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Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Joe Escobar - Sunday, April 14, 2013, 2:40 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.

Sum of ratings: -

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Rebekah Rundstrom - Tuesday, April 16, 2013, 11:20 PM

In dealing with conflicting information it is important to cross-examine the evidence. Its also important to realized what the mindset of the PBS producers were at the time. Also it can be very important to find out what drove them to twist the words and information that they had gathered from the interviews. In the AIMS video they say that PBS knew the information from the previously recorded series in 1983 and in 1984 – PBS rebroadcasted it and changed the words. That could have been because they hadn't been completely sure about their facts. They may have wanted to leave some information out while bringing forth other parts of events because those sold more copies, and got their viewer numbers up. It could have been part of their propaganda towards getting the US against the war. Feeding certain information can either turn someone against a situation or make him or her want to

stick up for that situation as much as they can.

Our two textbooks help us to cross-examine what we are watching. In reading both books we have a better understanding of both sides and know if they are telling the truth or not. Several stories between our two books echo each other, because they are of the same events. The story of Malcolm Browne Christian G Appy's book Browne writes, about his personal story covering the story of the burning sacrificial monk. In George C Herring's book America's longest war chapter three covers a bit of the monk crisis. This cross-examination helps us get two sides to the story rather than just one. One side of the information is more personal, while the other is very informative, and is less personal, it is only being reported on. With these two books we are able to get a better time frame of certain events that are talked about in both books. It's good to remember to only take things in small parts, to cross-examine certain facts to know the true raw facts about an even. So that when the time comes for knowing if something is factual we will be able to decipher if it is true or not.

While watching the AIM's video PBS's main objective was to as Douglas Pike said, "supply information for the historical record, provide an antidote to the misuses of history, contribute to healing and to national esteem in the post-war era, contribute to historical methodology". All of the objectives that PBS had, were mostly all false. Only some of the information they shared in the series was factual. The factual information they delivered was about the death tolls, and the fleeing refugees to the south. But in their fleeing PBS failed to give the context around the reasons for their need to escape the north. This video AIM as well as one of the stories that we read of Daniel Redmond in Appy's book shows how people from the north were migrating to the south to escape Ho Chi Minh. People were allowed to choose where they wanted to live either in the North or in the South. Over 1 million people fled from the Northern to the Southern part of Vietnam in 1955, most of them were Catholics. The reason why they fled from north to south was because in 1950 Ho Chi Minh and Paul Potter launched an unprovoked attack against them, forcing them to flee for their lives.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Elizabeth Gambee - Saturday, April 20, 2013, 3:10 PM

You mentioned the importance of understanding the mindset of the PBS producers at the time of production. I think this is something definitely worth considering when contemplating the credibility of any source. Biases and predispositions definitely have the potential to taint the quality of credibility that a particular resource may have.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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**Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth**

by Michelle Coming - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 5:45 PM

This becomes especially true if it's coming from a person, or in this case an organization, not directly involved. They have no first hand knowledge of the events that occurred.

Sum of ratings: (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth**

by Billy Crum - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 11:11 PM

In the PBS show where they talked about "Uncle Ho" they made it sound like his name was as common as saying a family name, but according to the AIM video he only changed his name to that just a few years prior. It does make you wonder why they would try to make him out to be such a hero. We know that sure was not the case when Ho Chi Minh came to power look at all of the people that fled the north leaving everything that they owned and had worked for for probably generations just to get away from his controlling hand. That doesn't sound like a hero to me.

It does help though having a couple sources to refer to in finding out this information and as you read it you try to understand why and where the writer is going with the story and did they change it to make it more catchy also what are the facts and what is not. If you come across the same information from several different sources then you know that this is probably true.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1) [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth**

by Skyla Brocksmyth - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 6:00 PM

Dealing with conflicting information can sometimes be quite frustrating. In order to determine which information is correct, it is helpful to look into the sources and their reliability. It's also helpful to cross-reference the conflicting information with other sources.

It's always important to take into account that stories may have been changed or edited to fit reader demands. The information provided by both textbooks can help us approach the information presented to us in the video. The interviews in our textbook by Appy provide us with information of the experiences of who were involved in the Vietnam War. These accounts can help us determine what actually happened. The Accuracy in Media video confronts the PBS series, Vietnam: A Television History and all its flaws. As told in the AIM video, PBS makes communists out to not really be communists at all, just nationalists (AIM "Steven Morris"). One of the most important lessons that should have been learned from Vietnam is that the imposition

of the communist rule inevitably results in great human tragedy (AIM "Reed Irvine").

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Rebekah Rundstrom - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 10:22 PM

I agree, cross-referencing is a great way to find the facts in conflicting resources. I'm glad that we have thought the same on this topic.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Maraya Maxson - Saturday, April 20, 2013, 12:08 PM

It is very important in any academic situation especially to be sure that you are using multiple sources to find your information and create an opinion. All too often people hear information from once source and base an opinion on it. With the Herring book, the Appy book, and the series it gives us a broad spectrum. Not only do we have hard facts but we also have personal accounts and visual representations.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Patrick Haider - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 3:29 PM

People getting information from one sources, and once source alone is all too common. Many people fail to understand that all sources of historical account are going to have not only their own goals in providing the information, but also their own perspectives. When we look at the "AIM" video we have to understand that the errors or lack of information that they point out in the PBS documentary could merely not be deemed as important to the people that put together the PBS documentary.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Jungmin Um - Saturday, April 20, 2013, 7:51 PM

I totally agree with you that we can always get information from two different books and video. In my opinion, being awake of the fact that some information might be biased is the most important thing for us to remind ourselves.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Jennifer Larson - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 9:18 PM

I agree that cross-referencing information is important, especially when there is conflicting information. Digging deeper and finding information that supports the history makes the credibility stronger of the author or producer of any information we are given. It is sometimes hard to determine which is a more credible source and cross-referencing is the way to decide that.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Understanding History Accurately

by Ian MacDonald - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 6:23 PM

I was a little surprised after watching the AIM video because I guess I didn't expect that there would be that much question with the accuracy of the historical information that our PBS series provides. That being said, I believe it is always important to look at more than one source whether they are "accurate" or not. And that is one good thing about watching a series like *Vietnam: A Television History* alongside reading both the Appy book and the Herring book. It allows us to analyze more than just one source and compare the information to see how close they relate to each other. Because it is a history class, I believe it's important to get the most accurate knowledge of that history as possible. And as Charlton Heston said to which I agree, "you have to understand history so you can plan for the future."

The information provided in the PBS series *Vietnam: A Television History* can probably best be affirmed or supported by our book by George C. Herring, *America's Longest War*. The Herring book provides more of a basic outlook on the events of the war. *Patriots* by Christian G. Appy can also help to give us a more in depth knowledge of those events because practically all the information is given by the people who were actually there and fought in the war. After finding out some of the flaws in the PBS series, I intend to pay even closer attention to the information it provides and cross reference it with the information in both our books and even additional sources to make sure I am getting the most accurate account of that history.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Understanding History Accurately

by Michelle Coming - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 7:57 PM

I also was surprised after watching the AIM video. PBS is such an accepted source of information that you wouldn't really think to cross reference their facts for accuracy.

Even with the Appy book I think it's still important to cross reference facts because of the large amount of time that has gone by and the bias of Appy himself. Even if you cross reference two stories (such as Malcolm and Le Lieu Brownes stories, pg 64-78) in the Appy book to each other and then fact check with another source (such as the section called "The Buddhist Crisis" in the Herring book, pg114-19) that should be sufficient.

I think we're just so used to not really having to question sources of information such as PBS that we really don't think about it and just accept most things as accurate facts. However after seeing the AIM video I too intend to pay closer attention to the facts that I am presented, not only in this class but in others as well.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Understanding History Accurately

by Maraya Maxson - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 11:33 AM

The Video surprised me as well, I guess I didn't even question whether or not I should believe what I was hearing, this isn't to say I agree with the video but it defiantly opened my eyes to the fact that I never second guess the information I was getting from PBS. With history especially it seems almost impossible to get the whole truth, let alone most of it. This is why I find the Appy book so useful, it gives multiple ways of seeing the war.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Patrick Haider - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 7:14 PM

Accuracy in media is something that is not only greatly important in history, but also in our everyday lives. In my daily routine I tend to obtain my news from multiple sources, as it is important to get information from multiple perspectives. I find that when analyzing a piece of information the most important aspect to consider is the objective of the reporter. I hold to this same philosophy in how I absorb history.

I found the "Accuracy In Media" instantly intriguing, not because of the information that it provided, but how it was providing it through wording and delivery method. Nearly instantly I became suspicious of the video as a device being used to denounce a single historical record. I had to ask myself if the reporting of the PBS

program was so mishandled that such an esteemed actor such as Charlton Heston had to be used to drive the message home, or if they had another objective entirely.

Throughout the video I perceived an overall theme of persuasion, not information. My perception of the video was that they spent more time trying to convince the viewer, rather than inform the viewer with undisputable fact. Near the beginning of the video they list the three main objectives of the PBS program, and go on to state that they failed to meet each objective. However, rather than provide any examples of how those objectives were not met, they quickly moved on. If the remainder of the video was an attempt to provide reasoning, then they failed in making that clear.

I also made note of the constant reference to Communism in a demonizing way. Our country has had a long history of combating Communism and driving the public to fear it. The video "Accuracy In Media" felt more like anti-communism propaganda than it did a reliable information source.

The one sided message of anti-communism politics was made clear to me as "Accuracy In Media" moved to denounce the PBS video that may not have fallen in line with their views, and for this reason I found it very hard to take the video seriously as an unbiased source of historical information.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Jennifer Larson - Thursday, April 18, 2013, 9:58 PM

Hi Patrick,

I also found it interesting how often the AIM video made references to communism. It was almost ironic that they continually harped on the issue with the PBS video discussing the Geneva mandated elections being brought up eleven times, but they went a step further by constantly repeating the word communism throughout. Coupled with using Charlton Heston, who some consider a "true American" as the narrator, and it felt a bit propaganda-ish to me. So while it did raise some questions, I really felt it wasn't as full of facts as much as it was just trying to cut the legs off the PBS series.

Jennifer

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Elizabeth Gambee - Saturday, April 20, 2013, 2:52 PM

Great points. I too became somewhat suspicious of the AIM video because of its apparent biased presentation. I definitely sensed a theme of persuasion as well. In my opinion, the credibility of the AIM video was lessened because of

their blatant attempt at convincing the viewer and audience to take their standpoint against the PBS documentaries. I thought you said it perfectly when you said "The video "Accuracy In Media" felt more like anti-communism propaganda than it did a reliable information source."

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Sean Lounsbury - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 7:19 PM

When you are presented with conflicting evidence you need to cross reference the different information. Realizing who when and why a historical books or videos were made is a good source to analyze the evidence. In the AIM alternative video they say that the PBS videos was wrong when they talk about the Cambodia but it wasn't because they didn't know it they just didn't and says Reed Irvine in doing this he says that they did not convey the importance that communism rule inevitably results in human tragedy. I don't agree with that statement that communism equals human tragedy but PBS did misconstrue the history. In the AIM video they also talk about how in 1945-1946 the communist set out and assassinated all non-communist leaders and collectively killed 10,000 people and was not mentioned in the PBS series. Now luckily for us in this class we also have our books to cross reference with as well as our videos. Stories in the books give accounts of the same thing but with different point of views and that's a good indication that they are true accounts. Even after watching the videos i am sceptical of everything ive watched so far and i will be more attentive to what i watch and read for this class.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Michelle Coming - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 8:34 PM

Researching credibility of sources and fact checking are two main ways of dealing with conflicting information. Credibility of a source is highly important. If a source is not credible for accurate information it is best to take their so called facts with a grain of salt and vigorously cross check it with more reliable sources if not just ditch the unreliable source for a more reliable one. However credible sources, such as PBS in this case, also might give information that isn't entirely accurate due to bias and/or editing. This is why it is very important to cross reference any and all information, especially when it comes to history. Sources can be biased or purposely leave information out to portray a person or event a certain way or to just save video time or space in a book. This seemed to have happened with PBS' Vietnam: A Television History. In the PBS series they made America out to be "the bad guy" while they portrayed Ho Chi Minh to be, not a communist, but a nationalist (Stephen Morris, AIM). They were sympathetic towards his cause, at least in the beginning. They seemed to go through the entire series not knowing that Ho Chi Minh was fighting for

communism and not democracy and freedom, as if they didn't know the final outcome of the war (Reed Irvine, AIM). The AIM video portrays Ho Chi Minh in a different light. Dulf Droge tells a story of Ho Chi Minh's betrayal of his teacher and counselor Phan Boi Chau "the George Washington of the Vietnamese nationalist movement", handing him over to the French police for money and then taking that money to endorse a protest of his capture. They point out how the PBS series glosses over these facts about Ho Chi Minh.

Like with most things the more information you have on a subject the better understanding you have. The textbooks help to either reinforce the facts already stated by the PBS and AIM videos or cause us to question it further by giving a slightly different account of events. If all sources agree on how and why a certain chain of events unfolded then I can feel pretty confident that it is accurate, since there are many different perspectives in the mix, such as individuals that were actually there (Appy) and experts that have extensively studied the subject (PBS series, Herring, AIM).

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Patrick Haider - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 3:37 PM

I agree that when all sources match up you can be fairly confident in the provided historical accounts. Unfortunately the more heated a topic gets, the fewer sources tend to match up. This seems to be especially pronounced in material covering the Vietnam War because of the passionate views of communism on either side of the debates. This leads to many conflicting reports on the causes and reasons for the war. This is why I find personal accounts to be more interesting, especially for the Vietnam War. Personal accounts show a more intimate side of the War that can be more revealing in many aspects.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Jennifer Larson - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 8:36 PM

Determining the truth can be difficult when we are presented with such difficult and opposing views as those of the PBS series and the AIM video. The AIM video seemed inflammatory towards the PBS video, with a strong, iconic American (Charlton Heston) narrating and asking questions of the more liberal PBS production. I thought this was an interesting contrast between the two videos and it definitely had me questioning what I was learning through the PBS videos.

One interesting component was how the AIM video almost harped on the fact that Ho Chi Minh was a communist and yet the PBS series presented him as a nationalist. I found this interesting because in nothing I have read in either of our books or that I have learned from the PBS series has led me to believe he was anything but a communist. While I can understand where they might be trying to pull threads from saying the PBS series was presenting HCM in a nationalist type light, there really didn't seem to be any supporting evidence for this.

The textbooks we are reading seem to follow along closely with the history presented in the PBS series, including the information about the Americans not upholding the Geneva agreement for an election in 1956. On page 45 of Appy's book, it says "Diem, with American approval, refused to hold the Geneva-mandated nationwide elections. American intelligence reports indicated that Ho Chi Minh would have won overwhelmingly". The AIM video made it seem that the PBS video was glorifying Ho Chi Minh and that the Americans weren't bound to the Geneva-mandates. However, the PBS video and Appy's book both state that the Americans were bound to the mandates and that they refused.

While history definitely has many sides and the victors and the losers will view and write history differently, the AIM video, while it reported interesting information that does make me stop and think, seems more propaganda by an unhappy government who did not appreciate the PBS series for exposing the faults of America being in Vietnam. Every story has many sides and while I learned from this video, I do still feel confident in the information in both our books and the PBS series.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Celese Mauser - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 5:29 PM

I also saw the contrast between the more liberal PBS series vs the more conservative AIM video. Regardless of the conflicting information, it was the presentation by AIM that I didn't like. I think it's necessary to cross-reference material, but the condescending tones of the narrator (Charles Heston- I was wondering!) seemed to do more damage to their point of view than if they were to discuss it in a more neutral perspective. I agree, that AIM definitely focused on the communist Ho Chi Minh, instead of the nationalist, which was more of a focus for PBS. I didn't quite understand why. It seems as though those exact points of view (the fear of communism) was what got us into the mess of Vietnam to begin with. It sounded to me like the AIM video showed no remorse for the bloodshed of the war, and many of those interviewed believed in the cause for the war- gaining nothing from the experience.

**Determining the truth**

by Elizabeth Gambee - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 9:28 PM

On a personal level, my approach to dealing with conflicting information that is presented to me is to research and uncover multiple sources to gain a variety of perspectives on a particular topic. I also attempt to find credible, reliable, and unbiased resources to get a well-rounded idea of the subject at hand. Academically, it is especially important to address the issue of conflicting information because I believe that it is common for a lot of students to take what is presented to them by an academic institute at face value rather than challenge and question it. For this reason, I think one way to deal with conflicting information within academics is to encourage students to think critically about the information that they are receiving. Students should be encouraged to research subjects on their own and should even, in my opinion, be encouraged to challenge and cross-examine the information presented to them by schools/academic institutes. Furthermore, instructing students to be able to determine the difference between a credible resource and a non-credible resource could also be helpful. Having the ability to identify the differences between biased and non-biased sources of information could be essential in gaining legitimate information.

Since I believe that it is critical to obtain information from a multitude of sources in order to more fully comprehend the subject at hand, I think that it's helpful that we have two textbooks in addition to the various videos that we watch concerning the Vietnam war for this course. Furthermore, the presentation of the AIM video definitely proved helpful to me in that it reminded me of the importance of being a critical thinker. In regards to the Vietnam: A Television History and Accuracy in the Media, I do kind of feel as though I was being presented with two rather extreme sources of conflicting information. As AIM video mentions, the Vietnam Television series seems to sympathize a little more with the Northern Vietnamese and Ho Chi Minh, labeling him as more of a nationalist rather than a communist. The AIM video, on the other hand, is very adamant about labeling him as a communist, shedding a more negative light on his character.

After viewing this video, I attempted to do some cross-referencing of my own. Something that I picked up on centered around the migration of a significant number of Catholics from northern Vietnam to the south. In our book, *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides*, I remembered reading Daniel Redmond's account which was largely centered around Operation Passage to Freedom. In the short introduction, I recalled reading about how the migration of Northerners (most of them catholic) to the south was promoted by the CIA through religious propaganda. "Under the leadership of Edward Lansdale, 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 the same (Appy 47)." In the AIM video, historian Steven Morris indicates that the mass migration of Vietnamese Catholics to the south was not a result of CIA black propaganda, rather, it was solely the result of an unprovoked military communist attack led by Ho Chi Minh on Catholics. I guess what I got out of this was that while it was likely that the main catalyst in encouraging the migration of Vietnamese Catholics to go south was the fear of their extermination, other factors likely played a part as well. It is possible that the attempted persuasion utilizing Mary as convincing factors actually did have an impact on some Vietnamese Catholics. I thought it was rather ignorant for Steve Morris to completely dismiss this factor as a possibility in playing a role in the migration of the Catholics southward.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Determining the truth

by Celese Mauser - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 5:13 PM

I really like what you said in your third paragraph about the discrepancies in the stories of the Catholic migration. I also think that it was ignorant for Steve Morris to dismiss the possibility of the migration being affected by the religious propaganda. I would think that different families would be affected in different ways due to many factors including their relationships they had with the North and the South. Some families may have witnessed more brutality than others, and were more motivated to leave. There are so many different variables in each individual story, it is impossible to lump them all together and say that they all experienced the same fear. Maybe Steve Morris was naive to the religious propaganda that was circulating, but based on the number of accounts that verify that, I don't think his information is very valid if he isn't willing to accept that people were affected in different ways.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Determining the truth

by Nathaniel Hahn - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 7:19 PM

Hello Elizabeth, first and foremost I would like to thank you for the feedback on my post. I would also like to say that I agree with you entirely on what you said in your first paragraph; that students should not take everything they are presented at face value and should be encouraged to research, think critically and to even challenge the ideas they are presented with. All because we are attending an academic institute does not necessarily mean we are getting fair and un-biased information. As with all sources of information, we should always research and think critically about the information at hand.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Determining the truth

by Jennifer Larson - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 9:22 PM

I'm glad you discussed Steven Morris and how he discounted the idea that the Americans went into the villages to convince the North Vietnamese Catholics to leave their villages and move south. I feel that it is something that happened, because in order for such a large exit by a group that size, there must have been some convincing to get them to leave their homes. I'm not saying the CIA was the sole reason they left, but I am sure it was part of the reason and for some may have been the convincing factor.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Nathaniel Hahn - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 9:41 PM

I have always felt that all sources of information, be it periodicals, radio, television even books, credible or not, should always be taken with a grain of salt. Nor do I feel that any one source of information is sufficient to get a full, un-biased account of whatever the subject matter may be. There are many questions that factor into how the information is gathered and presented; who finances the source? Who does the gathering of information? Who puts it all together in a neat little package for us (the public)? We have no way of knowing what their motivations are or what personal beliefs they might have about the subject and how they would want to influence the public.

In our class we have been given a few sources of information and through the combination of these sources, we hopefully should be able to get a relatively accurate account of the Vietnam War. While it is not surprising to hear that some historians in the AMI video have objected to the information presented to us in the PBS documentary, I also question the validity of the objections or concerns raised. Essentially we are listening to another party's interpretation of the facts.

Of course the PBS video is trying to portray the facts in a certain light, most documentaries do. However I do wonder what might have influenced PBS to present facts in a certain light. For instance AMI suggests that PBS was misleading in how they portrayed HO Chi Minh as a 'hero' of sorts and the war was essentially caused by our own blunderings and misconceptions of what is good for Vietnam or South East Asia in general. I wonder if perhaps PBS might have been slightly influenced by the times and were reflecting a sentiment shared by some of the population. For instance the documentary was made in 1983, eight years after the war had ended in Vietnam and there might have still been a strong opposition to the war even in the post-war era. How many movies had been made depicting the Vietnam War in a bad light, which even furthers the post-war opposition of the involvement in Vietnam.

We can never be sure we are getting a fair, accurate account when being presented with history or even current events. The best thing we can do is gather as much information, listen and consider details from all sides of the subject matter, and then hopefully have, at the very least, a balanced account of the facts.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Elizabeth Gambee - Saturday, April 20, 2013, 3:14 PM

I definitely agree that a single source of information is not sufficient enough to get a full, unbiased account of a particular subject at hand. I think that it is essential to emphasize the importance of gleaning information and facts from a wide variety of sources. Additionally, as you discussed, I find it very useful to take into consideration the motives and personal biases of the person or group presenting a specific source.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Skyla Brocksmit - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 8:32 PM

I agree with the points you've made. Looking into all the sources of information is definitely important. As is, what you pointed out, taking the motives and biases of specific sources into consideration.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Billy Crum - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 10:16 PM

I feel the same way about each source of the media not giving you the full story and the only way to get it is from someone that was there involved first hand. Also with using 3 sources of information for the class i think it helps to see the differences in the stories and how each source tells the story.

As you look at the AIM video what is really to say that the stuff that they was saying was correct either and it was just easier to throw PBS under the bus. That is the thing about media you just never really know who is telling the truth or what part is the truth.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth P S

by Celese Mauser - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 11:04 PM

I find that with history, or any conversation and event that took place, the facts are contingent on who is relaying the story. It doesn't necessarily mean that one is right and the other one is wrong, often it comes down to perspective. Our memories also seem to work in different ways which should be factored in. When it comes to highly disputed events such as The Vietnam War, I would assume that there would be many different versions of the same story or event due to the differences in the soldier's ranks and the individual's history which shaped the perspective of those involved.

It makes sense to review several different sources to formulate your opinion of the actual event. I think it is very important to look at various positions in doing so. For example, not only should you research the American position, the Southern Vietnamese who fought on the American side, and the Viet Minh, but also the monks who lived in the region and practiced non-violence, the women who were left to struggle, caring for their children with war on their front porches, the children growing up in a world of such violence etc. It seems only logical that all would have a different take on the event based on their role in it and how it affected them. The Appy book does a great job at that.

The PBS program does tend to use language implying that the American's were in the wrong for their participation in the war. But it does explain our reasons to engage in war. At that time in history, our nation had a "containment" policy with communism and that it only made sense to fight to secure our nation's interests in South Vietnam. This is also the view that Herring seems to take, although his information seems to be presented in more of a factual way, than opinion. I may also just assume that, because I find that language in books doesn't always capture the true emotion being expressed. With narration in the PBS series, you are more swayed by their perspective due to the tones and inflection used in the voices. The music that is selected also contributes to that.

In the episode "America's Mandarin" it focuses on Diem and features an array of interviews including one from his brother. The majority of interviews do portray him in a negative light due to his non-compliance with the American's policies and his violent methods. What I find curious however, is it also includes the opinion of Amb. Frederick Nolting who disagrees with the American's solution for Diem. "I don't think it was fair, just, or honorable to an ally of 9 years to do this behind his back." (PBS 52:20 referring to the killing of Diem by Americans.) So they were attempting to include multiple opinions. The AIM took issue with how Diem is portrayed as an American puppet in the PBS series. In an interview with Edward G. Lansdale, he says Diem was "exceptionally honest, very strong character, most of them thought that he was the best known of the last living nationalists, and most of them thought of him favorably than Ho Chi Minh." I don't understand why the producer would include this interview when it doesn't present any new facts. It is an opinion. What makes Lansdale's opinion of Diem and Ho more valid than the others?

The response by AIM is interesting because they passionately oppose the facts

presented in the PBS program. They don't incorporate any interviews which counteract their claims. It is blatantly portraying the Americans as in the right for their involvement. The premise of the war on containment is never disputed. Those interviewed, strongly believe that it was the only option to go to war and avoid a communist takeover. They do not believe that the war was fought by the Viet Minh to preserve their national unity as a country. (AIM 4:52, interview with Reed Irvine.) He does go on to say that PBS takes more of this stance towards the 13th episode which I haven't watched yet. I found the beginning of the film almost laughable. An interview is shown with Douglas Pike (AIM 2:30) who believes that PBS did not live up to the goals they presented. The promises that PBS made are shown on a "scorecard." Pike reads each promise, says he disagrees with the result, and crosses it off a list. I'm not sure how anyone could find this an affective argument. He doesn't even include any information to back up his claims. I am curious as to the backgrounds of the producers and writers of the film. Were they involved in the war? Which side did they fight on if so, and what rank were they? It's always important to know the background information of the writer.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Nathaniel Hahn - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 7:39 PM

Good afternoon Celese, I like what you have to say about perspective being a contributing factor in determining between what information we might find to be factual. Not only from who is relaying the story, but who is receiving the information as well. What experiences or past information has influenced the person who is learning? Does that said person have a pre-conceived opinion about the information, and does that determine what information they chose to glean and how does that influence their interpretation of said information? I agree with you that the Appy book seemingly does a great job of presenting us with many stories and accounts of the Vietnam War from all sides of the event, which is always useful in learning about a controversial and debated subject such as the Vietnam War.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Billy Crum - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 11:29 PM

I was not really surprised when watching the Accuracy in Media video. The reason why is there is no such thing as unbiased news. Whoever is reporting the news tilts it to where it goes more positive to their side of thinking. When the reporter writes and rereads the story they try to make it to where it is going to catch the attention of the reader over the competing reporter, so they can say they had the better story. Look at the media today with the internet how many different stories do

you read or hear about before there is really anytime for the police to investigate and the reason is so they can say they had the top story first.

Now as far as the Appy book those are probably closer to the real actions because they have less people to adjust the story. You have a writer there to write down what the person is telling them because that is what their book is going to be about first hand stories. With that being the case the writer does not have to exaggerate or stretch things to catch the reader's attention since the reader knows from the beginning what they are going to be reading about. There are a few things that might be changed around to make things flow a little better and to make it easier to follow but the writer is not putting their opinion in the stories.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Skyla Brocksmith - Friday, April 19, 2013, 8:42 PM

Being that the first three episodes of Vietnam: A Television History have already conflicted with information I had known previously to viewing them, I was not very surprised by the AIM video either. I also agree that the Appy book is probably the closest thing to the truth because it is coming from first hand stories.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Elizabeth Gambee - Saturday, April 20, 2013, 3:00 PM

I agree to some extent that the Appy book provides more accurate accounts of the Vietnam War and its history, but at the same time, I think it's important to realize that it is possible that many of the presented accounts from Appy's book may be biased based on the particular author's experiences. After experiencing the controversies of war firsthand, I think that it is possible that those recounting their times and particular events may have some predisposition tainting their accounts and recollections.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Patrick Haider - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 3:41 PM

This is very true. There were a lot of activists against the Vietnam War, and many of them fought in the War itself. It is indeed very possible that many of the authors Appy's book held a deep and

pronounced grudge against the War that could cloud their perspective either for or against the Vietnam War.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Michelle Coming - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 5:43 PM

I think having all those biased opinions of the war aid us in understanding and forming our own opinions of the Vietnam war. We get to see the same events from different perspectives giving us different ways of looking at the same thing.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Michelle Coming - Saturday, April 20, 2013, 3:06 PM

Not to mention Appy has multiple stories from different people involved in the same event which is then reinforced by the facts in the Herring book, like in the stories of Malcolm and Le Lieu Browne and the burning Buddhist monks.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Cameron Cole - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 7:33 PM

I am completely on the same track as Skyla Brocksmit is. i have taken many other history classes throughout my schooling career and allot of the information that the first three episodes of Vietnam: A television History talked about completely contradicted knowledge that I thought I had prior to taking this class/ It really gets you thinking about what Really is the truth! and what actually happened over there. Its kind of scary to know that there is so many different stories being told.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth P S

by Cameron Cole - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 11:45 PM

The way that I go about handling contradictory material that is presented to me or to the world is that I do my own personal research on the topic to see what I believe is the truth. When using this method, one has the possibility to discover many bases to gain a variety of perspectives on a particular topic that is being debated. The key to using this particular method is that one MUST find a reliable, trustworthy source to initially get the information that they are looking for. This source must have some relevant credibility to the topic and they must have supreme knowledge to back up their theories as well. In the world of Scholars, this type of technique is extremely important because one must tackle arising issues of conflicting concepts in order to believe a certain viewpoint of a topic. Personally in my academic career, I find that more and more students get persuaded by teachers and friends ideologies on certain issue rather than finding out their own information and making up their own mind. A way to deal with arising problem is that teachers need to stop stating their own personal opinions in their scholarship and start-providing students with necessary tools that will force them to think critically and find out their own conclusions with issues of controversy material.

Going back to paragraph one, where I stated that having multiple, reliable, sources is a vital step towards finding out the truth, I believe that it is very important that we as students have two different textbooks about the war in Vietnam. When reading both, I have found multiple different perspectives on situations that occurred in Vietnam. Most of these examples consisted of information on why we entered Vietnam and what were the causes that lead to or defeat. Also, I really enjoy watching multiple videos on this subject because it is interesting to see how different people look upon different situations about the war in Vietnam. The presentation of the AIM video absolutely was beneficial for me because it made me think about what "I" think is really true and what really happened there. I have lost that tool in the past, I would just believe whatever someone told me. Within the *Vietnam: A Television History and Accuracy in the Media documentary*, I almost felt confused when watching it. The conflicting information that was being said was really puzzling me to find out which direction I wanted to go down, because the theories were both 180 degrees in different directions. (For example whether Minh was either good or bad, or if he was communist or Nationalist, or if the United States involvement with the UN election started the whole dispute between the Vietnamese and us). The AIM video had more emphasis on why Northern Vietnamese and Ho Chi Minh, and why he committed his crimes. It stated that Minh was almost like a patriot trying to liberate his people from French rule. They were labeling Minh as a Nationalist, and that he had good intentions for his people. The AIM video is abundantly clear about categorizing Minh as a communist, and that he was promoting communism and supported his intentions to spread communism all throughout Asia.

When viewing this film, I was trying to pull similarities from the video to our

textbooks. I found evidence that was delivered in the PBS series *Vietnam: A Television History* that could best be supported by the book by George C. Herring, *America's Longest War*. The Herring book specifies more of a larger viewpoint on the actions of the war. *Patriots* by Christian G. Appy provides us with more details that are further in depth than the video, she had information from individuals who were actually there and experienced these events first hand. When discovering these few flaws of the PBS series, it became very clear to me that I must compare and contrast all information gathered with multiple sources to find out which outlook is the most legitimate based on accurate data. This will make it easier on me to ultimately create my own opinion and not follow ideologies that have been created by the media and false accusations.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Celese Mauser - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 5:00 PM

I agree with much of what you said, including the statement about your fellow students being persuaded by their instructors and friends when it comes to establishing their own ideologies, instead of making up their own minds. I also think that this is very common. I have had several assigned papers that I didn't agree with the premise on. I think that teachers need to appreciate students that are able to think outside of the box and aren't paralyzed by the small parameters that are often given on assignments. This should be particularly true with material that is considered controversial, as you said. If we all thought the same way, that would make for a very boring world.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Jungmin Um - Saturday, April 20, 2013, 7:40 PM

I think it is very important to compare, contrast, and analyze different sources such as books and videos. Being a human, it is very easy to become biased because we lean toward the information that we think it is right although we are not sure about it. In our case, we are reading two books and also we are watching a video. So, I thought it is fair enough to have correct information because we can look at the same moment through different people's perspective.

In addition, I thought it is very important to be aware of the fact that people are not always objective whenever we read someone else's work. It doesn't mean not to believe people, but I think readers should be smart enough to criticize or doubt at least a little because there always is a possibility that the fact the writer is telling us is indeed not a true fact.

The books we are reading are providing many different perspectives of the Vietnam

war and I think they are giving pretty much objective information. If it was written by one person, I would not have believed everything. In addition, if all the story was written by vietnamese who is full of pride of their country, it would not have been believable book as this one is. In my case, I am from Korea and I read lots of biased history of Japanese when they ruled Korea for about 30 years. Nevertheless, I still believe that the third person's view is a lot objective.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Jennifer Larson - Saturday, April 20, 2013, 9:38 PM

I agree with you that it is very easy to become biased because we look for the information that we think is right. This is so prevalent in things like politics - during elections, we are able to find all the information we need to support our position and discount someone else's, but they can do the same to us. That is one of the reasons I like Appy's book, because it is firsthand accounts, even though those will have their own slants to them as well.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Michelle Coming - Saturday, April 20, 2013, 9:53 PM

The stories in Appy's book may have their own slants but the general facts are supported by the other textbook as well as the video footage available to us through this class. Despite the bias of each individual story, the book as a whole gives us a pretty good idea of what happened by giving us access to other perspectives, be it from the side of the United States or Vietnam as well as average individuals such as Deirdre English and Jo Collins. Not to say that this is the only source we need to understand the Vietnam war, it just seems to stand up well to cross examination so far.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Elizabeth Gambee - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 1:53 PM

I think you make a good point here. While it can be important to realize that the individual accounts of each interviewee may be slightly biased based on that particular person's mindset and experiences, as a whole, the Appy book provides a wide range of perspectives, increasing its credibility. I always emphasize the importance of obtaining information from a number of people and perspectives, and I

feel as though Appy did a pretty good job in doing this. I do wonder, however, if Appy himself altered the content of his book by determining what to include and what to exclude from his book based on his personal preferences.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Michelle Coming - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 5:35 PM

I have no doubt in my mind that Appy did alter the content in order to make it flow easier as well as being able to fit it all in. As it is now his book is pretty thick and as it states in the acknowledgements he had to cut almost two thirds of the 350 interviews. He had to decide which interviews he felt were the most important. Imagine how long his book would have been if he had included all of them. I'm kind of curious to know about the interviews that he felt didn't make the cut.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Cameron Cole - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 7:26 PM

I also agree with Michelle on how he interpreted that Appy altered the content to make his story flow better along with being more entertaining for the readers. His book is filled with stories that tell the truth of situations that happened in Vietnam that Ultimately helps the reader figure out for themselves what they want to believe is the concrete truth with different situations that happened in this war. He also maybe picked these particular stories because they provide the reader with a base of what happened and Appy wants (us) as the reader to try make out what we think happened based upon the way the story is being told by the author.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Cameron Cole - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 7:39 PM

I really think its impossible for any interview not to be biased, Because it is being told from only one person who may have a completely different outlook on a situation that someone else may have. I do agree with Elizabeth on the fact that Appy provides us with a large variety of different viewpoints to choose from to see who's credible and who's not.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Ian MacDonald - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 8:57 PM

I agree that it is sometimes easy to become biased towards one specific source of information regardless of how accurate it is. That's why it is even more important to double check the information you are given with other sources, in the case of this class, our two other textbooks. I think that's also one nice thing about having one book (the Appy book) where most all of the book is comprised of Vietnam veterans firsthand experiences. I definitely feel that if you're trying to get as much as an accurate account of that history, what better way to do so than to hear stories of people who were actually there in the war.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Cameron Cole - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 9:24 PM

I agree. Why not go straight to a source who has first hand knowledge. And I agree with your words on how it is important to have two textbooks to get both sides of a topic, in order to make a clear assumption of what happened in the war/events.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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

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