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Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Joe Escobar - Sunday, April 14, 2013, 2:41 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 David Hartness - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 12:26 PM

It is very apparent history is has biased constructs that oppose one another. This became very apparent during the "Accuracy in Media" video that heavily criticized "Vietnam- A Televised History". The views expressed during the Media's segment were heavily pro American as well as anti-communist in almost every way. It's hard to find history to be completely one sided, as it is often so much more complex than that. Examples of individuals that vastly criticized differently were Ho Chi Minh as well as Ngo Dinh Diem. In the reading of the Interviews of the Appy book as well as the Herring book (Chapter 1) that Ho Chi Mihn perceived himself as a patriot before a communist only seeking to free his Vietnam. Diem's portrayal in the Media's segment made him out to be perfect leader that was loved by nearly all of South Vietnam, which appears to not be entirely true, especially from the Buddhist groups

that populated the south that appeared in our 3 other sources learning materials. The United States and South Vietnam cannot and shouldn't be regarded as the entirety of good in the war as well as the North Vietnam the bad.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by John Howland - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 1:02 PM

Absolutely, you hit the nail on the head! Once I saw Charlton Heston, as the spokesperson, I knew I was in for a right leaning love fest, and i wasn't proven wrong. From beginning to end they did exactly what they accused PBS of doing.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Georgia Haskell - Thursday, April 18, 2013, 10:04 AM

I am in the group of people that are ignorant to a lot of political and historical things. I did not know that Charlton Heston was known for having a person agenda on the subject or not. I did however realize once I saw a famous person narrating I immediately thought they were going out of their way to persuade us of something. I also agree with John that they did exactly what they accused PBS of doing.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by John Howland - Thursday, April 18, 2013, 12:32 PM

Yeah, Heston and the Accuracy in Media group have been long known to push a far right conservative opinion. I will listen to anyones opinion but draw the line when it becomes mired in mis-information and propaganda. The US must face up to it's mistakes in Vietnam before we can learn what not to do.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Hao Qiu - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 7:28 PM

You hit the point very well that the United States and South Vietnam cannot be regarded as the good in the war and the North Vietnam the bad. I did not know

the war clearly before I read all the book and materials, no one was totally right or wrong.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Melissa Booth - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 2:18 PM

It is hard at times to know what is right and what is wrong when there are many different viewpoints and opinions being thrown out at you. Everyone is going to have their own motives on how they want the public to view the information. What I got from the AIM video was almost the total opposite from the books and videos we are going through in class. For example, in one of the books from class, there was a story from one of the reporters where he talked about how the Buddhist's felt about Diem. (Appy part 2) The PBS video and Herring book also talked about the Buddhist's protesting the Diem regime. Clearly, they did not agree with Diem and his ways. In the AIM video, they were talking about how almost everyone loved Diem, and thought he was a much respected guy. They thought he was one of the best nationalist in the country. Seeing that there are multiple resources that have about the same information, it makes me confident that what I am learning is true.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by David Hartness - Saturday, April 20, 2013, 8:37 PM

The biggest thing I got from the AIM video point of view was that the US was right and was unable to be critized of it's wrong doings. Blind nationalism for ones country, sad when you can't admit the wrongs of the past so that it might be better in the future.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Melissa Booth - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 7:29 PM

That is what I got from the video too. I feel that in order to move forward from past mistakes or problems, you must own up to them. It is sad when there are people that are not willing to admit that yes, the United States may have made a mistake with choices they may have made in the past.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by John Howland - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 4:58 PM

Watching the Accuracy in Media clip, expecting nothing and wasn't disappointed, I thought back on the 3 episodes, the chapters in the Appy and the Herring books. They all stated facts, as well as opinions, which I found to be in-line with other book and documentaries I have seen. The Accuracy in Media group is well known for their conservative slant and their outright distortion of facts. In their video they speak of Diem as a great leader who was loved by all when in fact he was feared due to his biased and religiously oppressive policies against the Republic's Montagnard natives and its Buddhist majority(VietnamGear.com). In the AIM video Charlton Heston claims that his show is there to point out the inaccuracies of the PBS video yet goes on to distort and twist the truth to fit his needs. Douglas Pike continues this trend with his own skewed opinion. The one point that made me cringe was on the free elections that never took place due to the US backing Diem who knew he would lose. The facts show that the US agreed to the free elections and then backed out when they realized Diem would lose. The US then went and backed a coup against Diem(VietnamGear.com). Yet none of these facts were in the AIM video. I hope more people support accuracy in our history books and other media used in class.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Kyle Poirier - Friday, April 19, 2013, 3:15 PM

Yes it is crazy how much people try to hide things from us, it makes sense because they are unethical and would upset a bunch of people; but its our right to know, we should have a say in what affects our cultural image. It was interesting that none of those facts were mentioned in the AIM video, I wish history would just be said how it actually was. Unbiased

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by John Howland - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 10:17 AM

The "news" has always been slanted slightly one way or the other, dependant on the beliefs of the reporter, but never has it ever been as bad as it has been since the Vietnam conflict. Since then the news agencies have been allowed to be bought out by corporations that have their own agenda. No longer can the daily news be considered news, it is now opinions disguised as news. We must all be more vigilant when we listen and recognised opinion from actual news. Never take what you hear, see or read as gospel.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Andrew Lavengood - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 7:13 PM

I think that it can be hard to determine what is accurate and what is the result of bias in these web series, as well as in the stories in the Appy textbook. An excellent example of this is the treatment of Edward Lansdale in each book. In the story from Rufus Phillips, Lansdale is portrayed in very high regard. This can be seen in Phillips's description of Lansdale's ability to form relationships with Asians. "Lansdale could establish trust with Asians very, very quickly," he said; "He had a way of communicating with them even though he didn't speak French or Vietnamese" (Appy, p. 53). Phillips portrayed Lansdale as a brilliant man that knew how to obtain the loyalty of the Vietnamese, but that he was swept aside by Washington. However, in the Herring textbook, Lansdale is merely mentioned in passing as a supporter of Diem's policies. The two books provide two contradicting images of the man, one showing him as a potential war hero that wanted to see Diem in a democratic government, and the other portraying him as a "pawn" to Diem's government.

Distinguishing between the two, I think, requires reading around the texts. You have to take some information from one text and some from another, and try to synthesize your own conclusions out of it. The same is true of the video series, I think. I'll discuss those in my next post, though.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by John Howland - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 10:35 AM

Absolutely, I agree with your post 100%. It is up to us to ferret out the truth from numerous sources and never rely on one biased report. Sadly too many people listen to someone that seems to have their ideals and are drawn into a web of lies. Both the left and right are guilty of putting out biased reports but never as bad as the far right pundits. These far right pundits report their opinion pieces in such a way that their listeners believe they are hearing the truth while quietly stating that they are not a news reporter. Fox news won a case that they are allowed to lie or deliberately distort the news reports on public airwaves. Texas has gone one step further and have started to alter text books to have more of a right leaning slant. As an example,they have removed Thomas Jefferson from the text books replacing him with religious right icon John Calvin. We must stop this travesty from happening.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Kyle Poirier - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 6:37 PM

I agree. Thats a great example of the changes in how history is portrayed by different people. And like you said, one really has to read as much different angles to history as possible in order to gain an understanding about what is actually true

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Athena Miller - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 7:37 PM

The AIM video mainly criticized the PBS video for not including or distorting information they felt was pertinent to the developments in Vietnam. I say "felt" because different people or groups will have different interpretations or biases of events. The issue of Diem was brought up in the AIM video, but I didn't agree with their take on how the PBS video portrayed Diem as a "puppet" of the United States. In the PBS America's Mandarin it stated that Eisenhower was even skeptical of Diem's success of rallying the South Vietnamese people into a united front. "Diem's nationalism and administrative experience made him the logical choice for the premiership of an independent Vietnam," is one of the reasons Eisenhower committed to Diem and because he was an anti-Communist. (Herring p.58-59)

Personally, even though I did not like the tone of the AIM video or how they negatively attacked the PBS video, doesn't mean that they made no valid points at all. The same goes for the PBS video or both of our textbooks. All of these modes are open for interpretation and bias. Usually the truth is somewhere in the middle. I don't feel that we can get a complete or truly accurate knowledge of what exactly happened in historical events because of the biases and different interpretations. We can definitely determine some facts, such as how much the money the United States spent on the war, but some other facts are more obscure to be defined completely as black or white.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Melissa Booth - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 7:41 PM

I think that Diem wasn't a complete "puppet" of the United States but he was close. In chapter three of the Herring book, there are moments where the United States had tried to have Diem change the way he was presenting himself and running things. Diem, at times, refused to do what the United States wanted. I feel like the United States was trying to get him do do things that they wanted him to do, which I think would then make him a "puppet". Although, since Diem refused at times, he wasn't a complete puppet in my eyes for the United States.

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

by Jon-wesley McLeod - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 8:20 PM

Having different texts, videos, and eyewitness accounts is the best way to shape an opinion or understanding of the Vietnam War. Statistical facts can only tell so much of the story but the people involved can tell a completely different one. Even soldiers, citizens, politicians, and historians on the same side can interpret an event differently and memories can fade and be altered with biases. We have to try and understand opposing views as difficult it may be and realize that there are other ideologies conflicting with our own. When Giap met McNamara in the mid-nineties and disagreed on calling the war a tragedy "Maybe it was a tragedy for you, but for us the war was a noble sacrifice." (Appy p 43) This statement reminded me of our own American Revolution and how the army with the soldiers truly fighting for their personal cause will fight until they win or die.

I personally like the PBS series but do see a slight bias. I think Ho Chi Minh has to be explored more and all atrocities should be ascribed to the appropriate parties. The Vietnam War is too complicated and intricate to fit everything into any single archive and there is bound to be discord on a subject so personal to some people. The AIM film didn't win me over (especially Charleton Heston's glib personality) but I can see the issues that these historians are taking cause over and feel PBS should include some of these important facts. I do believe Diem was a puppet of the United States because with the sheer amount of funds being given; Diem wouldn't have the power without it. He didn't do everything the U.S. said, but had to be influenced just a touch with that kind of financial backing. (AIM video, Heston) Also, without first person accounts of Ho Chi Minh's politics and tactics, and if or how he changed and responded to internal and external pressures, it's all conjecture. Khrushchev said "Americans tended to believe what they read and saw on television. In Russian culture, all the way back to Czarist times, our first reaction is to distrust what we read, so we're much less affected by the media." (Appy p 89). Again, we have to try to see through the eyes of someone from a completely different culture and those bounds are too hard for some.

The two texts and video series are a great base to work with for a fundamental comprehension of the Vietnam War. With so many accounts and perspectives (even Appy couldn't include 300 interviews in his book, think of the thousands of stories out there unaccounted) even the conflicting narratives can be true. As people trying to understand the History of the Vietnam War, the events that led up to it, the interests and positions of the nations involved, and the people on all sides, we must not let personal inclinations sway our knowledge of the facts.



Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Andrew Lavengood - Saturday, April 20, 2013, 4:43 PM

While I absolutely agree that we can't let personal inclination sway our knowledge of the facts, I could also argue that history is not a collection of facts and bodies of absolute knowledge. Much of what we read in our textbooks and see in the video documentaries is an interpretation of the "facts." Different perspectives can lead to a different presentation of events, people, and places. I think that it is only by synthesizing these different perspectives that we can gain a more whole picture of some fact. Moreover, I think that our own perspectives allow us to place what would otherwise be arbitrary facts into some sort of context that helps both us and others understand the events, places, and people in a better and more complete way.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Athena Miller - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 1:15 PM

I agree with your assessment. History isn't black or white. A person could be standing right next to another person and witness the same event but have a completely different view point of the situation. Some things may be similar but how they interpret the event may be completely at odds with the other witness.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Kyle Poirier - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 6:25 PM

I agree with this. They are interpretations of what happened and depending on who's doing the interpreting can change the stories quite a bit. And by getting the different perspectives and hearing every side of the story is the greatest way to get closes to the fact. And I believe history is great for learing about people places and things all over the world because it gives you insight into what they actually think and the way they look at the world

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Jon-wesley McLeod - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 7:36 PM

I'm sorry for my ambiguous meaning of "facts". I thought it was obvious in my first reply that I think interpretations and perspectives are objective. When I mean statistical facts, I'm talking about the budget America had in regards to Vietnam both before and during the war, the number of troops deployed, bombs dropped, voting numbers, etc. Those aren't interpretations of facts, it's data. I agree that micro level History will never be in the books, we only know the bigger picture and that's not even clear because of our perceptions are based on others. "Arbitrary facts" as you call them are only arbitrary to some people. What is an important aspect, "fact", or statistic of a war to one person might not want to be brought to light by another. One culture's norm is another culture's atrocity.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Jacob Hutchins - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 8:00 PM

I definitely agree with you here. I think that it is important to understand what data actually mean, and then look at how it applies to things in a real way. It's very easy to fall into a "correlation implies causality" type fallacy but at the end of the day data can only speak to itself unless we frame it in context. The casualty numbers, for example, of the North Vietnamese outweighed the U.S. considerably- that's data. Placing the whole package into the context of a ground war in a foreign country against guerilla fighters and it starts to take on a different light and it can start to be read a different way. I think, and i'm just generalizing here, that htere is a major problem in our media wth improperly using data to support "arguments" that aren't there or are incorrect.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Brendan MacDonald - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 9:00 PM

I certainly agree with the statement you made about what we read in many history books and other resources being ones interpretation of the facts. That is why I think it is always good to gather information from a number of different sources and then compare them. And that is what makes reading in two different books and watching the series in this class beneficial. So that we can compare and contrast the info provided in all three sources and then piece that together with our own judgment as well and arrive at a conclusion as to what we believe the truth was.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Jacob Hutchins - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 8:08 PM

"I think Ho Chi Minh has to be explored more"

Boy do I agree with you here. It's true that our country committed it's share of injustices on the Vietnamese people, and so did Diem, but Minh seemed willing to do a lot of ugly things to win. The story by Malcom Browne in chapter 2 of the Appy book describes a special group of VC that terrorized one village in particular, periodically slaughtering the people before fading away into the jungle. My neighborhood as a child in central California had a very heavy Vietnamese population, many (if not most) of whom had fled the war after the South fell. They did not speak well of the things the North was doing when they won.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Hao Qiu - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 8:43 PM

After watching the AIM video I think that is hard to know what is right or not at that time, because different people have different viewpoints and opinions. In the video, they keep saying that Diem was a great leader who led his people to against communist, and he was loved by his people. But it is hard to know if it was true. " But the immediate threat wasn't the Viet Minh. It was all the various sects that opposed Diem- the Binh Xuyen, the Cao Dai, and the Hoa Hao." (Appy, p52.) If Diem was great, how could these people wanted to overthrow his controlling. Also, in the video, Diem was pointing out as a puppet of the United States, which I agreed. I have to be honest that I am not an American, and I am from China. The reason I think that Diem was a puppet is that the United States was trying to use the Vietnam war to show the Soviet union that America has the power and could fight, back to "cold war" time, that confidence show made soviet government put their focus more on Asia and got out from Germany and Europe. Communist was also the point that the United States wanted to destroy. If Vietnam was communist, America could not control that area anymore to keep pressure on China and the Soviet Union. So the United States needed to and had to control Diem to fight with communist force.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Kyle Poirier - Friday, April 19, 2013, 3:20 PM

I feel like he definitely was a puppet too. And i think you make a great point by

saying that if Diem was so loved why did people want to overthrow him? because leaders that are truly great and loved are the ones that the people are behind, and least the majority of them.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Hao Qiu - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 7:34 PM

Absolutely, and also Ho Chi Minh was trying to help his country get freedom without controlled by foreign countries. And after watching the video, the United States also stated Diem as a great leader and anti-communist ideas was shown by them which is not a fair way to do a historical video.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Brendan MacDonald - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 9:00 PM

Well I will start off by saying that I was somewhat surprised after watching the *Accuracy in Media* video clip and learning that there was that much in the series we are watching that was supposedly historically inaccurate and completely left out. I guess that I personally for good or bad tend to usually not question the accuracy of what I am reading (or viewing) when it comes to studying about history. I think the natural tendency when studying history is to believe a source is true until it is brought into question of whether or not it actually is. And what is true can certainly vary in different people's minds because of biasness and opposing viewpoints. That is why it is important to step back and look at a number of sources and put each into perspective.

As far as which source out of the three we are using in the class provides the most accurate recount of the war, I would probably lean towards Appy's *Patriots* since it is a collection of interviews with actual veterans who experienced the events firsthand, whereas Herring's *America's Longest War* and the series *Vietnam: A Television History* are more chronologies of the war from beginning to end. Not that it means they are less accurate, but I think it's safer to believe that those who have actually been there and gone through it are giving truthful stories.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Melissa Booth - Friday, April 19, 2013, 3:51 PM

The video was surprising. I actually had no idea what I was going to be watching before playing the video. It was interesting to see the one sided view of information. I tend to also agree with what is being taught when it comes to history. I assume that since it is history, whatever source we are reading or watching it from will be completely honest. Although, you do have to be careful sometimes because of the biasness and opinions. I have noticed now that I am keeping an open mind when hearing new information, and then confirming it with other sources to make sure it is accurate. The Appy book is also one of the sources of information I find most accurate like you do. Although, I find the Herring book to be also quite accurate. It can be hard to rely at times on stories from others, because they may have forgotten the story, exaggerate, or leave out information. Some of these stories can be hard to forget. For example, the story about George Watkins was hard for even me to forget. (Appy page 21) This story was how he lost his legs and both eyes from stepping on a pressure-detonated mine.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Kyle Poirier - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 6:30 PM

Yea in the past I usually have just taken history for what it is and kind of treated it like absolute truth, but now after this Accuracy video clip I may not be able to do that any more. Its hard that this happens because it doesnt give you that much options on who to trust. Because anyones capable of skewing the truth. I think overall I would trust the veterans too.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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What is "history".....



by Jacob Hutchins - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 9:28 PM

Our journalistic sources, such as the Associated Press, have an ethical and legal obligation to provide is wtih accurate information, even if it is biased. Of course, everything is biased to one degree or another, but the meat of it is that journalist are obliged to tell the truth- and other sources are might not be. It becomes murky very quickly when attempting to really get the truth of something and even quite scholarly sources can be found to be innacurate. All htis being said, we should look at what responsibilities a source has before trusting them. Charlton Heston, for example, has a long afiliation with hard right leaning organizations (such as the NRA) and can therefore be counted on to have a slant in that general direction. Specifically as it relates to Vietnam, the claim that many people there loved Diem is..... dubious. I do believe some there did approve of him, but based on what I have read and heard

from other sources it seems that it was a minority. I can't imagine a person actually lighting themselves on FIRE if something wasn't deeply wrong with the situation. Even a number of the readings from the Appy book, for example, that were not pro-North in the slightest, spoke poorly of Diem. It strikes me as revisionary to try and suggest he was somehow popular. I think that, academically speaking, we have to deal with these things by collecting a volume of information and reaching conclusions based off of what evidence seems to be overwhelming. You can find always find someone that disagrees, but it seems that if a majority of scholars and academics agree on something then that should generally be viewed as accurate (until shown otherwise).

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: What is "history".....

by Athena Miller - Friday, April 19, 2013, 1:10 PM

I agree that journalistic sources are supposed to supply fact, but sometimes they even make mistakes and print events that aren't true. They are then required to print a retraction, but the retraction is usually located in some obscure part of the paper. Many people don't take notice of these retractions and end up being misinformed.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: What is "history".....

by John Howland - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 10:40 AM

Sadly it seems that we no longer have journalist, instead we have opinion makers. The news is no longer the news but propaganda by whatever side has ownership of that news organization. The reason the American people started objecting to the Vietnam conflict was due to the news reports that came out. We no longer have that type of journalist, unafraid of telling the truth, now they are owned by corporations that want their agenda pushed.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: What is "history".....

by Athena Miller - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 12:43 PM

I'm sorry, but I feel that your statement is a little overgeneralized. We can't say all journalists feel that way. I've known many journalists and their goal is telling the truth and getting the whole story. I can say this because I was raised as a military brat and my father was in military intelligence. I've been in combat zones and have talked to and watched journalists. They risk their

lives by going into dangerous situations so that we can get the truth, and some of those journalists have died trying. Just because someone else is footing the bill or is their employer does not mean that they don't feel they have an ethical duty to report the facts. Some journalists may allow truths to be bent or manipulated but others don't.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: What is "history".....

by John Howland - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 2:16 PM

You're correct, I overgeneralized. What I meant to include was that "in the mainstream media. There are other sources where reliable and honest journalists bring the truth to the table. They are mostly ignored by the mainstream media unless their story backs up their position". Sorry for my forgetting to add that part.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: What is "history".....

by Jacob Hutchins - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 7:54 PM

One advantage I see in our modern media, "opinion makers" aside, is our tremendous access to pictures and videos of news content. Even instances in which the media is very confused (some recent tragedies come to mind) we still have the awesome power of the internet to view and challenge information that is being presented to us. I think that in this day and age a person has to really take responsibility for getting reasonably accurate and reliable information. Ignorance is no excuse. That being said, I agree with you that the integrity of our media system has fallen into question. Perhaps it is because our media has become so much more sensationalized in general, or perhaps it is that we live in a "24 hour news cycle" now days. In any case, it seems that much of what passes for journalism is.... dubious at best.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: What is "history".....

by Travis Jones - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 8:20 PM

While I agree that the internet provides us with a new found visage of images for various incidents and other conflicts. I also have to disagree and bring up the fact that our government withholds images from us as well, and sometimes pulls images or videos from the

public's view based up graphic images. As for the media, like it was said the integrity of our media is suspect and thusly must be taken with a very large grain of salt. But sometimes, while rare as it is, the media comes through and doesn't always have its political factions and alliances direct it opinions, again its very rare due to the financial influence od D.C.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Travis Jones - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 10:12 PM

When the subject of academically and historical evidence and fact is presented I personally feel that one must search through the arguments proposed by each and use third or fourth sources to ascertain further support of claims made by each. Conflictions will occur greatly through history depending on what sides are proposing them and where the aims of the speaker(s) are directed. The differences between text and video must be taken objectively and as stated my Joe, the PBS documentary was once the foundation of this class back in the telecourse day and is now merely used alongside the two text books required for the class and with that being the case now it's on an equal footing as far as credibility. That being the case I stand by my pervious comment that to determine accurate information one could possibly use information from elsewhere to substantiate and back the claims of each to help cement the historical evidence and find the truth.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Athena Miller - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 1:45 PM

I agree it is good to have multiple different sources to confirm different claims by others. Video sources, in some cases, have a greater impact to some. The use of images especially graphic or emotion producing can cause people to ignore or try to find more information on a matter.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Georgia Haskell - Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 10:24 PM

The AIM video is trying to "set the historical record straight". Apparently it really upset some people that things were misconstrued or left out all together in the PBS series. I think it would be hard to decide what to put into or keep out of something that was so historical. The AIM video says that Diem was well known and fully supported

unlike they portrayed in the PBS series. Maybe he was in the beginning of his career, but I think as time went on, the corruption and his actions changed people's opinions. Even his once supporter who had recommended as a genuine nationalist who could lead an independent Vietnam said when talking about Diem, "He appeared to be off his rocker" (Appy, pg. 81). I think the PBS series does a good job of getting the ideas across. Elbridge Durbrow (AIM) said he was interviewed by PBS and they did not use the facts he told them. I believe they probably did know things that were left out for whatever reason; however I bet they also learned some things about all sides that were not put in the series. I am glad to have our other two sources to give us a wider variety of the history of the Vietnam War. Having information from different points of view is good to try and keep a non-bias objective of the facts. The intent of the AIM video, I think, was to make America look like it was not in the wrong, that our actions were justified, or to somehow come out of this not looking so bad. When really what I learned from the AIM video is that PBS made a few factual mistakes however, they got their point across without using a famous actor as a narrator!

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Jon-wesley McLeod - Friday, April 19, 2013, 9:39 PM

I came to a similar conclusion about the AIM video regarding the opinions of certain Americans trying to "save face". I think the systemic pride that is instilled in Americans can distort the view or twist the facts in ways which makes it too difficult to accept the faults America has perpetuated. We also have to understand that hindsight is 20/20 and America believed what it was doing at the time was the best action to take with the information that it had.

Unfortunately, as with all wars, innocent people on both sides bear the brunt of brass button politics and the ideologies of others. America could have "won" the war if it decimated Vietnam completely but what is the ultimate goal, culture annihilation? Displaying strength at the international level? Spreading our own ideology forcefully and ironically calling it democracy? We'll never know. But, I also feel some servicemen understandably have a hard time accepting the defeat because it's harder to find meaning in the death of their fellow soldiers or the personal sacrifices they've made and still are dealing with the repercussions today.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Georgia Haskell - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 7:42 PM

I think your right. I feel like having to be there and make decisions or make sense of what was happening would be hard enough but, to then have to

defend your decisions would be even harder. I also feel like someone who wasn't there dealing with it saying that things were done wrong would make me mad. I understand the complicated views of the war and being mad that we didn't look great in the movie, but the French took a brutal beating in PBS series.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Athena Miller - Saturday, April 20, 2013, 3:24 PM

I've noticed that many of you believe that Diem was a puppet of the United States. I disagree, but maybe it's because I'm not sure what your definition of "puppet" is. My definition of puppet is one that does what they are told by another entity, whether it is a person or a government, without thought to whether it is right or wrong and have no personal agendas of their own. I know that the dictionary definition is also one who is influenced by those outside forces, and it can be said that Diem was manipulated by the United States to an extent. Especially, with all the money the U.S. was giving to Diem's government. The question is did the United States deserve some concessions from the South Vietnamese government because of that money? Diem was more than willing to take the money, and the United States officials believed he would use the money to help the people create a strong, united, and economically sound country. My interpretation of Diem is that he had his own agenda of how he believed South Vietnam should be ruled and was more than willing to take U.S. money to further his own goals and do minor things that would appease the United States, so he wouldn't lose his cash cow. The other question is if he was a puppet why would the United States agree to him being overthrown? Especially since they had invested so much time and money in his government? This also caused the South Vietnamese government to have less stability when they needed a strong central government to deal with the North Vietnamese tensions.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by John Howland - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 10:50 AM

I think that, in the beginning, like any puppet government, Diem was controlled by the US. Then he started to dislike the thought that he was a puppet and turned against the US puppeteers. In doing so the US decided, that since he was no longer reliable, that we needed to replace him with a new puppet.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth  



by Travis Jones - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 8:29 PM

Interesting take on the puppet idea, it reminds me a lot of how the US uses officials it put in place in Afghanistan and Iraq and how once they were in power the then tried to stand against the US officials.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Hao Qiu - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 7:42 PM

Puppet in my definition is one that does what they are told by another and try to do something that their controller could get benefits from. Diem was a puppet in the begining and he did lots of things that the US told him to do. Even though he disagree the thoughts and tried to against the US, he was also doing the puppet thing which was against his enemy- the Northern Vietnamese government, that was what the US wanted.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth



by Andrew Lavengood - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 9:44 AM

If I were to just watch the PBS series, I would probably take what was presented at face value. Only by knowing what I've read in the textbooks am I able to put the information presented in the documentaries into a different perspective. Only by synthesizing the material from the two textbooks with the documentary can we come to a more complete picture of what was happening in Vietnam. Appy provides us with an understanding of the Vietnamese point of view, whereas Herring provides a more "American" point of view of the war. The documentary, I think, does a nice job of finding some sort of balance, but you can definitely sense the American bias in the way the material is presented. For example, in the documentary series, Ho Chi Minh is presented as a mysterious man that got into communism while in France ("Roots of War"). While it did touch on him being a nationalist before a communist, it didn't emphasize how much he meant to the Vietnamese people or how loyal they were to him not just before the war, but throughout the war. Herring explores this a bit more, but Appy is the text that really provides an idea of the lengths that these people were willing to go to obtain their independence, and how loyal they were to "Uncle Ho."

As a side note, I was greatly disappointed with the AIM video. I felt the bias greatly outweighed the quality of material presented.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by David Hartness - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 12:06 PM

I highly agree with your thoughts on the AIM video. History is really complicated in the sense that it can be viewed in many different perspectives. History really is only books and documents recorded by humans that can be based heavily on bias of those who lived it. This bias most certainly can be seen through other historical events other than the Vietnam war.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the truth

by Travis Jones - Sunday, April 21, 2013, 8:26 PM

While I agree with you on the basis that history is only books and documents recorded by humans, I also want to mention bias' that come from the fact that most history is written by the victorious in such conflicts, the 20th century wars are a bit of an exception due to the media involvement of a war, just as with the PBS documentary, its also portrayed very differently due to the interpretation of the teller. Therefore one should always keep an open mind when receiving information and question motives of those telling the information in order to separate fact from fiction and inaccuracy.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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