fighting the north. Heston on the other hand claims that the South Vietnamese army (ARVN) was a well trained fighting force capable of taking on the north. I haven't quite gotten a chance to see episode 4 of the pbs series, but so far I haven't picked up on Heston's claims, at least not from the reading material at hand. Iv seen other

documentaries (one in particular was Vietnam in HD) and the overall impression that I get is that none of the commanders in Vietnam had any confidence in the south Vietnamese army, and that showed when the us began dropping ARVN soldiers into Cambodia. (an operation that takes place near the end of US involvement, the name of the operation has since slipped my mind but ill update you all when I can find it) basically the operation doesn't go the way it should and by some accounts can be called a failure.

After reading the New York Times article my vote for the more accurate side goes to the pbs video series. After listening to what Heston had to say I still believe the pbs video series to be the more accurate of the two.

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Re: PBS FMV!

by David Lahy - Friday, October 25, 2013, 6:45 AM

I agree with you on the claim the ARVN forces were not well suited for fighting the NVA. Over the last couple of chapters Herring refers to the many problems the ARVN faced, namely adequate training and leadership from the officer and NCO core. They were being training in the old model of warfare (Cold-War) not on how to fight an unconventional war so they were ill prepared when they confronted NVA regulars. Even General Westmorland, doubt their battle worthiness and when the U.S war role expanded, was more than happy to relegate the ARVN forces to conduct rear security, policing type actions. As a result of being relegated to a second-tier status, and being seen as second rate soldiers, morale took a big hit within its ranks and animosity started building between the ARVN and U.S. forces. One of the big strategic objectives of the war was the implementation of the 'Strategic Hamlet' program and one of the critical requirements was security which the ARVN was primarily responsible for. In most cases ARVN was incapable of providing security and in some areas part of the problem. (Herring p. 194)

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A Grain of Salt with Everything

by Karis Lindvall - Sunday, October 27, 2013, 11:37 PM

When it comes to history and the accounts passed down, it is most important to ask what the reporters would have to gain from it. There are always dynamics and elements just below the surface of what is going on at any one time, a person only has to dig a little while until they find the root of what is the matter.

I was very skeptical while watching the Accurcy in Media video. When any side picks

a fight with the other, I have to wonder what they are trying to prove. While the AIM video brought up some good thoughts to consider, they did not have much to back themselves up with outside of personal testimony and used a lot of inferences. The PBS television series did a good job of providing an eye witness account into what was going on in the geographical region, but similarly was based on a specific side. In these respects, I do not believe that either film can provide an honest answer to the war in Vietnam. It would be highly ignorant to assume that any one side has the right answer to the communist vs nationalist question regarding Ho Chi Minh and the North Vietnamese Army. One of the biggest discrepancies I noticed between the videos and books is Charlton Heston's view that the South Vietnamese were good fighters. In neither of the books or the PBS series was there any relevant information to back this notion up. If the south Vietnamese were indeed capable fighters, we would not have went over there to help them in the first place. The idea of the two sides being "compatible" on the field makes me think of the current situation in Korea, where on the northern side you have people trained in warfare who grew up in a militarized state, while in the south the youth train on their play stations and get their exercise walking through the shopping malls.

In the end, I would choose to take my information from the books. Being how neither one is totally pitched towards one opinion of the war or another, I believe that they can provide the most accurate, unbiased information. While Appy's book provides similar contradictory elements through the means of interviewing people of all walks of life, I believe that you can find a valid median. I would go with Herring's book for factual information and believe his to be the most accurate view out of the four sources, especially considering the way in which he backs up all his writing with citations and sources where you can go to affirm what he has stated. It is almost like a dictionary or encyclopedia for the war in Vietnam and is presented as professionally as one could hope.

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