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Longest War & Video Documentaries

by Joe Escobar - Saturday, October 1, 2016, 10:39 AM

This thread is for discussions on the Longest War & Video Documentaries topic. 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 - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, something that describes which question(s) you are addressing . Do NOT simply leave it RE: Longest War & Video Documentaries

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A few discrepancies between the governments documentary and George Herring.

Chapter one and two of George Herring's book, *America's Longest War*, offers a detailed analysis of the events that led to America's involvement in Vietnam. On the contrary, the film: *Why Vietnam?*, was created by the Department of Defense and portrays a brighter image of South Vietnam than that of Herring. In minute nine of the film, the narrator describes acts of terror in the south as being perpetrated by northern communists. When in Herring's book they are actually attacks from small regimes controlled by mafia like organizations, with little to no ties to the communist north. "The Binh Xuyen, a mafia-like organization" "had an army of 25,000 men, earned huge revenues from gambling, an opium factory and prostitution in Saigon," (Herring pg.63) Herring describes one of the "sects" that Premier Dien fought in the sects crisis of 1955. He also goes on to describe the fighting as more of a resistance to the rules of a new leader, for Dien wouldn't allow the mafia to be above the law like his predecessor Bao Dai did. It seems that the Dep. Of Defense wanted Americans to see any attacks against South Vietnam as communist. The video also showed a misguided view of the "elections" in South Vietnam.

In minute seven of the video, it describes free elections being held in South Vietnam, however in *America's Longest War*, Herring's only discussion on the elections is that Diem, with American approval, purposely delays them in fear of losing. "Not eager for elections but not wanting to appear to obstruct them, Americans encouraged Diem to agree in principle while delaying and insisting on conditions that North Vietnam would not accept." (Herring pg.66) Diem then replaces the national election with a referendum as a "means to get rid of Bao Dai." (Herring pg.67) I believe the video's aim was to show American involvement in South Vietnam in a positive light, therefore obscuring minor facts and details to get American approval.

The differences between the video and the more fact bound book are not overly surprising to me, of course the government wants to portray progress in South Vietnam, that was our mission.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: A few discrepancies between the governments documentary and George Herring.

by Andrew Kilmer - Wednesday, October 5, 2016, 1:48 PM

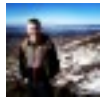
Andrew,

I read and enjoyed your post. I came to many of the same thoughts. After reading Herring, it almost seemed as if the government video was taking broad strokes to promote the "why" behind the action. I find this upsetting, I think Americans could have seen the need for American involvement had they been given more facts and history of the area. Instead people were left to read

between the lines and make their own assumptions. The same could be said for the people of South Vietnam who felt American was an the next colonial force to occupy their country. Diem and our own government did not trust those governed to support their countries goals. Its hard to get people to support a cause when they are left to wonder what that cause really is.

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Re: A few discrepancies between the governments documentary and George Herring.

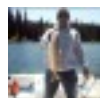
by Andrew Dellinger - Thursday, October 6, 2016, 6:45 PM

Andrew,

That's exactly how I felt. Its upsetting to read and watch how poor Diem's leadership was. Also considering the lack of cooperation between him and the United States officials. It's understandable that he would want to run the country his own way, but it's as if he didn't understand his own people. Herring describes Diem's land resettlement program in 1957 at the bottom of page 78, and it is the perfect example of discontent for his peoples culture. Forcing families off the land that their ancestors are buried. He also appointed "landlords" over the farmers who stole and imprisoned them, taking bribes to let them out of jail. To me, his failure ultimately lies in trying to promote a capitalist democracy when in fact using the same leadership style as a dictatorship. It's easy to understand his people's dissatisfaction.

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Re: A few discrepancies between the governments documentary and George Herring.

by Andrew Kilmer - Friday, October 7, 2016, 1:37 PM

Exactly and further more, the US Government allowed Diem to stay in power, over fear that he would lose the popular vote in a Nationwide election. I wonder what the North's Government would have looked like had the elections taken place.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: A few discrepancies between the governments documentary and George Herring.

by Andrew Dellinger - Sunday, October 9, 2016, 4:35 PM

I couldn't help wondering what would have happened if American officials had backed Ho Chi Minh after the revolution of 1945. We had OSS agents inside Vietnam training the Viet Minh in return for intelligence on the Japanese during WW2 (Herring pg. 11). He describes Minh as very eager for American support, and this is also stated in the Patriots book. Maybe if we would have spent more time and resources with him we could of swayed him away from communism and to a more social democracy. Ho was a nationalist first and a communist second, he solely wanted a free Vietnam. This would of course cause problems with the French, but it probably would have stopped them from trying to re-colonize Vietnam and averting the first Indochina war. Of course this is just hypothetical, but it's interesting learning about some of these miscues and wondering how that could have changed the outcome.

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Nationalism and Propaganda

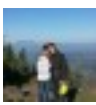
by Andrew Kilmer - Tuesday, October 4, 2016, 10:17 AM

In regards to connections between our textbook and the two videos, I felt the first video "The First War in Vietnam" had several connections. I re-watched it after reading Herring and thought both sources recounted history about the same. While the video only touched the highlights of the U.S. building investment in Vietnam, it didn't vary much in the way it was reported. Herring was much more detailed and gave in-depth information on the events and politics leading to American troops on the ground.

The most important connection that I took away from the first film and the text was that of Vietnamese nationalism. The video touched on it, when focusing on Ho Chi Minh and his history, it gave me a perspective of his ideals and intentions for his country that I had not known before. Herring only furthered this information for me. My preconceived thoughts had been based on mainline media and movies that never gave a perspective from Vietnam's strong nationalism. This ideal is critical to me in understanding foreign failure in Indochina.

The second video I felt had little connections for me, in relating to the text. Other than the timelines of American escalation in the war, the reasoning was different. The video used words like "aggressor" and "Ho's War Machine." It didn't mention the south's questionable government, but rather focused on the Communist scare and how innocents will continue to die, until we prevail. I was ready to buy war bonds by the end.

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French and Vietnamese

by Dan Johnson - Tuesday, October 4, 2016, 8:35 PM

The negotiations following the Viet Minh's take over of Hanoi in 1946 marked most significantly the course for the Western approach towards Vietnam. The Video Documentary seems to blame the French reluctance to relent its imperial ambitions on the leading French Admiral D'Argenlieu claiming a shift in French attitudes towards the Vietnamese; however, it seems to have been a much more complex development than the result of the will of one man. The Herring Book seems to present the complexities more thoroughly. The Herring Book shows the French insecurity after their defeat during World War 2, and their need to be a major actor in world politics on par with the British and United States. Simultaneously, the French were able to leverage themselves to gain support for their ambitions as they further *internalized* the struggle. This marked a point that set the stage for the conflict to get out of hand because the French *internalization* carried over into a British and American *internalization* which made all parties feel that they **needed** victory. Considering the Vietnamese already felt they **needed** to win themselves, the *internalization* set the grounds for a long and bloody series of conflicts, which makes the events surrounding the 1946 Vietnamese-French agreements most important. The Herring books shows a complex view of it while the Video Documentary shows a more stereotypical picture where the leaders and the people were diametrically opposed. I wouldn't say the Video Documentary appears inaccurate, but I would say it doesn't remind the audience of the extremely complex undertones surrounding the time.

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Compare and Contrast

by Jeffrey Wright - Wednesday, October 5, 2016, 12:37 PM

In regards to Herring, the first chapter is aptly named "A Dead-End Alley". In comparison to the PBS Documentary Series, we see the progression of french rule and the people of Vietnam resisting colonization. Herring directly associates this on Page 34, where he begins to delve into the perils of French position in Vietnam (i.e Dien Bien Phu crisis). If we dissect the first PBS documentary, we see that it deals heavily with the institution of Ho Chi Minh and how he lead his nation through french warfare.

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Re: Longest War & Video Documentaries

by Austin Potter - Wednesday, October 5, 2016, 8:49 PM

Why are we really in vietnam? In chapter 2 of the Herring book it goes into detail about the aid the united states provided to south vietnam, often describing it as “a testing ground for the viability of American ideology and institutions in underdeveloped nations” (ch2pg69) and . While the “Why Vietnam” video is quite biased and is often aggressive to the communist controlled north vietnam. Claiming that the U.S was there to aid a country with poverty and political unstable, and without aid there will be political and economical collapse. As to which one is true, I believe it is a little of both. While the U.S wanted to gain an edge against communism and use vietnam as a prototype american style democracy, I think there is still a ring of truth to wanting to aid the south vietnamese make their country strong and independant.

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Pre US Involvement

by Mason Fisher - Wednesday, October 5, 2016, 11:06 PM

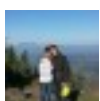
There are so many topics to choose from when it comes to both documentaries (“The first war in Vietnam” and “Why Vietnam?”) and the first two chapters of the Herring book. All of these different learning options cover a lot important information regarding Vietnam 1940-1975.

My focus is between “The first war in Vietnam” video and the beginning of chapter #1 in the Herring book. Both of these materials cover how the French tried to take over Vietnam pre American involvement into the stop of communism which happened later. The book and the video have similar information and seem to agree on the major points. Those being, why the French wanted Vietnam as a colon and how the Vietnamese broke away from the French.

The French wanted to exploit the Vietnamese and were attempting to do what other countries had done to other Asian cultures. The French brought western styles with them to Vietnam and created large cities. They also wanted to use Vietnam's population as a work force, Vietnamese leaders were not letting this happen and in 1945 they resisted the French and broke away.

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Context of American Imperialism

by Dan Johnson - Thursday, October 6, 2016, 11:31 AM

The book nor the documentary connected the U.S.'s own use of imperialist practices in Guatemala or Iran at the time. This context is important because it shows that the Vietnamese would be right in not trusting the America agenda in their country. Stopping the spread of communism seemed to be the primary concern, but was their secondary concern spreading social capitalist democracy for the good of the Vietnamese people. It's important to know the U.S. foreign policy at the time in relation to broader issues that just Vietnam to understand the nature of American action towards non-European based nations. With that in mind, the Vietnamese found themselves in an extremely challenging predicament themselves in how to compromise with the Americans. Ngo Dinh Diem as a nationalist showed himself to be more than an American puppet, but with South Vietnamese dependency on American aid, Ngo Dinh Diem may have no choice but to be an American puppet. Seeing this reality, Ho Chi Minh must have found himself in the uncomfortable position of not wanting to relent on his communist ties as to not alienate his allies China and Russia while hoping to see if he could relent on some of his communist ideology to stabilize relations with western powers. Ultimately for Minh, his alliance with other communist powers was a more stable one. He probably couldn't have seen a way to allow broader American influence with forgoing Vietnamese autonomy. This dynamic along with others made it difficult for either side to moderate their understandings of themselves and the world. I think it's an important context in understanding the relationships of the leaders and nations involved.

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State of Indochina

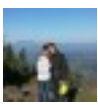
by Dan Johnson - Thursday, October 6, 2016, 1:53 PM

It's also important to note the state of the rest of Indochina to see what American strategists would have been looking at during the time. If Vietnam's future was closely linked to the rest of Indochina, then it's important to consider that action could have been taken directly towards Cambodia, Laos, Burma ect. to bolster and establish non-communist stability. I would guess this strategy was considered, but I'm not sure based on the readings and the documentaries. I'm not sure to what extent the American leaders hyper-focused on Vietnam. Certainly, there was a desire for total victory in Vietnam that was the status quo amongst American leadership and beyond. Kennedy acknowledged however that the Vietnamese would have to win the war themselves suggesting complete American interventionism would not suffice. It seems as though Kennedy was under pressure to fight in Vietnam when perhaps a greater percentage of resources should have been diverted elsewhere.

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Complex Propaganda



by Dan Johnson - Saturday, October 8, 2016, 5:58 PM

I noticed the propaganda film was much more complex than earlier forms of propaganda. The information was more dense and informative which gives it a stronger appeal to intellect. Compared to baseless fear tactics used at previous times in American history. Perhaps it reflects the more complex times and a wider and more in depth access to information about international relations than in previous times. Watching it truly shows a major change in the public psyche. I think it also shows where the distrust and at times paranoia of the government also took root. The more nuanced manipulation must have made people at the time feel confused.

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Re: Complex Propaganda

by Andrew Kilmer - Sunday, October 9, 2016, 4:31 PM

I agree Dan, it was more complex. To me there was a big difference even between the two government films we watched this week. The first one was short, with a simple narrative and little more than just a news clip. The second video, "Why Vietnam" had a lot more production to it. There was music that was meant to make you feel something and images to back it up. When we saw the enemy it had an ominous tone and when it showed our troops a patriotic feel. I think that it probably had to do with the publics lack of support and the title itself. The film was trying to answer the question "why Vietnam", but I feel it missed several key points after reading Herring.

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