

HST 195: History of the Vietnam War F14 (Escobar Meta 21179)

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Forum 1

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Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Joe Escobar - Sunday, October 12, 2014, 2:34 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 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.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT: Change the subject line of your post to something more descriptive. DO NOT leave the subject line Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

Sum of ratings: -

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Steven Masone - Monday, October 13, 2014, 10:21 AM

I did find the PBS portrayal of Ho Chi Minh as first a nationalist and second a communist an attempt to show him in a better light to the American view.

"Intelligence assessments countered that Ho had remained loyal to Moscow throughout his career." (Herring book p.15) Ho clearly was trained and commissioned by Moscow to spearhead and organize communist party activities in Vietnam and China. "The DRV, with Ho still president, now devoted its efforts to

constructing a Communist society in North Vietnam. In the early 1960s, however, conflict resumed in the South, where Communist-led guerrillas mounted an insurgency against the U.S.-supported regime in Saigon." (Ho Chi Minh, Selected Works (Hanoi, 1960-1962), Vol. 2) It's not rocket science to understand that the communists were the invading aggressors who ignored the Geneva Accord agreements to have the U.N. oversee the elections. (AIM video)

While I could not find historical evidence of the DRV corruption as PBS portrayed Diem's government, I doubt corruption was any less prevalent in the north. The winners get to change the narratives.

"History is written by the victors." — Winston Churchill

I have found it's a PR world! Everyone is selling something... especially the media. Buyer beware!

"If you don't read the newspaper, you're uninformed. If you read the newspaper, you're mis-informed." — Mark Twain

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Zachary Embree - Monday, October 13, 2014, 7:13 PM

I would agree that the PBS series seemed to repeatably show the North in a better light, in some cases doing so by committing details. Throughout the series it stresses Ho as a leader fighting for his country and denies strong communist ties. Take for instance the films of Ho compared to Diem, Ho is sitting with children or standing around in a uniform with the troops. Diem on the other hand is flying to Washington or standing around his palace, subtle reminders that play on our tendency to root for the oppressed under dog.

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Zachary Embree - Monday, October 13, 2014, 7:50 PM

The AIM video has brought to light several problems I have when estimating the bias of the PBS series. For one thing there is a definite lack of information of what was happening in northern Vietnam after Ho had taken power besides repeated scenes of an ecstatic populace. What programs and reforms he enacted, how he treated his citizenry, and his relationship with China and the USSR are never really expanded upon. Meanwhile we are given extensive looks into the Diem regime the majority of which detail a series of political blunders and harsh actions taken by the Diem government. I personally use the textbooks especially the Patriots book by Appy to get a feel for the actual attitudes and motivations of the various groups. One particular point that shows a difference in presentation is the subject of the mass

migrations of Catholics to South Vietnam after the Geneva Accords. According to Herring "responding more to their own clergy than US propaganda, thousands of northern Catholics sought to regroup"(Herring p.62). Why they wanted to "regroup" in a whole new country despite the dangers is left out. The PBS series seemed to suggest CIA and fears of oppression played a major role. However the AIM video states that "in 1950 the communists lead by Ho Chi Minh launched a unprovoked military attack"(AIM historian "Morris"). This is what I mean when I state that actions and policies done by North Vietnam are left out of the picture in some sources.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Steven Masone - Tuesday, October 14, 2014, 11:41 AM

Good points! It is evident that with Ho's alias's and propaganda campaign by posters and *myth building* of his image, he was not the humble "Uncle Ho" who the people discovered through his intellectual writings and speeches. He was groomed and created by his Communist Party handlers and sold with great success to the populace who needed a hero. Even after death his official biography declares him an "Immortal Saint."

"The problem is that it all looks a bit hypocritical and stale today because the Communist Party in the eyes of many Vietnamese doesn't stand for those things.

"Many Communists are getting rich, corruption continues to flourish: if this is the party that Ho Chi Minh represents, then people don't really want to know about it." (Sophie Quinn-Judge, a scholar and biographer of Ho Chi Minh. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-18328455>)

It seems to me Uncle Ho was either very naive and believed his own press, or thought he could create a form of communism that would not become corrupt. I can't imagine he was blind to the corruption and totalitarian tactics Moscow and Beijing were steeped in.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Appy Book



by Desria Hansen - Tuesday, October 14, 2014, 6:12 PM

I also feel the Patriots book by Appy gives a great detailed account of the different experiences of those on both sides. Out of all the material we are required to read and watch I feel like this book has taught me the most so far. I may be naive, but I feel like it has been the most informative. Thank you for your

input!

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Conflicting Information

by Racheal Bryant - Wednesday, October 15, 2014, 7:32 PM

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)?

I think the best way to deal with accuracy in information we are learning is to use the triangulation approach. Using several pieces of research to cross reference the topic and see where the information agrees or disagrees is a great way to make sure you have the facts straight. Even though using the 3 sources takes more time it does help weed out what we can call truth.

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

The two text books are helping sift through the information we are viewing. When I read about a person's story and then hear the same story from a broader view I can accept that the information is credible.

Conflicting information:

PBS does seem to want to cast a positive light on Ho Chi Minh. PBS used an interview with Archimedes Patti who described Ho Chi Minh as "gentle and weak". Abbot Low Moffat referenced him as a communist, but said "everyone who has ever known him has said he was first a Nationalist and second a Communist"(PBS). After viewing AIM's claims I re-watched parts of the PBS video. I did notice after watching PBS the first time that I came away from it sympathizing with the North and Ho Chi Minh, after all "they were just doing their best to defend their nation" (PBS). During the second viewing I noticed PBS referred to anything negative that happened in the North as the doings of the Viet Minh. Even knowing Ho Chi Minh founded Viet Minh, it did leave him one degree away from the negative spotlight. PBS even made me think how Ho Chi Ming could even know what the Viet Minh were doing. It was possible maybe some of the groups were "rogue". It wasn't until after watching AIM that I realized the conflict that I was feeling was from the positive image of Uncle Ho from PBS but the negative image of the guerilla warfare and brutalities from some of the readings about the North. Aim said PBS doesn't mention the mass executions of all non-communists in the north estimated that 10,000 were killed. While I didn't watch all 3 hours of PBS again, I also didn't find any mention of Ho Chi Minh killing 10,000 non-communists. That didn't settle it for me since I hadn't read about the killings I looked it up. According to the order of the dragon "Hundreds of non-communist freedom fighters were murdered by Ho Chi Minh men" (<http://orderofthedragon.homestead.com/nguyen.html>). Since it's not quite the 10,000 I was looking for, I will walk away believing Ho Chi Minh did kill non-communist fighters. I also will leave believing that no matter who is giving the

information they do have some sort of an agenda, good intentions or not, there is always room for embellishment when it benefits your story.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Conflicting Information

by Savana Cochrane - Friday, October 17, 2014, 12:56 PM

While PBS does place Ho Chi Minh in excessively positive spotlight, Patti isn't the only one who found him "gentle and weak". According Appy, Henry Prunier described Ho as "A soft spoken, really meek-looking individual" (Appy, pg 40). In regards to the non-communists murdered by Ho, it makes me wonder if the AIM producers also stretched the truth a bit to make it seem like the PBS videos were even more wrong than they really were. Perhaps the truth lies somewhere in between the two videos.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Conflicting Information

by Desria Hansen - Friday, October 17, 2014, 6:43 PM

I think that when anyone is talking about something they are passionate about they tend to be biased towards one side or the other. However, I felt like the AIM video presented more facts even though they were passionate about Ho being a communist before a nationalist. Henry Prunier who "...in 1945 he was an ally of Ho Chi Minh..." so it seems to me like that statement he describes Ho as is more of an opinion (Appy, pg 38). But I do agree that the truth most likely does fall in between lines somewhere, it is hard to define what is actual truth.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Conflicting Information

by Dana Pond - Sunday, October 19, 2014, 11:11 AM

I agree with you about the truth falling somewhere. I don't think any amount of books or programs could ever reveal the actual truth.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Conflicting Information

by Racheal Bryant - Sunday, October 19, 2014, 2:00 PM

Thanks for the comments back. As I have read through this forum, I find it interesting that we all so blindly believed what PBS told us. Then when we watched AIM we blindly believed them. I did go ahead and do some research on AIM. They are a group of volunteers who decided to pull their resources to "out" some of media's lies or false reporting.

AIM states: "Accuracy In Media is a **non-profit**, grassroots citizens watchdog of the news media that critiques botched and bungled news stories and sets the record straight on important issues that have received slanted coverage."

Their goal is: "AIM exposes politically motivated media bias; teaches consumers to think critically about their news sources; and holds the mainstream press accountable for its misreporting." I think we should all take this as a lesson to think critically and do our best to seek the truth.

AIM's biggest accomplishment was the PBS airing: "AIM began purchasing stock in major media corporations in 1975, which enabled its representatives to attend news companies' annual shareholder meetings and ask executives to resolve issues with the corporation's reporting. In an unprecedented victory in 1984, AIM persuaded PBS to air a documentary it produced challenging the network's coverage of the Vietnam War."

PBS is also a non-profit organization they state: "PBS' mission is to create content that educates, informs and inspires." Interestingly, I found that PBS allows others to submit and edit the content in which they air, but there are certain guidelines. One being: "Editorial integrity: PBS content should embrace the highest commitment to excellence, professionalism, intellectual honesty and transparency. In its news and information content, **accuracy should be the cornerstone.**" In this case, I know a lot of people have wondered why PBS would have aired something like this when it was not wholly accurate. My thoughts are after reading and trying to decipher for myself what went on through accounts we have read. that sorting out the details was not as easy as it seemed. After all we are all human and error is inevitable. I don't know the intent, but for me I must be responsible for what I believe, not just blindly accept what someone else tells me.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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by Marquita Lucier - Sunday, October 19, 2014, 1:56 PM

Ho Chi Minh presented himself in many different ways to a lot of people almost as to find favoritism and popularity among many different groups in order to carry out his goals. Maybe that is where he did succeed in causing differences of opinions as to his character and significance in history. Reading the many different postings from students on our forum it did strike a little curiosity and interest. Our reference materials seem to support the many different views, however, I found a similar forum posting on the topic at <http://www.historynet.com/ho-chi-minh-north-vietnam-leader.htm>, and concluded that there are many different perspectives about Uncle Ho, even with the Vietnamese people as there seemed to be an even split about who and what Ho Chi Minh was and his importance and their allegiance to many who did not share the same sentiments. (Our forum is a lot more civilized,) as for me, Ho Chi Minh may have been a little too controlling for my taste not wanting to let go of control right up until his final breath.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Confusing Information



by Desria Hansen - Wednesday, October 15, 2014, 8:41 PM

When I first started this class I honestly knew very little about the Vietnam War. My knowledge was limited to what I had seen on *Forrest Gump* (talk about credible information ha). That being said, I started the class watching the first episode of the PBS series. After it had ended I had the impression that Ho Chi Minh was a great leader and someone to be admired. After reading the Herring book I felt like I had a better grasp of what was going on and felt like I was given information that wasn't as biased. Granted, the Vietnam War is a confusing war to begin with I watched the first episode in the PBS series again, but still felt confused by the information the PBS series was giving me. I was glad to find out from AIM that I was justified in feeling this way. I watched the first episode again and was able to correlate events that were the same in the book and in the movie. This is how I dealt academically with the conflicting information I was trying to sort out. However, I tend to lean more towards published books with cited sources more for credible information.

In the first episode of the PBS series, Ho Chi Minh was referred to first a nationalist and then a communist. The AIM video addresses this and states facts to why Ho was more of a communist, such as going to Moscow and becoming a soviet citizen along with other specific examples of things that Ho actually did that made him "a professional international communist" (AIM Historian Droge). I know that many of my other classmates have addressed this same issue, but it is also the one that stood out the most to me and I believe it to be the biggest mislead from the PBS series.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Re: Confusing Information

by Zachary Embree - Thursday, October 16, 2014, 4:52 PM

While I do believe that Ho Chi Minh was in fact a communist that does not mean he did not have very strong nationalist feelings. A real problem I keep having with any information sources made back when the USSR was still a big deal, was that the thought of communism was so polarizing. It took me talking to people who actually lived back then to realize just how deep the fear of the "red menace" was ingrained into our national policy. It really was called the "red scare" for a reason. So be aware that anything related to communism can be used to make all sorts of connections that could have never existed. One particular line from the Appy book that makes me wonder about Ho's actual connections to Soviet and Chinese policy is when the son of the former Russian premier states that the "Vietnamese had their own plans". So was he a communist? Definitely, but he might have been still a nationalist first.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Confusing Information

by Desria Hansen - Friday, October 17, 2014, 9:28 AM

Zachery, first thank you for replying to my post! have been a bit behind this week and have been trying to play catch up. The more I read and learn, I would have to agree that I do think Ho Chi Minh had strong nationalist feelings and wanted what he thought was best for his country. I will admit some things are still a little confusing to me, you seem like you have a good grasp on all this maybe you can explain in simple terms for me what communism even is? All I really know is the U.S feared China's communist way and did not want it spread to Asia, for fear it would overpower them? Am I on th right track? If you could help me out it would be greatly appreciated!

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Confusing Information

by Zachary Embree - Friday, October 17, 2014, 9:09 PM

I am no expert so feel free to fact check this. Communism as I understand it was all about taking the means of production, factories, farms, whatever made the things needed for a society to keep running, away from the privileged few in the upper class and distribute it evenly among the workers. At least that was the idea behind it, in reality it just made a new upper class in a unwieldy centralized government aka USSR. The fear the US had was that communism would expand and bring the entire world under its sway destroying

society as we know it. That or the conflicting ideologies would start another world war, and thus Mutually Assured Destruction with ICBMs(long range nuclear missiles). When it came to China the US had backed for a long time the nationalist anti communist government, when Mao seized power it looked like their was a solid communist block ready to take over the area and form a unstoppable alliance against NATO. Thus for political and security reasons communism had to be contained and to do that the US thought any country falling to communism had to be prevented lest a "domino effect" ripple outward. That and after so much fear mongering being "soft on communism" was political suicide.

TLDR: 1.China+USSR= solid block of communism 2.Vietnam falling= communist takeover of Asia 3.Communist takeover of Asia=beginning of the end of the US

hope that helps sorry for being so wordy.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Dana Pond - Wednesday, October 15, 2014, 8:42 PM

I think ever determining the actual events of how the war itself unfolded and carried on for so long would probably be impossible. Everyone seems to have their own version. I am 41 years old and spent my childhood and teenage years growing up watching my mother put all of her energy and effort in to finding her brother whom went MIA during the Vietnam War.

I remember her sitting at the kitchen table day after day for years always on the phone with people from the Pentagon and Generals. Going through stacks of paperwork with 98% of the words blacked out for security reasons. Finding her brother consumed her life; it took away from her children's lives. About 8 years ago they finally contacted my mom and told her that a tooth had been discovered at his crash site and DNA testing with his daughter confirmed it was him. He had a full honors military burial and then my mom lost her mind.

I still question if they really found a tooth or did they just want to get my mom off their backs. My mother was very involved with many projects having to do with the POW flag, the memorial wall in Sacramento.My Uncles name is Henry Clay Knight. If you google his name you can read about his story.

I think the PBS reporters and producers had a political motive. I have watched several documentaries over the years and I think the footage and pictures tell the story of just how devastating the soldiers lives were. Reading the stories in Appys book from the Vietnamese is very hard to do. I don't want to know about their struggles. I don't want to read their boasting of how many American soldiers they killed.

I have always wondered what we were fighting for. I know my mother has tried to explain many times. When I told her I was taking this class she seemed irritated. She didn't see a teacher being able to teach on this subject. I have decided not to share any of what I am reading or learning with her. It just brings up to many emotions for her.

I think the truth can only come from the soldiers as far as the battle field is concerned. As for the political aspect, it will be tough to decipher what is fact or fiction.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Can Motive Truly Be Determined?

by Savana Cochrane - Wednesday, October 15, 2014, 8:58 PM

When we come upon conflicting information, it's helpful to identify what is actually factual versus what is a writers/editors opinion that's being portrayed as fact. Then you would want to seek out more sources to better understand which one is 'bending the truth' slightly or adding negative or positive feelings which may or may not be present. The true motives of Ho Chi Minh for example, can not be known by anyone other than Ho himself. His actions however, are what we can see. I think the Herring book is very helpful in discovering what happened (without added opinions and motives). This is in part because he uses the most recently available information (Herring, introduction). It's also helpful that he cites his sources, so if you have any question about what he writes you can see where he got that information, whereas it's not always clear how the PBS show gathered their information.

It was interesting to hear other perspectives on the story presented by the PBS show. It remains unclear to me why the editors of the show would portray Ho the way they did. If their goal was to "contribute to national esteem in the post-war era" (Accuracy in the Media) then wouldn't you expect to see Ho portrayed more as a communist in order to show that America really was fighting for valuable reason? After all he did explicitly say "I am a communist" (Appy, pg 40). I think people see this as meaning that he is following orders from Moscow or is some extension of Communist Russia and China. However, this is not necessarily true. After all the "Kremlin declined to even answer Ho's letters" and "US diplomats could find no evidence of direct ties between the USSR and the Viet Minh" (Herring, pg 15). It seems likely that Ho was neither a communist nor a nationalist first. He was both equally, seeking to gain independence and start a communist regime at the same time and with equal passion.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Mixed Reviews

by Hannah Morton - Wednesday, October 15, 2014, 9:08 PM



Hi Chi Minh, a man who seemed to want what was best for his people. But was also a revolutionary who wanted to make a political stance and would do all that he could in order to do what he felt was right and necessary for his countrymen. Given the name "Uncle Ho" by his country men, they felt as though he was a "kind, Humble man" (PBS episode 1). but little did they know that the true revolutionary would do anything he could, to be a powerful country. Therefore leading to the war between the South Vietnamese, who were backed up by the United States, and the North Vietnamese, in which Ho controlled. These are things things that I found confusing about the different things that I have heard and learned about Ho. Although from other history classes, and my little knowledge about Vietnam, I have always associated Ho as an independent revolutionary. This being something I admire in a political leader, but obviously not in the ways in which Ho decided to do things. The New York Times Published " Intelligent, resourceful and dedicated, though ruthless, Ho created a favorable impression on many of those who dealt with him."

It is hard to sift through the credible information and the not so credible information in history, this is something I seem to struggle with. From the different reading we have done for this class as well as viewing and doing my own research online I work to decide and chose the things that I feel would be true and those that would be false, but also looking at the different authors, writers and speakers who are publishing the note. From information ranging from our American written textbooks, and our novel in which we are reading different interviews from no biased opinions help us to understand some truth, or decide our own truths in learning about Vietnam. Our textbook gets more to the facts behind the history, the video is facts/ but also interviewing and a story that is made for our entertainment.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Mixed Reviews

by Zachary Embree - Thursday, October 16, 2014, 4:35 PM

I would definitely agree that the PBS video was made with marketability in mind. I find that is one of the problems many historical documentaries share, they have to embellish the truth at certain points to much sure the viewer is getting a interesting story. I find one of the better ways to at least get a solid outline of the conflict is to look at each major event in its own context. If you look at the whole conflict at once it can be easier to begin to generalize the people and attitudes that sprang from different sources altogether.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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What is there to hide?  



by Dennis Calciano - Wednesday, October 15, 2014, 9:12 PM

I'm curious why Ho was betrayed as more of a nationalist in the PBS television series? I don't know what PBS sought to gain out of lying to their viewers, it wasn't clear to me after watching the AIM video. If I had to guess, it would have to do something about the government wanting to soften the blow of defeat and conjuring a different way to look at the war. They made Ho out to be a peaceful person that was for the independence of his country. Even though it was said in the AIM video those with different political beliefs were executed. Why was PBS trying to hide the fact that Ho was a violent martyr backing the support of communism? As it is said in the AIM video, "The PBS series wanted to contribute to healing and national esteem of the US in the post – war era." (Aim Video 3:45) They wanted to give people a lie that they could get behind and feel comfortable with.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: What is there to hide?  

by Jimmie Berguin - Thursday, October 16, 2014, 12:27 PM

I'm sure we're not alone in feeling uncomfortable after being lied to continuously through the PBS broadcast. What in the world were they thinking? Did they think that giving us false information would somehow pacify us and give us a sense of closure? It doesn't make any sense. And Ho being brought about to seem like a peace keeper for the good of his country was the most insulting part. You're so right saying that they made Ho seem like a peaceful person! It was the exact opposite. I don't know a lot of political figures that willingly sought out non-communist believers and had them murdered. In the end, the worst lie was that this was told by PBS someone we thought we could rely on. Now it just shows that there is not such thing as honest reporting, just news reporting. We are justified in all our frustration with this misleading piece of work.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Truth and Vietnam: Determining the facts from fabrications  

by Jimmie Berguin - Wednesday, October 15, 2014, 9:33 PM

After finishing the AIM video my mind went reeling. I'm not sure why exactly I so confidently believed in the PBS video, no questions asked, but I did. Now I feel such a loss. In my personal opinion, I believed PBS to be the only truthful (most truthful) form of information on television when it came to any history. But I suppose much like anything on TV, there was some form of fiction added along the way. Moving forward, the best solution to avoiding future misleadings is just to cross reference the information. Example: in ep. 2 of Vietnam: A Television History, this was a Diem information heavy episode. The documentary informed us that Diem was essentially a puppet of the United States. Conspiring that the US had put him in power. And that

eventually went rogue and ran amok; leading to his ultimate downfall. But when we reference Herring's book, (page 60, paragraph 2) it says, "The United States has often-mistakenly-been accused of conspiring to put Diem in power. In fact, he deserves far more credit for his own fate than he has usually been given. While in exile, he lobbied hard for U.S. backing. Eisenhower and Dulles came to favor him because of his Catholicism and apparent religiosity but mainly because he seemed the only alternative to communism and French colonialism". This is the exact opposite of what was stated to be fact by PBS's program.

I'm sure I am not the only student in class frustrated, nay, enraged by this misleading information. This guaranteed my future researching in every and any little information I come across about the Vietnam war. In a way this seemed like a perfect metaphor for the Vietnam war. It wasn't just a black and white war, there was an immense gray area that people always want to rule as being one or the other.

Here we have, yet again, information on a war we know only so much about. In order to learn more, we have to make sure our facts are fact checked. The Herring book can give us the detailed accounts of the war. Patriots can help us understand the human side of it, by those on the fighting frontlines; both political and warfare.

Then we have the PBS videos that can give us "interesting" stories to ponder over. I'm not worried anymore about what's true and what's not true. The truth has always found a way, and the amount of resources at our disposal, I think finding it won't be too hard. I wouldn't be surprised if this is how Vietnam is for everyone else. A series of digging through books, reading documents, listening to first hand accounts.

Hoping that in the end, we will eventually make sense of it all.

War does not determine who's right, only who's left. -**Bertrand Russell** (British Political Activist and Philosopher)

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Truth and Vietnam: Determining the facts from fabrications



by Racheal Bryant - Wednesday, October 15, 2014, 10:49 PM

I think I believed what PBS told us because PBS has a reputation for serving the public by broadcasting information...that's their job! I always believed they would tell us the truth for the sake of public knowledge. I also think I believed everything I was viewing because 1) the teacher recommended it as a source and 2) they seemed to know more about Vietnam than I did.

I also have to say your metaphor about the war not being black and white more of a grey area is exactly that for me too! Nicely put!

I am finding my self second guessing all information at this point and hoping I come away with a better understanding of the war than when I started.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Truth and Vietnam: Determining the facts from fabrications



by Savana Cochrane - Sunday, October 19, 2014, 10:37 AM

I definitely agree that these realizations have been a frustrating reminder to really check that what you're hearing and seeing is accurate, no matter how 'credible' the source seems to be. I think the Vietnam War is so far proving to be one of those historical events that just wasn't entirely logical or sensible, no matter much 'sense' we try to make of it. Also, I really like that quote that you posted.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Truth and Vietnam: Determining the facts from fabrications



by Marquita Lucier - Sunday, October 19, 2014, 1:37 PM

If there is any frustration or outrage I may think or feel about the Vietnam material, it is not based necessarily on the sources of documentation presented in this class and whether or not it is misleading information or not, but comes more from the continued lies and dishonesty that came out of Washington and our administration to conceal the truth. How can any information presented be accurate and not distorted when our commander and chief and all his advisors went to great lengths to be deceitful and hide the truth from the American people. In the Herring book chapter three I could not help but to notice the amount of direct quotes he used of President Kennedy throughout the chapter. They were not necessary the best Kennedy quotes that Herring could have used, as it damaged a lot of his character in my eyes with his continued use of profanity, (this made me suspicious of Herring's intent and the bias's he had in including this in his book perhaps knowing that Kennedy did not hide his Catholic proclamation.) But also Kennedy's seemingly lack of attention to what was actually going on in Vietnam and his middle ground approach, prolonged procrastination to act on the mounting crises in Vietnam and the conflicting reports from his administration regarding Diem and his brother. I find it very interesting that he was assassinated only three weeks after the assassination of Diem and his brother. With all the conspiracy theories surrounding Kennedy's assassination this is a connection I have never heard or thought of before. I find myself believing the statement made by Charleston Heston in the AIM video that **"You have to understand history so you can plan for the future."** Then he quoted the philosopher, George Santayana, **"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."** These words should worry us more than the discrepancies of material we suspect of containing errors as we should consider the sources and what they base their information on. I like your statement "The truth has always found a way," I have heard it before said in this manner, "And you may be sure that your sin will find you out," Numbers 32:23 New International Version, also, one that I am sure Kennedy heard as well.

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Re: Truth and Vietnam: Determining the facts from fabrications



by Dennis Calciano - Sunday, October 19, 2014, 10:22 PM

I would have to agree that I'm also disappointed about being lied to by PBS. Reading the Appy book has been the most resourceful place for me to get insight on the war. Not only is it a captivating read, you also get a sense of realism that you wouldn't get with the PBS series.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Is there such a thing as Non-Bias Reporting?



by Marquita Lucier - Wednesday, October 15, 2014, 10:43 PM

First, let me start out by saying how much I appreciate the progress Lane has made to ensure that students who enroll in the History 195 class are getting a better quality of education for their money. If I had taken this course previously and based my education on the topic of the History of the Vietnam War, while taking the telecourse using the PBS series, I would not have only been misinformed but also bored at the same time. In the AIM video (Douglas Pike, Director, Indochina Archive, U of Cal Berkley) points out the four promises that the PBS series did not live up too. PBS claimed that the series would: 1) Supply information for the historical record, (however, some of the information being accurate and some not.) 2) Provide an antidote to the misuses of history (AIM saying was laughable and a misuse of history.) 3) Contribute to healing and national esteem in the post-war era claiming to Bring pride in America and end trauma (but it didn't.) 4) Contribute to historical methodology (According to Aim the series only showed it in a negative sense and how not to do it.) Was the PBS series promoters intent was to report the truth, hide, change the facts according to how they viewed the event. After watching the first three episodes, I would have to conclude and give the PBS series the benefit of the doubt and say that the information was based on ignorance or a lack of knowledge or perhaps conflicting information that they were given. I also wonder what the true motivation behind the AIM video was in exposing the inaccuracy of the PBS series and was their reporting accurate or does it also fall to discrepancies and bias information. Is it possible to obtain a non-bias opinion or story about anything in life?

When the PBS series came out in the Fall of 1983 the first IBM PC had only came out two years prior and it had been 8 years since the US defeat in Vietnam and a lot of people did not remember most of the 1970s

(<http://www.theinquirer.net/inquirer/news/2101426/ibm-pc-ago>.) With the advancement in technology and social media, we have the opportunity as Americans to receive information quickly and unfiltered giving us a better understanding and grasp of current affairs.

In 1995 Robert McNamara, secretary of defense from 1961 to early 1968, published a memoir declaring that the United States had been “terribly wrong” to intervene. Robert McNamara’s lack of intelligence, who didn’t understand and appreciate Vietnam’s history, language, culture, or values admitted at first only in private that our intervention and involvement in Vietnam was wrong and that the war could not be won while misleading the American people with false reports of the “great progress in every dimension of our efforts,” in Vietnam.

When comparing conflicting information from different sources it is still difficult to get away from bias opinions and information even those who claim to be reliable and come with good credentials.

Daniel Redmond assisted in Operation Passage to Freedom, transporting almost a million North Vietnamese, most of them Catholics, to South Vietnam being the largest short-term migrations in history and was promoted by the CIA in hopes of providing political base for the new Catholic ruler Ngo Dinh Diem. The CIA operatives flooded northern Catholic villages with leaflets saying that Jesus and the Virgin Mary had moved south and it was the duty and salvation of all Vietnamese Catholics to do so as well (Appy p. 47.)

The refugees added to the confusion to the south but Washington saw their value as a solid anti-communist base for Diem and a touching symbols of the cold war. American agents assigned to the north used propaganda to spur the migration headed by their chief, a veteran CIA Specialist, Colonel Edward Lansdale. Some people were reluctant to leave their homes so they used stronger informative propaganda and was urging and nudging real hard to make them come to a decision quickly since free movement would become difficult. Stronger methods were used to persuade them at a great time of demoralization of the people (PBS Episode 2.)

According to Stephen Morris (Aims video) the Catholics didn’t flee from north to south because of religious reason or fearing communist nor as PBS suggested that they collaborated with the French although some had or it was because of the CIA propaganda and fearing the communist but in 1950 the unprovoked military attack against them led by Ho Chi Minh was the reason they fled.

After hearing, these three different perspectives on why the Catholics moved south I am still not sure if we are getting the most accurate information. Maybe it is somewhere in the middle. As with anything, use discernment when basing your findings on the facts presented.

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Re: Is there such a thing as Non-Bias Reporting?

by Steven Masone - Thursday, October 16, 2014, 10:25 AM

I have no doubt we did not get important "secret" information especially regarding the Vatican's involvement. There is a back story there. Unfortunately, the internet is rife with conspiracy theories about the Catholic Church in general.

However, with a Catholic in the White House with JFK, it's naive to think the Vatican was not doing all they could to influence their agenda. After World War II we found the Vatican involved in assisting Nazi's to escape to South America. Gitta Sereny wrote in her 1974 book *Into That Darkness*, "Vatican official, Bishop Alois Hudal, not former SS men, as the principal agent in helping Nazis leave Italy for South America." (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ODESSA>) Whether or not this was official Vatican policy with the Pope's blessing or not will never be known. In those times, the Papacy was untouchable as their scandals and dirty laundry was still kept secret. In light of their current problems I doubt any transgressions PBS or any media would uncover could, or would be kept quiet. The politics of every war has so many divergent groups and special interests trying to profit and gain advantage with so much "spy v.s. spy" or "All warfare is based on deception." (Sun Tzu, Art Of War) we never get all the facts. Many times major players who were instigating and perhaps even designed the start of conflicts, can remain unknown.

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Re: Is there such a thing as Non-Bias Reporting?

by Marquita Lucier - Friday, October 17, 2014, 7:50 PM

I was intrigued by your response to my posting regarding the possibility of the Vatican's involvement in Vietnam and perhaps some conspiracy theories behind it and tried to do a little research myself for additional information. Nothing proved to be fruitful however; there were numerous references to JFK and his partiality toward the Catholic's theories. In addition, I found an article on Asiannews.it with Cardinal Phan Minh Man dated 04/14/2005. He states that "following the reunification with the North in 1975 the Church in the south, which was used to operating in relative freedom, found itself at the receiving end of the Communist takeover: everything—Catholic seminaries, schools and private hospitals—was nationalized." In terms of reforming the country's religious laws, he has suggested going back to Hô Chi Minh's 1956 rules.

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Phan-Minh-Man,-talking-to-the-Communists-3040.html>

I did find in our class reading that Diem was a northerner and a Catholic who was sympathetic to the refugees, having his government give them funding to build new dwelling, clothing and food. Because of his favoritism for the northern Catholics, it contributed to bringing indictment against him (Herring p.62, 63.)

This topic does bring one to contemplate warfare and the reasoning behind the decision makers in Washington to pursue our involvement or not and who or what information is being provided. As you stated, "the start of

conflicts, can remain unknown." Cardinal Phan Minh Man - "From 1968 to 1971 I saw through the mass media the inhuman face of a war that was ravaging my country, a war that sowed pain and destruction, suffering and death. This explains why you won't find anyone among my people who believes that there is just war whatever reason to start it might be invoked to start it".

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Ivan Guitron - Wednesday, October 15, 2014, 11:34 PM

I was really Interested that he used to work and live the U.S, then to France under a different name. Then when he came to Vietnam He changed his name to Ho Chi Minh meaning " he who enlightens". The Herring book also is a great source of information about "uncle ho" as the people of Vietnam knew him by. After years and years of fighting the to proclaim their independence from the French Ho decided to try and seek help from the Americans. To show his devotion to the Americans, Ho the opening speech by Thomas Jeffersons. During world war 2 the Japanese started to invade Vietnam and try to take over the rights to claim them. In 1941 a small revolution group called the "Viet Minh". They were the the first to Introduce the gorilla warfare style. Even when he was dying from malaria he still tried to be the leader that he wanted everyone to see. He was always there trying to learn everything he can to win the fight against anyone that try's to take over his home land.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Dana Pond - Sunday, October 19, 2014, 9:58 PM

I know that I did not add anything to this forum. I am very overwhelmed with all the different information and books that we are reading and watching. It is a lot to take in. I have read everyone's posts and seem to be able to understand more from my peers than trying to keep up with the confusion of politics. Thanks everyone

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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(Week 1 - Determining t...) Next >

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