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Week 4 Forum

Determining the Truth

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Determining the Truth

by Joe Escobar – Sunday, April 17, 2016, 12:32 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Determining the Truth topic.

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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: Determining the Truth

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Wash, Rinse, Repeat

by Mathew Bohman – Wednesday, April 20, 2016, 9:24 AM

So the assignment says simply do not repeat part 1 but we are aren't we? The PBS video has continued with its same theme and the AIM with its.

The AIM video discussed events from 1965 all the way up to 1973. The PBS video moved to short interviews from people and short video clips that in my opinion are not put in any real context when they are flashed on the screen (random shooting at someone running away, pushing a man's head down into water).

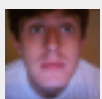
The PBS video used interviews from Bill Ehrhart, Jack Hill, Nguyen Bay and Le Thi Ton to paint a picture that American soldiers didn't want to be there and thought of deserting. It also painted the picture that soldiers were going into villages and killing women and children for no reason.

On the opposite side the AIM video presents the Hanoi March of 1966 and the march of troop support of May 1967. There are a lot of other things the AIM video presented but they are outside the time period being covered in the PBS and the Herring book.

In the end the New York Times article I don't believe affected my view of the videos or books. I do find the Herring book for me to be most relevant because I want facts that I can digest and then make my own decisions. The videos (PBS, AIM) are both slanted to support their narrative.

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A different picture

by Timothy Eckley – Saturday, April 23, 2016, 10:31 PM

I agree that some of the soldiers were just going in and killing who they thought were needed to be killed for their own survival. I think what PBS was trying to portray goes much deeper than just that. I believe the purpose of Episode 4 was to give us real accounts of how individuals now interpret their experiences in the

Vietnam War. We saw some soldiers really open up and speak about very traumatic experiences. The picture I saw painted was more of an image of reflection, regret and lessons learned.

From speaking with the few veterans of this war that I know, I feel like the individuals that went to this war really believed they were defending their country from something greater than themselves. That the cause was perceived to go beyond them. These feelings might have changed while they were there or after coming home, but there were truly good motives behind their fight. I don't think our soldiers went there wanting to be butchers of some sort, but with the surrounding environment of war, people become conditioned to protecting themselves and their comrades. Although atrocities were committed from both sides, it's unlikely it was out of anything but the sense of necessity.

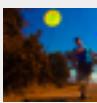
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Re: A different picture
by [Robert Taylor](#) – Sunday, April 24, 2016, 11:33 AM

Episode 4 of the PBS documentary in no way represented the soldiers in a bad light. I agree with you that it was attempting to portray something much deeper than mindless killing. If this episode is what the AIM documentary was referencing when they concluded that the PBS documentary showed the soldiers in a bad light, I would completely disagree. There were actual soldiers telling actual stories. I believe that their are viewpoints of other soldiers that are different than the ones shown here, but most of the stories from the Appy book seem to reflect similar experiences of these soldiers. I personally think that the PBS documentary did a good job at representing these soldiers and their actual feelings toward the war.

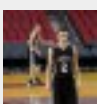
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Re: A different picture
by [Adam Clairmont](#) – Sunday, April 24, 2016, 4:12 PM

While re-watching Episode 4 of the PBS documentary I saw stories of soldiers being told who truly believed in our mission in Vietnam. Major Vernon Gillespie spoke about a time when his unit captured the operations officer of the 22nd NVA regiment. He found that both he and his captive both truly believed what they were doing was right. They were both truly dedicated to their leaders; the American view that they were fighting the spread of communism, and the North Vietnamese view of attempting of reuniting the north and south. These were not soldiers who were there because they enjoyed committing the brutal acts of war, but who were simply dealing with the situations they found themselves in. Doing what they could to survive and to promote the goals of the leaders, while difficult, was what I believe drove most of the soldiers on both sides.

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Re: A different picture
by [Bryce Tilton](#) – Sunday, April 24, 2016, 6:38 PM

Tim,

That's awesome that you've been able to talk to veterans from this war. That I feel will give the realist feelings of what the soldiers were feeling. I'd love to hear more about what was discussed in those conversations. I feel like both videos are bias towards one side of the other (for or against the war) that its hard to get a true understanding of the war. That is one reason why I enjoy reading Patriots because it is writings from the soldiers themselves. It still may be a little exaggerated or twisted in some way, but I feel like that is the most reliable source that we have to use.

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PBS vs. AIM
by [Aaron Ashenfelter](#) – Wednesday, April 20, 2016, 1:54 PM

What the NYT article is here to talk about how the 2 different stories were trying to almost cover each other to

show what the other is not showing. The story "Television's Vietnam: The Real Story" mainly attempts to show everything that the PBS series seems to leave out. In my opinion, neither of these stories should be taken as the whole story and they also should not be viewed as better than one another because while the PBS story may leave parts out, the other one never really states what the tells you exactly what the PBS misinforms you on it only tells you what they left out.

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Battle of Opinions

by [Daniel Long](#) – Wednesday, April 20, 2016, 3:13 PM

Battle of Opinions

Going back to the PBS series “Vietnam: A Television Series” and the AIM video, they continue to conflict their sides and correct each other on facts and truth. Through their facts about the Vietnam War and how they portray the information is what draws each video to counter each other and confuse the viewers on who to trust. The main issue that still presents itself between these two videos is showing the use of media and portraying the U.S. and South Vietnamese who fought in Vietnam.

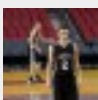
The PBS series episode 4, “America Takes Charge” talks more about how the lives of the soldiers were during the Vietnam War, as well as, sharing opinions from the surviving villagers who experienced the War just as fully as the soldiers did. For one section of the video, the soldiers were asked about their experience in burning the villages and killing the civilians to cut the supply to the communist party “Viet-Con”. “At the end of the day, when going through those conditions, and you see a buddy of yours killed, you don’t care who’s on the other end of that rifle” (PBS ep.4). While from the other viewpoint of some Vietnamese citizens describe their experience with the American soldiers, “They shot at us anyway” “They burned everything” (PBS ep.4).

These conflicting opinions is what AIM and PBS does to each other on their viewpoints on how to depict and justify the War in Vietnam. PBS–so far–has depicted Americans in a weak manner. An example would be the airstrikes. Throughout episode three and four of the series, they would talk of the technology and arms that were far more superior to the Vietnamese, but Leslie Gelb described in the video that those bombings weren’t doing a whole lot a good. “Even though we were stepping up the bombing, it seemed there was no impact on the North Vietnamese.” (PBS ep.4). While at the same time, the South Vietnamese are all shown very weak and almost none existent. Douglas Pike sees this from the PBS special and addresses it in the AIM video, “South Vietnamese was viewed in a racist manner...regarded as a non-people or American Enemy” (AIM pt.2). The AIM video also discusses how the veterans of the film are depicted throughout the series as being a “stereotypical soldier who can’t adjust to civilian lifestyle again, but rather, they can be successful and contribute their experience to that success” (AIM pt.2).

How these soldiers are portrayed throughout the PBS video is also one to be discussed. Although, the television series does show graphic images of the soldiers and dead Vietnamese, the AIM video comes back with a different view on the PBS depiction. “Portrays Americans as bigot’s, and drug-addicts” (AIM pt.2). The media also has to do with the barrier of truth and lies throughout these videos. In the AIM video, the last thing that it talks about is how the television series and media is creating a falsehood of American sacrifice in War. They stated that in 1968 a battle in Vietnam was falsely reported to be a defeat for the American side, even though it was a victory, when the reporter asked to do a follow up story to right the wrong, his boss told him that it had already been established in the public’s mind as a defeat, and rejected the story (AIM pt.2)

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Re: Battle of Opinions

by [Bryce Tilton](#) – Sunday, April 24, 2016, 7:58 PM

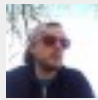
Daniel,

I 100% agree with your first statement. Even though PBS and AIM are refuting each other, in a way they are both making the same point that is the United States media being manipulated was a huge huge part of the war. Media gave the North Vietnamese an advantage in many ways. According to the AIM video, the media told the US people that we lost an important battle, but in reality the US won that battle in convincing fashion. If the media was to release the correct information, the US maybe would have gained more support from the people. With more support from the people the US could have kept up with their attacks and force,

and maybe even put a halt to communism in Vietnam. There's a lot of what if's in that, but it's pretty crazy to think about.

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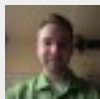
A Conservative Agenda

by [Robert Taylor](#) – Wednesday, April 20, 2016, 3:21 PM

Now that I have viewed the second half of the AIM video and reading the New York Times article i feel as if my suspicions were correct. The AIM video serves as more as a statement of a political stance than an actual rebuttal to the PBS film. The specific part of the AIM video that convinced me of this was when Senator Steve Symms (Approximately 20 minutes in) compared Vietnam to the (then) current situation in South America. The senator makes the claim that if we don't intervene in South America we will have ten to twenty thousand Mexican refugees coming into the United States. To me this is fairly blatant that the AIM video has a right wing pro international intervention agenda. That combined with the fact that there was little to no actual conflicting evidence in the second half makes me hesitant to trust any of what is presented in the AIM video. The New York times article confirmed my opinion by saying that "the rebuttal is being presented by Accuracy in Media, or AIM, the conservative group that monitors the press." Im surprised the the the video was given any attention at all with such obvious bias from the group presenting it in the first place. With all of this being said I would absolutely give my endorsement to the PBS documentary over the AIM documentary.

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Re: A Conservative Agenda

by [Daniel Long](#) – Saturday, April 23, 2016, 10:34 AM

Robert,

I would say that I was hesitant as well to believe the information presented by the AIM video. In the first part of the video it seems to dive right into the conflicts that the PBS documentary presents, mainly judicial reasons. When Douglas Pike explained how PBS came forward with their promises in a large contract agreement, and failed to follow through with those promises, I started to feel hesitant of the information brought forward in the videos we have seen, so far. Although, after the second part I also noticed the lack of information that was against the PBS special and rather a use for the documentary film to help assist the AIM video to an underlying message of foreign citizens from Mexico coming into the U.S. from the civil war in el Salvador in the 1980s. I still feel hesitant though on who to believe in information. I feel as though the App book is my best source for actual events of the Vietnam War.

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Re: A Conservative Agenda

by [Robert Taylor](#) – Saturday, April 23, 2016, 1:03 PM

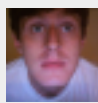
Daniel,

I too am hesitant to completely believe either of the videos presented. Although I would endorse the PBS documentary over the AIM documentary, I believe the best source of information we have is the text(both Appy and Herring books) as well. I do believe the AIM documentary succeed in showing that there are two side of the story, yet not as well as the Appy book. The way the book simply presents the point of view from as many sides as possible brings all of the debate in to perspective. We see that this war wasn't created by a few large events, instead it was many events over years of time. Each person had their own motivations, their was not simply right and wrong decisions made. The reason why I take such issue with the AIM documentary is because they seem to present the idea that we definitely should have been in Vietnam. After a war i would expect a nation to be critical of their actions, instead of defending them. You can only learn from your mistakes after admitting that you have made mistakes.

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Another disappointing 30 minutes from AIM



by [Timothy Eckley](#) – Wednesday, April 20, 2016, 5:29 PM

The poorly arranged arguments from the AIM video appear to start right off in part 2 of the full film. Dan Cragg states, six minutes into the film, that the injustice of the PBS series is that the film portrays our soldiers as racists, bigots and drug addicts. Episode 4 gave us very little context into the war itself, in my opinion, but rather gave us a very clear picture of various personalities of individuals who participated in this war. Soldiers accounting their experiences in the war, their feelings of doubt behind their true purpose in Vietnam. Soldiers even stating that they might be able to understand the Vietnamese way of life if they had only been a part of it. Cragg's comments are demeaning to these very individuals that took on the daunting task of talking about their feelings in this war, sometimes to the point of tears, with labels such as these. This was very upsetting to me personally, as I am not a veteran, but know many and the sacrifices they make are priceless. I did not notice the PBS series labeling anyone in the videos so far, perhaps my mind will change in the future.

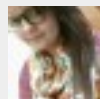
One of the biggest contradictions I find with the AIM video occurs just 8 minutes in when William Jayne states that the series doesn't talk about the problems of the soldiers. He refers to a much later episode in the series but from what I've seen in Episode 4 of the PBS series, the very accounts of soldiers in the war show that they are haunted by their experience. One soldier reminisces about shooting an elderly, unarmed woman in a rice field. Stating that he still has nightmares about this to this day. Jayne also claims that his daily contact with veterans directly refutes this and that many veterans are even assuming leadership roles in society. The outrageous part of this argument is he never gives you a clear definition of "many," just vaguely says some veterans assume leadership roles now. It's common knowledge that approximately one third of homeless males are actually veterans and they deal with struggles from the war to this very day.

Reed Irvine states that the PBS series overlooks the fact that the Vietnamese were using our media to achieve their objectives. This is covered in the early episodes when they are referring to the Vietnamese using English signs in order to get their message to US citizens. They are very clear about their goals with these tactics in the PBS series. I'm incredibly disappointed with the production value of the AIM video. It almost seems like it was quickly tossed together as a rash rebuttal for the PBS series, with very little thought behind the contentions they chose. Like a hodge podge of people who just happen to disagree, I'm sure it could've been produced in a much more efficient fashion.

This is why I agree whole-heartedly with John Corry, of The New York Times, when he refers to the AIM video, "that it is not a particularly effective rebuttal." I feel that his words were far too polite. A journalist like himself would likely think the claims were laughable the way they were presented. There's no doubt that things were left out in the PBS series. It's impossible to cover a war of this magnitude in its totality with just 11 hours of footage. The approach from AIM in refuting the PBS series, however, is very disappointing for a group that falls under the name of Accuracy in Media.

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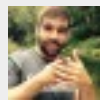
Re: Another disappointing 30 minutes from AIM

by [Mikayla Cervantes](#) – Sunday, April 24, 2016, 1:50 PM

Part two of the AIM video mainly decided that it wanted to disburse the information that the PBS documentary was giving but it didn't really give examples or details of the problems from what I could understand of the video. I think you are right when you state that the AIM video doesn't tell the amount of how many veterans they believe take a leadership role because they do not know the statistics and the mental struggle some veterans are likely to have after returning from war. The PBS documentary gave a lot more insight on what the veterans were going through during that war and how they felt afterwards. The AIM video was extremely pointed at just rebuttal the PBS documents or so it seems because it was hard to follow the peoples point throughout the video.

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Re: Another disappointing 30 minutes from AIM

by [Bo Costello](#) – Sunday, April 24, 2016, 5:17 PM

PBS gives great examples of how the U.S. soldiers might have felt during the intrusion of Vietnam. This wasn't easy for the soldiers over there. They spoke of fighting for 36 hour without food, water, or sleep while

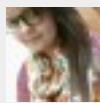
fighting in anywhere from 100–120 degrees some days. This caused for major exhaustion and delusion. Captain Edward Banks compared the war to a game of football. It is not like the war was the San Francisco 49’s vs. the Cincinnati Bengals; everyone began to look alike (PBS ep.4). There was also a major language barrier, which Jack Hill says caused the U.S. to have to use force to get Southern Vietnamese to evacuate.

The AIM wants to support the U.S., but PBS states information providing facts from both sides of the story. The U.S. was using media to hide information as well. This was a hard time to gain any support for America. Out of all of our allies, only Australia supported us (153 ALW). The *America’s Longest War* also states that LBJ hid info, “by deceit and obfuscation, he immobilized a consensus behind his policies while blurring what these policies actually were.” With most information being misconstrued during the war only makes it that much more difficult to dissect it today and understand.

John Corry is way too polite, but a think he gives his opinion in a smooth and honorable fashion. It would be nearly impossible to present every fact in 11 hours. Reinterpretations would be very hard if they were to try today. There has been way too much time for journalist to fiddle with information to present it so that it only proves their points.

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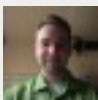
Who is right?

by [Mikayla Cervantes](#) – Wednesday, April 20, 2016, 6:35 PM

While watching part two of the AIM video the one thing that caught my attention was the fact that AIM talked about how the PBS documentaries would show the South Vietnamese people as being "non-people" and just being American enemies, instead of North Vietnamese enemies (AIM Part 2). The fact that anyone could be considered a no one just because they live in a place that follows one way of life that is different than ours should never have been around. In the New York Time article I believe it mainly talked about how the PBS series was shown through it's own point of view rather than the facts. The PBS series tells us that communism is wicked, yet when considering the 20th century history should not be a terribly controversial position (NYT pg 2). AIM is set to only rebuttal the information that the PBS documents states. I honestly do not approve of any of the sources given, but if I had to make a choice I think it would be the textbook over any document because the textbook is proven by the people that have actually lived through the war, such as the main information in the text about Ho Chi Minh and Diem and how they came to rule Vietnam.

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Re: Who is right?

by [Daniel Long](#) – Saturday, April 23, 2016, 10:55 AM

Mikayla,

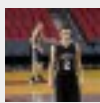
All sources for me, so far, that have been presented also has myself in a hesitant state. The PBS documentary does a good job of showing a rounded worldview of opinion, but still, what that AIM video touches on is how, so far, the PBS documentary has shown little of the south Vietnamese people. Also, the AIM video touches on the idea that Ho Chi Minh could be a nationalist and a communist at the same time, just to make U.S. dealings with him seem less dangerous than they really were. When reading the New York Times article one quote that they use struck me into seeing the true value of these two medias was through Mr. Irvine, "It seems to me that what your doing is projecting your opinion" (NYT pg.2). It reminded me that no matter how the person or company tries to make their videos seem more believable, the real summary is that they all will have some opinion or miss an angle of the story.

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Re: Who is right?

by [Bryce Tilton](#) – Sunday, April 24, 2016, 10:24 PM

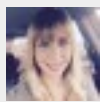


Mikayla.

I see why you're hesitant on trusting PBS and AIM videos. I'm kind of on the same boat with you because both videos refutes the other, but I do believe that both videos tell the truth to an extent. If you think about it, every war has two sides to it. Even our war in Iraq right now has mixed emotions with the people of the US. Some say its not our business so get out of there, and other people say were doing a good thing helping the people in Iraq, and fighting against terrorism as well. I just think that the two television series exaggerate some of their information, but I do believe its fairly true. I absolutely agree that our books are our most reliable source of information though. Reading about what people who took part in the war are definitely a reliable source, but I think those can even be slightly exaggerated or curved depending on the person telling it.

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Significance of New York Times Article
by Delynne Frank – Wednesday, April 20, 2016, 8:36 PM

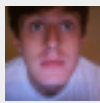
I feel that the New York Times article brings light to the history that the PBS series was presenting and the criticism of it from the AIM video.

It seemed as though the NYT article was siding with the AIM video. And I have to agree with them on how information was presented in the PBS series. Information in the PBS series did not match up with information from our books, the AIM video, or "Televisions Vietnam: The Real Story Part 2". I dont think that the PBS series presented an accurate representation of the events during the Vietnam War.

The significance of the NYT article goes back to the question about dealing academically with conflicting historical information. Reading an article like this not only backs up what the AIM video presented, but can also be used as a tool for us, as students, to help determine what information is accurate.

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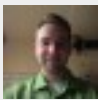


Perspective
by Timothy Eckley – Friday, April 22, 2016, 12:45 PM

While I don't think the PBS series is telling the entire story, as this would be nearly impossible in 11 hours of film for a war as long as the Vietnam war, I disagree that the AIM video is a viable critique to the PBS series. As a whole, I believe the AIM video did a much worse job in rebutting the PBS series than PBS itself did in depicting war in this era. There are so many empty claims that are provided throughout the AIM film that should not go unnoticed.

I agree that the NYT article did a good job in pointing out the intolerance the producers of the PBS series have for alternate points of view. It is not a good trait for anyone to be closed minded, but isn't the AIM video guilty of doing this as well? While the AIM video does provide some very good commentary in spots, this is not nearly as common as the unwarranted, negative rhetoric about the PBS series.

What information did you find that the PBS series doesn't actively match up with? If the PBS series flat out didn't present and accurate representation then it would really have little to no educational value. The PBS series isn't as inaccurate as it is a story told from another perspective. However, the PBS series does a much better job at portraying their point of view than the AIM video.



Re: Significance of New York Times Article

by [Daniel Long](#) – Saturday, April 23, 2016, 11:05 AM

Delynne,

The PBS documentary did have some information that didn't equal what the Herring book was telling us on a political overview standpoint. But, I believe that what the video did well for itself was the face-to-face interviews with veterans and villagers who actually experienced this. I felt more connected with their stories than I did with the dates and meetings. The stories of a soldier who was haunted by his nightmare of shooting an unarmed elderly women (PBS ep.4), and the story of villagers expressing their terror of U.S. soldiers saying, "they shot at us anyway," and "they burned anything" was what really connected me to a sliver of what they experienced (PBS ep.4). These experiences expressed in the PBS documentary and in the stories in the Appy book is what really has me to see the ugliness of War and how the people really felt, not just facts and numbers.



Re: Significance of New York Times Article

by [Bo Costello](#) – Sunday, April 24, 2016, 4:15 PM

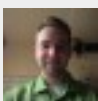
The AIM made me feel uncomfortable with their way of representation. Mr. Irvine seemed to shut out any information that the PBS provided. I think in order to be more trusting, they would have needed to do more face-to-face interview with veterans and civilians of the war. Hearing the stories of the relocation of the civilians also struck some emotion in me. At thirteen minutes into episode 4 of PBS, an officers says that if he were VC during this time, then he would be "discouraged"(PBS). This episode felt real. The stories were real. When I'm listening to Mr. Irvine and his scholars speak, I find it overly aggressive, which makes it hard to find completely reliable. I wish they could have stated were they were getting this information, or had video to prove their stance.



Depiction of our troop

by [Jonathan Logue](#) – Wednesday, April 20, 2016, 9:27 PM

The conflicts between the depiction of our troops in both of the documentary series is something that I find interesting. The AIM video talks about how PBS had depicted American soldiers as drug addicts and racial bigots. I kind of agree with how the AIM video gave criticism to the PBS for not being balanced on both sides. The only thing that PBS really showed in defense of the the soldiers is the one of the soldiers says he knows that half of the people in his squad did not just go into villages shooting up women and children. Also, I find it interesting how PBS did not depict the troops as being on the level of other troops who had served before them. Maybe a misunderstanding happened into the quality of our troops because they were not use to the environment that they were fighting in. That does not mean that they did not serve on the level as a soldier in World War II. My opinion leans more towards the side of the AIM documentary then the PBS series.



Re: Depiction of our troop

by [Daniel Long](#) – Sunday, April 24, 2016, 4:09 PM

Jonathan,

I would say that the PBS series actually has some good points to give the soldiers. Although the depiction of the soldiers is that of frightened and scared young men, it just shows the weight that is being put on these young men's shoulders. Episode 4 touches on the opinions of both the soldiers and civilians lives. You can get the feeling that both sides were scared and in a situation they couldn't explain; U.S. soldiers sent to kill guerrillas and burn down innocent Vietnamese villages and shoot civilians, and Vietnamese people wondering why. Even though these events were at the same level of any other War fought, I think the PBS

series does remind us that this was the first War filmed for the world to see. No more war films of glory and honor, but real people losing friends and shooting people for the world to see. So, even if the AIM video says that the PBS documentary made U.S. soldiers look like drug addicts and bigots, you also see the real brutality of war for what it is. Additionally, I think that these views of soldiers giving their opinions and experience only makes me respect them more.

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Re: Depiction of our troop

by [Amelia Hansen](#) – Sunday, April 24, 2016, 7:55 PM

I concur, I found that confliction to be interesting as well. Whether or not PBS actually intended to "degrade" the U.S. soldier or not, at times during the episode, it came across as so. Although PBS presented interviews from two Vietnamese victims from the village (31:00 – Vietnam: A Television History) and two U.S. soldiers that cleared the village, I thought the material that PBS chose to show was an indirect implication that the U.S. soldiers were cruel and racist (as AIM viewed the episode). If I were to stand in the shoes of a Vietnamese villager, I cannot imagine how traumatic it would be to watch soldiers from another country (who speak another language) barge into your house, let alone kill your family. However, standing in the shoes of a U.S. soldier, I cannot imagine how scary it would be to be fighting a war in an unfamiliar country where it was near impossible to distinguish who was your enemy and who was not (27:30 – Vietnam: A Television History). Though I do not doubt that some U.S. soldiers did perpetrate what the Vietnamese villagers claimed in the PBS episode, giving the impression that ALL U.S. soldiers did so didn't seem right nor equitable to me on PBS's part.

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For or against the war

by [Bryce Tilton](#) – Wednesday, April 20, 2016, 10:10 PM

One thing that caught my attention in the AIM video was the part where they talked about the march of a quarter of a million people in New York marching in support of the troops in Vietnam. Not once has the PBS series showed United States citizens supporting the war in Vietnam. As a matter of fact the PBS series talked about a couple parachutes coming down in the sky in New York City showing that they were against the war, however not mentioned in the video was that there was a march of thousands of people a few blocks down that were marching in support of the war in Vietnam. That shows how much media can blind people of what is actually going on. That has especially confused me in this class in particular. Everything that we watch and read, it seems like there is another source that tells the exact opposite. It is extremely hard to tell what is true, and what has been bent truth. I'm excited to read what other people have to say about this.

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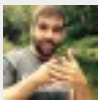


Media – A modern day storyteller

by [Timothy Eckley](#) – Sunday, April 24, 2016, 3:02 PM

This is generally what happens when stories get retold. The story changes slightly or is presented from another side of the arena. A controversial issue like the Vietnam war is very likely to create a habitat for debate within the media. While I didn't get to experience it with this particular war, I have been able to experience it within my lifetime with a number of other issues; Iraq war, War on terror, war on drugs, abortion etc. It's going to be nearly impossible to find two people that agree on the exact same principles, even if their theory on ethics or morality sometimes lead to the same conclusions, they generally have different thought processes that lead to these conclusions which will cause differentiation in opinion.

The PBS series and AIM film are two examples of just this. We don't have either side lying about events that occurred in this war (to my knowledge at least) but they have very different takes on the events that occurred and what is more relevant. The NYT article does a good job of pointing this out and highlighting the lack of a will to budge by either side. The awesome thing for us is that we have the opportunity to examine multiple sources and draw our own conclusions from the information provided.



Re: For or against the war

by [Bo Costello](#) – Sunday, April 24, 2016, 3:50 PM

This was a very confusing time for the Americans to truly understand what was happening in the war. In the very beginning of episode 4 of the PBS series, stated that there was support by American people in 1965, which led to 200,000 troops landing in Vietnam (PBS). In *Americas Longest War* it states, “The Kennedy administration went to considerable lengths to deceive the American public about the extent and nature of its growing involvement.” David Halberstam of the NYT and Sheehan of Unite Press International sniffed out facts of growing U.S. involvement (p.107). So far, I find the *America’s Longest War* to be the most reliable source that we are pulling information from. There are plenty of sources to support reliability of where the information is coming from. The fourth episode of the PBS video truly showed the soldiers outlooks of the war. AIM claims PBS to represent the U.S. army to be druggies and bigots. Episode use multiple examples of soldiers, who went to Vietnam because that was their duty as a part of the armed forces. Soldiers stated, “We were just doing what we were told” (PBS). This war was confusing to merely anyone who took part in it, so I can see why there was so much controversy. I still find it hard to fully trust AIM and their approach to aggressively counterattack the PBS series, thus leaves me to take more useable information from the PBS series.



Re: For or against the war

by [Bryce Tilton](#) – Sunday, April 24, 2016, 11:27 PM

Bo,

Thank you for your reply. That really helped me distinguish more about the two television series. After reading all of these forum posts, I am as well leaning toward the PBS series. I agree that the AIM video just focuses on refuting the PBS series. Where the PBS series may exaggerate some things, I do think it gives a little bit of both sides of the war. It focuses on thing against the war, but it does give some information of pro war ideas that happened, and I do believe it is the better source of information about the war in Vietnam.



PBS or AIM?

by [Bo Costello](#) – Wednesday, April 20, 2016, 10:29 PM

The NYT article kinda of went along with what I said in a couple of my responses from last week. I found the AIM video to just be a counterargument or "polemic, interested mostly in its own point of view". I still think that AIM makes some valid points. For example Senator McCain was talking about how North Vietnam exploit prisoners for propaganda and how it wasn't shown in the series. This would show how Ho Chi Minh was using media for negotiation purposes. But then again, this is only going off what one person has said. In order to give a better response I will have to try and did something good out of the books. I'll post what I find throughout the rest of the week.

Another thing that caught my eye in the AIM (part two) video was the the segment about the refugees. The point of the U.S. being there was in order to preserve the vietnamese way of life, but we were failing to the point where people where fleeing. PBS didn't want to show anything that would make America look bad, so this wasn't in the series. What confused me the most was how there was no accuracy in the media. Reed Irvine said that the enemy used our free uncontrolled media to use for their own objectives. I really need to catch up on my reading through chapter 5 and will add to this post and I'll discuss on which article I found as the more accurate article.



Media was the true enemy

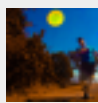
by [Carter Smith](#) – Wednesday, April 20, 2016, 10:30 PM

From watching the PBS series it would seem that we were the bad guy in the war. Only really showing all the bad

stuff that we did! For example the sacking of villages and killing unarmed civilians. I do believe that this happened, as it something that usually comes with the cost of war. But PBS made it seem as though it is almost normal routine. After reading the New York Times article I was definitely driven to endorse the AIM Program more than the PBS series. It helped clarify what exactly were some of the things that PBS did not mention correctly in turn, we seemed more as the bad guy. I believe that it was the media of the time and its depiction of war to the viewers at home in the United States that cost us our support and eventually cost us the war.

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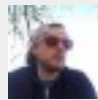
Bias in the media

by [Adam Clairmont](#) – Wednesday, April 20, 2016, 11:43 PM

After watching the second half of the AIM program I realized that there is always another side to any story told. I often forget that the media almost always has some sort of agenda that they are trying to push even in documentaries. It is difficult, at least for myself, to watch or read any type of news and not take it at face value but I believe that is an important skill to have so that you can stay informed while still forming your own opinion. The AIM program stated that the PBS series makes the American soldiers out to be drug addicts. While it is true that many did partake in different illegal substances while in Southeast Asia, to say that the PBS series makes most of them out to be drug addicts is a gross exaggeration. The AIM program also suggests that the only reason we won the war was because of North Vietnam’s use of our free media system. While I am no expert on this war I find this again to be a gross exaggeration. The media definitely played a part in our final decision to pull out of Vietnam, but we were facing an enemy that could not be beaten the way we were fighting the war. The NYT article helps validate my opinion of the AIM program. So far I would have to say I favor the PBS series because I feel like it provides a wealth of information without brutally shoving opinions down your throat.

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Re: Bias in the media

by [Robert Taylor](#) – Friday, April 22, 2016, 11:47 AM

I also believe that the idea of Vietnam using our free media to win the war was grossly exaggerated. To my knowledge before and during the war most of the media was in favor of the war. In week two we watched the 1965 video Why Vietnam, which was basically propaganda in favor of the war. From what my family has told me about the media during the war, this seemed to be all they saw until people started protesting. The way the the AIM video claims that media is the main reason why people view the war unfavorably is confusing the effect with the cause. I view the PBS documentary as a response to this pro war propaganda and a reflection of the way that many Americans already viewed the war by then. All the AIM video has been able to present is a few things that they believe were important to add to the PBS documentary, not anything that proves that the information given was incorrect. Whether the PBS documentary had and agenda or not, nothing it is presenting is a lie.

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Re: Bias in the media

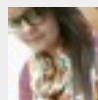
by [Mathew Bohman](#) – Saturday, April 23, 2016, 6:05 PM

What I am taking from this class at this point is exactly what you are saying, there is bias in media. I understand with points made that you can't include everything about such a long war in just several hours of video, but you can present information evenly from both sides.

The way PBS and AIM are presenting and countering information is sad. The videos are a decade removed from the war and there seems a need to push an agenda more than present facts about what happened.

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Re: Bias in the media

by [Mikayla Cervantes](#) – Sunday, April 24, 2016, 2:19 PM

The Vietnamese using our media as a way to win the war is extremely exaggerated, the Americans chose to leave the war because there was no way of winning at that current time. The AIM video made everything that the PBS documentary said to be incorrect and exaggerated on the information that they said was to be invalid. Not all of the soldiers were drug addicts, not all of the even tried drugs, but considering most of the soldiers during that war were young adults, experimenting with drugs was bound to happen. Especially with all the difficult things that they were watching, like seeing their friend die or any of their bunk mates, and even having to kill others. Neither videos gives a clear insight on what the soldiers had to remember after the war or all the problems the war created for them mentally.

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Re: Bias in the media

by [Adam Clairmont](#) – Sunday, April 24, 2016, 5:09 PM

I also found it interesting how the opinions of the American soldiers changed as time went on in the war. In the beginning, Americans had a sense that they were helping the South Vietnamese stay a free country. As time went on, they witnessed their friends and brothers being hit by an innumerable amount of IED's. Seeing the farmers and villagers in the area walk the paths without concern because they seemed to "know" where the mines were would be unsettling and make any sane person begin to consider the possibility that these farmers and villagers were members of the enemy. I am by no means defending the horrific behavior some of the soldiers exhibited. Le Thi Ton describes an awful event where American soldiers came into her home. After greeting them, Le received laughter and a grenade that killed every one of the 10 people in her hut and wounded her. I find it hard to believe that this was a typical soldier of the time but I am not surprised that this happened. Witnessing friends and family die I'm sure has a profound effect on you.

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Re: Bias in the media

by [Bryce Tilton](#) – Sunday, April 24, 2016, 9:01 PM

I'm having the same troubles as you right now. Its really hard to pick and choose information from several different sources that have different point of views. You really have to take in every single piece of information, compare, and make decisions on what you believe to be most truthful. I also agree that both videos tend to exaggerate with some of the information they put out. I however believe that media did have a pretty big part of the war. I think media made each and every American pick a side without them knowing exactly what was going on in the war. That caused quite a commotion back in the states what I've seen and read. But like you said every one is going to have their opinions in what happened which also makes this class very interesting. Thank you for your information. I found it pretty helpful.

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How U.S. Soldiers Are Portrayed

by [Amelia Hansen](#) – Thursday, April 21, 2016, 1:37 AM

After studying this week's assignments, one of the things that I found the most intriguing was how both the PBS episode and "The Herring" book seemed to portray U.S. soldiers. In the PBS episode, Private Bill Ehrhart talks about combat in Vietnam (17:45 – Episode 4 – Vietnam: A Television History), *"Most of our enemy contact at that time wasn't enemy contact at all, it was mines and snipers, mostly mines"*. He continued, *"Day after day, you'd have dead Marines, wounded Marines, and nobody to fight back at"*. In Private Ehrhart's platoon, he estimated that there were 75 mining incidents per month, most of them producing casualties (18:00 – Episode 4 – Vietnam: A Television History). Private Ehrhart also spoke about the difficulty to differentiate between the Vietnamese people, for they all looked and dressed similar. He said, *"...when you go on patrol, and hit a mine, there's a couple dead people and then there's "Joe the rice farmer" out in his field who doesn't even stop, like he didn't even hear the blast. After a while, you start thinking that these people know where these mines are, why aren't they stepping on them? You think they must be VC or VC sympathizers (18:45 – Episode 4 – Vietnam: A Television History)"*. He continued to say, *"And so, after a relatively short period of time, you begin to treat all Vietnamese as though they are the enemy. If you can't tell, shoot first and ask questions later (18:55 – Episode 4 – Vietnam: A Television History)"*. These comments made by Private Ehrhart reminded me of a section in "The Herring" book (page 194 – Chapter 5 – America's Longest War). In the first sentence, the book comments how for American soldiers, *"Attriting the enemy" was the major goal, the "body counts" became the index of progress"*.

The paragraph goes on to discuss how, "...notoriously unreliable those figures were for the sheer destructiveness of combat made it difficult to produce an accurate count on enemy killed in action". The Herring book claims that "Distinguishing the guerrillas and the noncombatants was near impossible, and that in the heat of the battle, American "statisticians" made little effort". Both the PBS episode and The Herring book seemed to offer the impression that that the U.S. soldiers were rather cold-hearted and brutal towards the Vietnamese people. After watching the interviews provided by noncombatant victims of a Vietnam village (31:00 – Episode 4 – Vietnam: A Television History), one can easily agree with PBS and The Herring book. But one should also take into consideration the position that the U.S. soldiers were in. As Private Ehrhart explained earlier in the PBS episode, it was impossible for the soldiers to tell the difference between the VC and the noncombat Vietnamese, and because of that, U.S. soldiers did not know who they could trust, and could not let their guard down in order to stay alive. Though I think that U.S. soldiers could have (and should have) handled the situation regarding the village cleaning better (as mentioned in the PBS episode), at the spur of the moment, I think those soldiers did what they thought they had to do to survive.

In regards to The New York Times article about the PBS series, I think that the significance of the article is to bring to the public's attention the great controversy that surrounds the series, and to possibly suggest to the public to take PBS's views and information with a grain of salt, as you should with any source.

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Well said
by [Timothy Eckley](#) – Friday, April 22, 2016, 12:52 PM

I can't empathize with being a soldier. I have not served in the military and do not plan to. I can't imagine a situation where nearly every decision you make has the possibility of brutally ending your life. I believe that our soldiers at that time did what they felt was needed in order to follow their basic instincts of survival. While I think the PBS series can seem like it shows that the soldiers were cold while in war, it shows even better that after the war, the soldiers realized that their actions may have been in vain. They likely killed many innocents on their path to trying to win a war against what they felt as a very just cause.

We should be taking all of these sources with a grain of salt. They all provide a point of view and with us having so many sources to refer to, it allows us to analyze what happened and attain our own view on the situation. Of course, one source has to be more accurate than another, as it's impossible for them to all be equally accurate or inaccurate, but we get the opportunity to analyze them and come up with our own conclusions.

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Re: How U.S. Soldiers Are Portrayed
by [Mikayla Cervantes](#) – Sunday, April 24, 2016, 2:31 PM

The soldiers seemed to have been portrayed negatively in the PBS series and yet it never really talked about the problems that they had to go through just to return to society. The return after the Vietnam war was different than it was now, there was not as much medicine to assist the soldiers that were in constant pain all the time, and it was difficult to return home because people would view you differently back then because they would watch the reports of the war and know that their loved one or friend had killed people. While I was never a soldier myself and don't really plan on it, most of my family served for the wars. It takes a soldier years to return to the life that they once had, and while a lot changed in their personality and the way they live their life it still took time for them to return to their daily life. Many went back into the war when they had the chance. While the PBS series talked about the troops, it did not really talk about how the soldiers lives were after the war, the return and how difficult it can be. Many soldiers in the Vietnam war had to be cold and heartless because they would follow orders that they did not want to follow, many of the soldiers were young men that did not have to fight before and had to find a way to coop with what they were doing.

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