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Continuing the discussion



by Joe Escobar - Monday, April 22, 2013, 8:11 AM

After reading the NYT article and watching the second half of the AIM program, discuss specific examples of conflicting information you have encountered in the provided class sources (from the Herring book, PBS series, and AIM program). More importantly, which source gets your "vote", on that specific issue, as having the more correct/accurate/truthful interpretation or reinterpretation?

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Re: Continuing the discussion



by Andrew Lavengood - Tuesday, April 23, 2013, 10:00 AM

Slight Disclaimer: While this example may not be outright conflicting material, the way things are presented is in a conflicting way.

More to the point, the perspectives that I found conflicting were from the "Roots of War" video from the PBS documentary and the Herring text. Each of these sources discussed the French approach to the war, and the relationship between the United States and France. In the documentary, the French are portrayed as a valiant fighting force that is consistently on the offensive and making bold, sweeping attacks against the Viet Minh forces. While it does acknowledge that the Viet Minh were able to take back most of the countryside that the French thought was pacified, it continues to portray the French in a positive light. It also portrays the United States as being a staunch supporter of French Indochina policy.

The Herring book, on the other hand, presents this situation in an entirely different light. Perhaps most strikingly, it displays the French military policy in Vietnam as an utter failure, and it notes the United States' annoyance with their "secretism and obstructionism" as well as being "thoroughly dissatisfied with France's performance in the war" (Herring, p. 28). Herring went on to explain that the French wanted to run the war, but that they weren't making any headway in any recognizable way.

I'd have to say that I'm more inclined to believe the Herring text on this one. The

complexity of the political environment at that time lends itself more to a fractured relationship between two powers rather than a rosy and hand-in-hand relationship that PBS painted. Also, some of the facts mentioned in the documentary would lead to questions that are only answered by Herring, such as how by the mid 50's the United States was paying for 50% of the colonial war ("Roots of War"). That would naturally lead to the question of whether the United States was happy that they were paying for a losing war. Herring gives us the details of how unhappy they actually were, and what they attempted to do about it. I suppose the most swaying point for Herring is the fact that he is so much more thorough than the documentary, which is possible, of course, because PBS only had a certain amount of time to talk about the war, whereas Herring had a seemingly unlimited number of pages to write the text with (not to mention all of the sources that he cited).

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Athena Miller - Sunday, April 28, 2013, 1:00 PM

I am also more inclined to believe Herring in this situation. He does include more information on the inner workings of how and why the situation with the French developed. The PBS series, I feel only skimmed the surface and didn't portray their relationship as anything but favorable to both parties.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Rebekah Rundstrom - Tuesday, April 23, 2013, 10:27 PM

After revisiting the first AIM video, they were saying that while in jail Ho Chi Minh wasn't well known at all. In fact no one knew who he was because he didn't start going by that until he got out of jail. In the PBS video, we were told that Ho Chi Minh was popular and liked in 1940 when he wasn't even known as Ho Chi Minh. They also pointed out that Ho Chi Minh was very well known, when once again he wasn't really well known until 1944 when he official began going my his new name. He was accused of being a Soviet Union puppet, when the USSR didn't even call him one of his or her own. The PBS portrays Ho Chi Minh as a hero, one who isn't really a communist, and then portrays the south and ultimately the US as a villain, someone who is taking advantage of a third world country trying to grow.

In the AIM video we are told that several thousands of Northern Catholic Vietnamese were fleeing Ho Chi Minh's terror, death and persecution. While in the PBS video we are told that fled the north because of the religious quarrels, and not having a good collaboration with the French.

I am leaning towards Herring's book being the correct source of information. They way that he writes is factual. Although he does have a lot of his opinion in there it is

an opinion that I gravitate towards. He said at the beginning that as new information is coming out – he has to make new editions to correct the “facts” that were once right and have now been proven wrong.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Maraya Maxson - Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 3:53 PM

I would agree that Herring seems to be the most accurate source of information. Admitting that there are questions not yet answered is admitting that you don't know everything, which I respect. Herring says that his book evolves with the growth of information which I believe. As far as PBS and Accuracy in media goes, the truth seems to lie somewhere in the middle.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Rebekah Rundstrom - Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 11:35 PM

Does the true lie somewhere in the middle, or are they too cheap to make a new series of all the facts that they claim to be true when really they are all false?

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Cameron Cole - Sunday, April 28, 2013, 9:32 PM

The way the NYT article went about talking about the PBS series was strictly all about getting rid of all the biased information and replacing them with factual evidence, For example Ho Chi Minhs background/history. They wanted to separate the difference between biased information and factual information.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by John Howland - Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 4:37 PM

This is why groups like AIM succeed in misleading the public. Ho Chi Minh was very well known, before and after the name change, with the Vietnamese people and those he dealt with on a regular basis. Groups like AIM are used to

"muddy the water" hoping that enough people will take what they claim as facts. They are good at taking a sentence and adding or subtracting enough to alter the complete meaning. They also like to present one side, unlike the PBS series, and leave you thinking exactly what they want. Any source of information is better than the AIM clips.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Rebekah Rundstrom - Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 11:37 PM

So what you are saying is that they take "facts" out of context to twist it into what they deem worthy "facts" and share it with the world hoping that someone will grab ahold and believe them?

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by John Howland - Thursday, April 25, 2013, 3:27 PM

In a sense, what I mean is that they take parts of factual information and regurgitate it back up, twisted into something that seems to support their ideals. Let say we have the sentence "The boy walked into the room where a knife was sticking into the wall" now we put it through the propaganda machine and produce "The boy walked into the room with a knife". Now while the sentence is factual it gives one the impression that the boy had the knife in his hands. This is what groups like AIM does best.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Rebekah Rundstrom - Thursday, April 25, 2013, 4:45 PM

True.

Sum of ratings: (1)

0

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Cameron Cole - Sunday, April 28, 2013, 9:22 PM

I Completely agree with both of yours and johns

interpretations. Information even now can get fabricated over time. It has always been like this, and it will never change because people want to make the story more dramatic to get people interested.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Georgia Haskell - Saturday, April 27, 2013, 10:54 PM

I agree. I think I will dismiss these AIM videos faster than it took me to watch them. The only good thing that did come from them is to remind us that people do twist facts and lie to suite their purpose and we should be weary. I believe every opinion deserves to be heard, but we need not agree with everything.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Patrick Haider - Sunday, April 28, 2013, 8:29 PM

I also tend towards Appy's book as well. I think it is an advantage that the book is a much more recent publication. While there are advantages to a program such as the PBS documentary series coming out close to the events covered, I think that the time between then and when Appy published his book has allowed for a time of perspective.

Back in the early 1980's when the PBS and AIM shows were produced, there was a much higher chance for the material to be influenced by personal or public opinions on a very recent event in history. While I'm sure some of those biases still existed for Appy, I don't believe that they would be as pronounced.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Cameron Cole - Sunday, April 28, 2013, 9:27 PM

The different contents of information on Ho Chi Minh was ridiculous. The PBS film is completely contradicting its own information. It really confused me. Is he a hero or is he a criminal? Is he a nationalist? a communist? a murderer? What is he?

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Maraya Maxson - Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 3:34 PM

The Vietnam War is no doubt a sensitive topic for America. What struck me as interesting about the accuracy in media videos was how apparent they made their opinion, something I feel both the PBS series and the Herring book do not do. I was interesting having not known much about the Vietnam War beforehand I find it useful to hear it discussed with the amount of passion Accuracy in Media brings to the table. As far as whether or not I agree with their opinions is another story all together. I do agree that veterans of the Vietnam War have been misrepresented and unfairly ridiculed. Many good men fought and died for a confused cause. I disagree with the claims made in Accuracy in Media pertaining to the condition of the Veterans. Although PBS may have generalized the veterans making them all seem mentally damaged I still am a firm believer that the Vietnam War, as with any war took a large mental and physical toll and many of the people fighting it. In a way I felt like the Accuracy in media video belittled the post-war suffering. I would say that overall on the issue of the veterans I agree more with the PBS series.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Michelle Coming - Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 9:31 PM

I agree with you on how the AIM video was arguing about the PBS series and their description of a Vietnam war veteran. I'm sure there are veterans that came out with perfect mental health and became well adjusted members of society, as well as those who became severely damaged both psychologically and physically. I'm positive that some of those veterans that were psychologically damaged, managed to cope in their own ways and go on to become well adjusted as well. You can not just place them in these tidy categories like both videos seem to suggest.

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by John Howland - Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 6:27 PM

To start with, we have to toss out the AIM clips due to lack of any redeeming value. While the PBS series, the Appy and Herring books try to allow for views from all sides, the AIM clips demand that their side is the only "facts" that should be related. One such statement made by Heston uses an old subliminal trick by claiming that there was two ways of life "one based on freedom and one on Communism," hoping the viewer will of course side with freedom. Another issue is when John McCain makes the statement that there were "tragic situations of brutality on POW's by both

sides” but then goes on to say that they were isolated incidents on the US side. He makes a very telling statement when he states “not one single “documented” case of mistreatment of a Viet Cong or North Vietnamese once they were “in the prison compound”.” One should ask what happens before they get to the prison compound. Their segment on Jane Fonda made me laugh at the way they showed the clip or her with the Viet Cong. The music and the slow speed at which they showed it gave the viewer almost an automatic hatred for Jane. It is hard to comment on a lot of the info in the AIM clips unless one has watched every part of the PBS series or having been to Vietnam during the conflict. This is why I have such contempt for the AIM clips, having experience in country and witnessing mistreatment of prisoners by both sides. And yes, I and other Vietnam Vets that I know still have issues stemming from our service in Vietnam. Since starting this course I have had memories reemerge, causing me to have a few anxiety attacks, but I’m working on smoothing out this problem instead of trying to bury it. One other issue with the AIM that I find to be repulsive is the attempt to make Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Cong out to be brutal savages who have killed thousands, conveniently leaving out events like My Lai Massacre. “My Lai, a hamlet in Quang Nai province 335 miles northeast of Saigon, was the site of an infamous massacre. On 16th March 1968 members of Charlie Company of the Americal Division’s 11th Infantry Brigade entered the village and brutally killed hundreds of its inhabitants after failing to find any Viet Cong. The massacre was kept secret for more than a year until it was exposed by Richard Ridenhour, a soldier with the 11th Brigade, who learnt about what happened from others that were there. The resultant investigation and court case led to the conviction for murder of Lt William Calley, Charlie Company’s commanding officer. He was initially sentenced to life in prison; however his sentence was quickly reduced to 10-years, of which he served only a third.”(vietnamgear.com). All in all, I feel the variety of information we are getting from the text books and the PBS series offers the opinions from both sides and allows us to form our own opinions. Contrarily the AIM clips demands you see their side and only their side.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Michelle Coming - Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 9:56 PM

There's a picture in the Herring book about pg 224, title Tet, 1968, of a Vietcong captive being executed. His hands seem to be bound behind his back and he does not seem to be armed. Does this not fall under the category of documented mistreatment of the Vietcong? He worded his statement so carefully that I suppose that this picture falls under the BEFORE the reach the prison compound section of documented mistreatment. I suppose that's part of an answer to your question of what happens to them before they get there.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by John Howland - Thursday, April 25, 2013, 3:33 PM

John McCain's comments are a perfect example of Political Speak, a language used most often by those looking to hold some future political position. One only has to read between the lines to see what they are truly saying.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Athena Miller - Saturday, April 27, 2013, 3:31 PM

I don't agree that the AIM videos don't have any redeeming value. We may not agree with their viewpoint or their interpretation of the PBS videos, but they do have some valid points, which the NYT article does point out. For example, some may argue that the PBS series did not portray the South Vietnamese army in any positive way. I can see how some would agree or disagree with this passionately. I believe it is good to have an opposing or contradicting viewpoint in these sensitive matters. It gives us a more encompassing view of the topic at hand and allows us to broaden our own perspectives to include others. The AIM videos may want people to see their side as fact, but as individuals we should question that type of mentality. Also, I believe the AIM videos allow us to make our own opinions, but it may not be in the same direction as them.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Michelle Coming - Saturday, April 27, 2013, 11:01 PM

I absolutely agree with you Athena. The AIM video definitely does have some value. If anything they do help us match faces with the names that are metioned in the text books, which I havefound to be helpful. Their point of view, no matter how forcefully they try and impose it on their viewers, does give us an idea of how the Vietnam policy makers may have viewed the war. This strong anti-communism attitude seems to be how America approached the situation in Vietnam.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Georgia Haskell - Saturday, April 27, 2013, 11:18 PM

That is a good point. I had not thought about how the views in the AIM

videos might be the same way the policy makers at the time thought about the war. I do believe the anxiety about communism was extremely high back then and obviously influenced every decision made.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Michelle Coming - Saturday, April 27, 2013, 11:27 PM

No matter how biased (and a bit ridiculous in my opinion) the AIM videos are, they have made us rethink the validity of facts about history (or any subject for that matter) and the sources feeding us these facts through the media. I think that's really the most important role of the AIM videos for this class.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Maraya Maxson - Sunday, April 28, 2013, 12:11 PM

The AIM videos did serve there purpose. As much as I disagreed with the way they went about making the video I do appreciate being able to hear things from all points of view, no matter how biased.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Rebekah Rundstrom - Sunday, April 28, 2013, 7:43 PM

That's a good thing to keep in mind while watching these videos. It is good to have two sides of the story. Otherwise we are learning half of what went on. We would be cheating our learning through that. Thanks for bringing up this point. I also agree that the AIM video got us all thinking, and discovering what really happened in the war. And I think that without this video, I would have just read our books and watched our PBS videos without really cross referencing what really happened.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Maraya Maxson - Saturday, April 27, 2013, 11:08 PM

I am really glad that you brought up the POW's. When I was watching the AIM video I was shocked by how noble they made America look. I agree that the AIM videos are somewhat outlandish. I would have to say that when I have talked to anyone that was in the Vietnam War they don't talk about it the way the AIM video does. I'm most likely only talking to a certain type of veteran however I have had enough conversations to be able to say that not everyone sees it the way John McCain does. Although the PBS series might not put enough emphasis on the fear of communism I personally think it's a much more accurate source of information.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Athena Miller - Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 7:43 PM

One example of conflicting information within our sources is whether Ho Chi Minh was a Communist puppet of the Soviet Union and China, or if he was a nationalist. The AIM video (Part 1) portrayed Ho Chi Minh as a professional international Communist that was willing to sell out fellow comrades to attain his goals. They also claimed he was not well known to the Vietnamese people at all. They went further to claim when on September 2, 1945, Ho Chi Minh used OSS intelligence unit that accompanied him while Ho declared the independence of Vietnam to establish his position and give him the illusion to the Vietnamese people that the United States was backing him.

The PBS video (Roots of War) portrayed Ho Chi Minh as a nationalist, who wanted to gain independence for his country. It goes on to claim Ho Chi Minh became popular to the Vietnamese people in France after World War 1 when he tried to petition for Vietnam's independence at the Versailles conference. They go on to state that when he came back to Vietnam and founded the Vietminh as Ho Chi Minh, the people of Vietnam realized that he was also known as Nguyen Ai Quoc, he was well known as a patriot of Vietnam.

The Herring book also includes most of this information but doesn't really take a definite stand of whether he was a Communist or nationalist. The Herring book gets my "vote" on this issue because it isn't dramatically slanted left or right. It also has many different sources in which it attained its information. The other reason is that a television series or a rebuttal of a television series can usually only put so much information within an allotted time frame, where in a book different avenues can be explored on an unlimited number of pages of text.

Another example of conflicting information within our sources is whether Diem was a puppet of the United States or not. Again, the AIM video (Part 1) and the PBS video (America's Mandarin) have conflicting interpretations of his role. The AIM claims that he was not a puppet, while the PBS video didn't specifically call him a "puppet," but did allude to that conclusion. Again, the Herring book gets my "vote" on this specific quandary.

There are many other conflicting issues and interpretations of events and I personally prefer the Herring and Appy book as sources then either the PBS or AIM videos. Even though the PBS series isn't dramatically left wing, (unlike the AIM video, which is definitely right wing) it still portrays its bias in a subtle nature.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Andrew Lavengood - Saturday, April 27, 2013, 3:37 PM

I agree with your points on the AIM video, as well as Herring. However, I felt the AIM video did portray some sensitivity to how the soldiers were treated while they were in the war. They were called "baby-killers" and were ridiculed by the public, despite the fact that they were fighting a war that they didn't understand or necessarily want to fight. The Herring book and PBS documentary didn't fully address this issue, I felt. However, there were a number of times throughout the AIM video where I questioned if they were blatantly lying or misrepresenting information for their own purposes - I didn't get that feeling from either Herring or PBS.

This is not to say that the PBS documentary is perfect or the Herring book is without its flaws. I've found contradicting information between them, as well, although these contradictions were normally not as severe. I suppose this is something that comes with the territory of history, however. Sources frequently conflict with one another because of the various perspectives that are being brought together in one place.

In the end, I think I have to rely primarily on the Herring and Appy sources. Appy is relating direct interviews with participants in the war, so the only thing that could be misconstrued is the interviewee's perception of the events. Herring, however, notes that he must continually update the book to include information that was previously proven to be incorrect or misrepresented. The fact that this is the fourth edition of the text gives him more credit than either television series, I think.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Athena Miller - Sunday, April 28, 2013, 12:33 PM

I agree that the AIM videos do show some sensitivity to how the soldiers were treated. My father was drafted in the Vietnam War, and he never felt that he was mistreated. In fact, he loved the military so much he joined the Army after he got back. I'm not saying that other soldiers did not feel that

they were mistreated or shunned by some of the American public. I'm just saying that not all of them felt that way, as the AIM videos do point out. I haven't watched all the PBS videos yet, specifically the one referred to in the AIM videos so I can't really say if the AIM videos are over exaggerating the misrepresentation of the veterans in the PBS videos.

I wonder if the AIM videos went with a different tone and wasn't directly attacking the PBS series, then maybe it would have had more credence? The PBS series has a more subtle way of portraying their information to fit their preferences. It's just a thought.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Michelle Coming - Sunday, April 28, 2013, 11:19 PM

I don't think the fact that the AIM videos were attacking the PBS series really had much to do with the loss of it's credibility. It was more of its strong anit-communist attitude that they forced on their viewers. These strong oppinons made it hard to take their "facts" at face value. Most of what they said seemed to be a matter of opinion. If it wasn't a "fight against communism" they most likely wouldn't have attacked the PBS series they way that they did. I think if they would have toned down their opinion and focused a little more on bringing to light the facts that the PBS series skipped over or skewed it would be a much more reliable source of information.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Andrew Lavengood - Sunday, April 28, 2013, 11:20 PM

Regarding your thought on the AIM videos, I can't help but feel that a change in tone or in outright "my way or the highway" approach might have vastly improved the quality. Many times the video came off as condescending and, even more often, as shoving its point down your throat. There was no room for discussion, no room for various points of view. There was only the one, uniform point of view that permeated the entire program. I understand that this was offered as a rebuttal to the PBS documentary series, but there should have been at least some basic attempt made to include other points of view. Without them, this piece just feels like propaganda.

This is where the AIM videos fail and Herring and the PBS documentary succeed. Herring and PBS include many different points of view and opinions, which is why they represent more of a

"consensus" on what happened, as opposed to one side's rendition of how it ought to be viewed. That's not to say that Herring and PBS are without their flaws, because they most certainly do have their flaws, but the at least make some attempt to present a more well-rounded interpretation of events.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Sean Lounsbury - Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 7:53 PM

The conflicting information that I am getting is what to call Ho Chi Minh either a nationalist or a communist. PBS says that he is a nationalist first than a communist and the AIMS say's that he is just a communist. I think that he was a communist because he was a nationalist. He used the communist party and his popularity to get what he wanted and what he wanted was a united Vietnam. So pertaining to that subject matter I think PBS is more right but I think that he was more using the communist party instead of just being a dictator to his people.

Out of all of the sources that we have to choose from my vote goes to the Herring book. I chose the book because even though he has his own opinions the two videos have their agendas and they were made quite a while ago. Although, Herring had his opinions he has gone back to his book and made revisions to it so it is correct and not saying what he wants to say like in the videos.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Patrick Haider - Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 9:39 PM

I find that watching the AIM video's turns into more of a practice of trying to decipher what they are actually saying, than getting another point of view. Their approach is very forced onto the viewer, as they use common tactics to try and twist words into an acceptable truth.

One of the areas of the video that jumped out to me the most was in their discussion of the soldiers post war mentality. They talk about how the PBS documentary refers to the veterans as "haunted", or otherwise damaged. The AIM video tries to debate this by saying that the veterans return to America as valued members of society that somehow gained their value from their time in the war. I would have liked to have heard some solid evidence on this claim, but in usual AIM fasion they have decided to emit facts when they do not strengthen their claims. They quickly turned to "the parade that never was" as some kind of indication that media was focusing too much attention on the "haunted" veterans, rather than the support for the war.

It is this kind of misrepresentation that makes me question the AIM video's so

much. It is fantastic that there was a parade to support the troops, but that really has nothing to do with proving the positive mental stability of returning veterans, or the public perception of the war. Really I would see the parade as civilians showing their support of the troops themselves, and their condition. It seems to me that the AIM video is trying to turn a support for the troops parade into a support for the war parade, and those two things do not always coincide, as the war in Iraq has shown us.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Rebekah Rundstrom - Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 11:55 PM

Good point about the AIMs video claiming the vets coming back as valued members of society...if they were valued, why is there such a debate about this war? If I remember from past history classes, we shunned the vets because we were afraid to be associated with them. So they went to war all fired up - with the country behind them, just to come back to a country that couldn't even look them in the eye with the respect that they deserved. I would have liked to see some solid evidence as well!

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Georgia Haskell - Saturday, April 27, 2013, 11:11 PM

I would have liked to see some evidence to back this up also. The only thing I knew about the Vietnam War before this class is that the veterans were treated horrible when they came back. I know movies don't represent real life, but they do speak to what is happening in society at least a little and we have all seen (well most of us) the beginning of True Blood and how they treated Rambo when he came back from Vietnam.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Jon-wesley McLeod - Friday, April 26, 2013, 7:25 PM

I agree with you 100% Patrick. I pretty much talked about the same thing in my initial post. The only thing I think we really have to consider is that both of these videos were made in the early 80's (thirty years ago!) and this is the height of the Ronald Revolution. I think the conservatives in the AIM video were still in the 1940-50's come back from war, go get a job mentality and didn't understand "shellshock", now P.T.S.D., which we have tens of thousands of cases

documented having been in two more wars since.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Athena Miller - Sunday, April 28, 2013, 1:21 PM

I grew up around military personnel all my life, and have heard many veterans talk of the Vietnam War and other wars they have been in. Many do value their time in war; it allowed some to understand what type of person they were. Would they freeze in the face of aversion or would they do what had to be done to survive....would they put their beliefs of what was right or wrong before their orders.....it allowed them to understand their own personal strengths and weaknesses. The life of a soldier is to train in strategies to be used in war, and some are excited to finally be able to use some the knowledge they have been practicing for years. I know my ex-husband was when he went to Iraq. Now, I'm not saying all felt this way. Some initially felt this way and came back never wanting to experience it again. Others can't wait to go back. I just feel that we can't generalize them in categories.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Jon-wesley McLeod - Sunday, April 28, 2013, 2:53 PM

Exactly, soldiers (especially ones from a melting pot like America) can be as polar opposite in every aspect of life as any two people can be. To generalize a person's disposition based on occupation is prejudice, and I think a lot of times unfairly done to soldiers disproportionately to others. I believe people's eyes were starting to open when Vets started marching against the war because they've seen first hand the devastating effect it was having on both nations and the futility of American political agenda in Vietnam.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Jon-wesley McLeod - Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 10:29 PM

Even though I feel the AIM video is pretty biased, I believe it brings up a few good points. So far, with the materials we have for the course, I assume a few things are glossed over. The portrayal of the South Vietnamese hasn't been very flattering and I believe the materials should cover more of the relationship between North and South Vietnam. It's hard to illustrate all of the different factions that come into play and

interact to build a complete encompassing comprehension of the War in such a short time. The carnage that the Communist's committed also has to be addressed. I haven't watched the complete PBS series yet so I can't say whether or not it's included but McCain made a good point about America's P.O.W.'s being treated with the rules of Geneva while the North Vietnamese tortured, starved, and propagandized their captives. Without seeing all of the PBS videos, I can't tell if it was touched upon but presumably not. The massacre's in Cambodia and the deaths of millions needs to have a light shone upon it in less of a nationalistic twist and more of an ideological viewpoint.

Kenneth Moorefield says that the PBS series attacked our soldier's performance and praised the guerilla fighting tactics of the Vietminh. I personally don't feel that's the case. The Vietminh and NLF probably surprised a lot of people with the efficiency of their war machine without the industrial backing seen previously in American warfare but I don't recall from any text or video that criticizes the exemplary conduct American soldiers acted with. Having two and a half million soldiers halfway around the world would probably produce a few bad people but it was definitely the minority. Don Cragg said PBS painted the soldier as a "Drug addict, racist bigot, a man who would murder N.C.O. and officers at will." (AIM) What a generalization. Even if PBS said this, most American's know this to not be true.

One fact that the AIM series takes issue with is the PBS claim that $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million soldiers have been "affected" out of the two and a half million sent to Vietnam and public perception of these vets is that they are "losers" or "victims" both of which I think are false. (William Jayne, AIM) Jayne says his daily contact with vets refutes these statistics. Really? Unless he has met with literally hundreds of thousands of soldiers and documented each case, it's not really conclusive proof if you ask me. Hell, $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million is a conservative estimate considering the research that has been done in the past thirty years on P.T.S.D. since these videos came out and with the amount of soldiers that are inflicted today from present conflicts. The majority of American's don't think of our vets as losers and victims, maybe as casualties of war, but now we understand and can sympathize easier with the increased knowledge we have. I do agree that many came back as productive people in our society and even some of the most important leaders of our community. Again, updated statistics would do both sides well.

When the AIM video re-directed the story to South America with the turbulence in El Salvadore and Heston exclaimed the "Soviets are aiming their arrow at Mexico." (AIM) I couldn't help but laugh. This is the same misleading, paranoid causal connections that were plaguing the politicians making policy in Vietnam and which got us into Iraq from Afghanistan (W.M.D'S, terrorist links). A constant state of fear is being perpetuated. The AIM video states "they'll be pouring across American borders." We know illegal immigration is mainly economic and less for political asylum. They also completely lost credibility when they attacked American protestors, generalized their grievances, speculated on their conclusions, and giving them no credit in terms of rationalization.

Even though I don't agree with a lot of the AIM video, I feel it is an important viewpoint we must consider just as if it was in the Appy book. It shows aspects of the

war participants feel are crucial and their perspectives are just as valid. The PBS series doesn't seem as perfect as it did now with the AIM video critique but I feel the PBS producers were very responsible and conscientious in putting together a great detail of the Vietnam War. Along with the other texts, the AIM video is a good inclusion that helps us understand that there can be very opposing cogent attitudes about Vietnam and that bias can sway the delivery of factual information.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Cameron Cole - Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 10:56 PM

After watching the Aim Video and after reading the textbook, I found that the textbook was definitely more reliable due to the unbiased information. The information from the textbook was made from the insight from first hand people who was actually on the ground during the war. I got the impression that the AIM video information was influenced by the media and propaganda that has been falsely created over time. In other words, I feel that the information is based off opinions rather than real, factual information with evidence or from a reliable source. For example, the AIM video portrayed the French Army as a blood seeking regimen that was out promoting violence, when that was not the case. Also, when the brought up the point where Americans and French governments were supporting each other in taking Over Minh. Secondly, the South Vietnamese and North Vietnamese a reasons for fighting are a little biased, as well as contradicting.

On the PBS series, Kenneth Moorefield called out or American soldier's Faults and magnified them to make it seem that they were very barbaric, almost to the point to where they could be considered murders. I feel that that isn't accurate in the sense that things that happened in that war were very brutal, but our solders did what was necessary in order to insure the safety of theirs self's and their fellow soldiers. The Herring book includes information on this, more towards the tone that I personally feel, which in a sense is totally contradicting the Aim video because the textbook is unbiased, and has reliable sources to the subject.

Even though I am disagreeing with the content of the AIM video, I feel that it still serves a purpose because it is really nice to see different sides to a story. Many different people feel defritentyl about certain situations and it is good to see all sides to story because that's the most important task in finding the real truth. The PBS series is not flawless by any means PBS creators were accountable and thorough in detail about the facts of the Vietnam War.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Rebekah Rundstrom - Saturday, April 27, 2013, 12:49 PM

I like how you have all the evidence laid out. I completely agree with you on the AIM video being influenced by the media and propaganda. I think it's interesting how if we didn't have these additional books, to cross reference with, I could find myself believing the AIM videos. It is nice to hear the different sides of the story, but I think it's beneficial for us to find the facts, and then search for them else where to make sure we are being fed the correct ones.

I think if you study any war you will find soldiers who are more barbaric. If they are looking for what "sells" in the media, they will look for the worse story of some encounter the soldier had. I too thought that, that was a bit unnecessary for those two soldiers to be put on a pedestal like that.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Ian MacDonald - Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 10:56 PM

One of the biggest conflicting differences I have noticed between the PBS series *Vietnam: A Television History* and the two text books is the portrayal of the United States role in the war. The AIM video claims that it is the Americans who are the ones that are made out to seem like the "bad guy." And after watching the episodes of the series that I have so far (especially the very last episode **America Takes Charge**), I can see why the AIM video drew that conclusion. One specific example is the part in the episode "America Takes Charge" where the Americans were trying to clear a village of Viet Cong. All of the local villagers who were questioned about the event talked as if the American marines just came in and started slaughtering people which I find to be a bit stretched. Undoubtedly there was a lot of chaos and violence that took place because that's what they had to do. As former captain Edward Banks said, "You never knew who was an enemy or a friend." The way that whole episode was set up seemed to sympathize more with the Vietnamese victims and make the Americans out to seem more ruthless than what they probably were.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by John Howland - Thursday, April 25, 2013, 3:38 PM

Do a web search on the My Lai Massacre.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Ian MacDonald - Thursday, April 25, 2013, 6:30 PM

John

I am aware of what took place during the My Lai Massacre and agree that that was a pretty dispicable act on the side of that battalion led by Lieutenant Calley. My previous post was mainly directed towards the raid of that specific village of Vietnamese that it talked about in the episode "America Takes Charge." I am not saying that every single decision made by the Americans were justified or even called for, however I can definitely see how being a soldier in that war and a lot of the time not being able to tell the difference between who was a friend and who was an enemy would drive you to the point that it did with some of those troops. In the case of the village that was raided in that episode, I believe what the Americans did was justified. As private Jack Hill said, they had been pinned down for hours taking heavy fire. When they finally did get into the village, the only way they could get anyone to come out was by dropping grenades and firing their weapons off because that's the only way they would "get the message." I think if that had been me and I had been pinned down for that long trying to avoid getting killed and listening to other troops around me being killed, by the time I got into that village, I would be doing everything I could to find the enemy too, even if it met using somewhat brutal force.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by John Howland - Friday, April 26, 2013, 8:38 AM

Now don't get me wrong, I was not passing judgement on any of the soldiers for what happened in Vietnam, what I was trying to point out is the way a group like AIM doesn't show both sides of the issue.

I know the feeling of being pinned down for hours and even days in the rain, where we slept in a ditch, in five inches of rain. Or, how about the number of times I was working on a wounded 18 yr old soldier, and watched the fear in their eyes as they slowly passed away. Or trying to keep a soldier from looking down, at their now missing legs, so they wouldn't go into shock. So I know how it can get and in Vietnam the people to blame were the officers that sent green Lieutenants to take charge of men, who had been in country for years. That is why there was so many deaths from "friendly fire", yes, some where accidents but others were by men who couldn't lose another soldier to the actions of green command. (just in case someone doesn't know what I mean by "green", it's a soldier fresh in country who has never seen action).

The one thing I will never say is that it was justified, killing innocent villagers because you can't tell which one is the enemy only gave the Viet Cong more ammo for propaganda against the US. We claim to be

better than those we fight because we never lower ourselves down to their level of abuse but it seems that we have not learned that lesson yet. We just change the name from torture to "intensive interrogation".

Sorry if I seem very passionate about this, but I've lived it and going back brings back some very dark memories.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Brendan MacDonald - Thursday, April 25, 2013, 5:46 PM

I agree that there probably were certain instances during the course of the war (the My Lai massacre) for instance where the mistreatment of Vietminh civilians was unnecessary and taken too far. However I can definitely see why in the specific village raid they discuss in the episode *"America Takes Charge"*, those kinds of things are done. As one veteran in the episode Private Jack Hill is explaining, they had been pinned down in the rain and mud for an entire night taking heavy fire from enemy Vietcong, they were nearly driven to the point of insanity because of it, and when they finally did get into the village couldn't distinguish between civilian and enemy. I can somewhat place myself into the boots of those troops and try to imagine what it would have been like and can definitely see why they were driven to the point of destroying everything of suspicion after enduring what they had.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Cameron Cole - Sunday, April 28, 2013, 8:59 PM

The AIM video is not all completely useless, it brings up many good points that one can take and use for this course. One example would be the information on how the POW's were treated by of the North Vietnamese and their techniques on how they went about torturing their prisoners, while also digging into the information about how the United States armed force treated their captives under the strict guidelines of the Geneva Convention. They described the differences between the two, which was a very good source to see how the prisoners of war were treated during this time period. Torture techniques used by the North were very brutal and inhumane, they starved, severely tortured to the point of death. Lastly the information about the Massacre at Cambodia had very good information on it as well because it the information was not biased in any way and it can be compared with other sources as well.

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Sum of ratings:3 (1)



Re: Continuing the discussion

by Brendan MacDonald - Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 11:00 PM

One thing that I have made the observation of is that the *Vietnam: a Television History* series and the two books portray American soldiers differently. For example, in this week's episode "*America Takes Charge*", the company of marines who were ordered to go into a village a short distance away from where they landed and clear out enemy Vietcong. This scene in particular makes American troops out to seem like rabid beasts that went in and slaughtered innocent Vietminh civilians and burnt down the entire area and all its inhabitants without another care whatsoever. They interviewed a number of survivors of the village raid and included their details on what happened; and according to many of them, the American troops went in and senselessly murdered all of them. The AIM video clip touched on the point that the series portrayed American troops in this fashion. And I can certainly see how they would gather that opinion. I think the two books we are reading give more justification as to why these events played out like they did.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Georgia Haskell - Sunday, April 28, 2013, 10:37 PM

In the "America Takes Charge" episode they mention briefly that the platoon was fired upon from the village and they couldn't see from where. So they are in a place they have never been before and they are getting fired on and the civilians and VC are all wearing regular clothes. I think the PBS series in an effort to come across as unbiased actually focused more on the victims of the village than the circumstances that the soldier were in (in this particular part of the PBS series). They mentioned it, but did not focus on it making it seem like they were making the American soldiers look bad.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Georgia Haskell - Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 11:23 PM

After watching the AIM part 2 and reading the NYT article on the AIM part 2 and the PBS series, I agree with the tone of the NYT article. The AIM segment said that the PBS series gave an "inaccurate political history". They said that the PBS series portrayed Ho Chi Minh as a nationalist instead of a communist. I did not get that impression while watching the PBS series. The impression I got of Ho Chi Minh was that he was fiercely dedicated to his cause of reuniting his country and that was his first priority, but that he was also a communist. Once again, like in the first part of

AIM, they argue over the wording in parts of the PBS series. In the second part of the AIM sequence they say that the PBS series implies that the American soldiers were somehow not as good of soldiers as the VC. That is absolutely not what I got from the PBS series. I saw that the American were not used to guerrilla war fare and had to adapt to a new country, culture, and way of fighting. In AIM they also made remarks about Jane Fonda helping Ho Chi Minh win the war and that PBS portrayed American soldiers as drug addicts. This made me wonder if I was even watching the right PBS series. I have only watched four episodes so far, but none of these accusations hold true, as far as my impression of what I have seen.

I think that out of all of our material so far in the class the Herring book seems to have the most factually correct, truthful, and the most unbiased information on the Vietnam War.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by John Howland - Friday, April 26, 2013, 8:46 AM

Absolutely, the AIM clips are nothing more than propaganda by those who refuse to admit that the US made mistakes. You can't learn from the past by trying to change the facts.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Rebekah Rundstrom - Friday, April 26, 2013, 10:08 AM

Do you think that in a way, they could be trying to bring to light something else? If you think about it, we don't know too much about the producers or even really a motive behind it other than to point out others mistakes. The whole time I've been watching it, and am wondering if these producers are some of the antiwar protesters...trying to still protest the war. I don't know, just a thought.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by John Howland - Saturday, April 27, 2013, 12:22 PM

I'm not sure I understand what you are saying. Are you saying the AIM people or the PBS people could be anti-war protestors? I doubt the AIM people because they are definitely pro-war and as for the PBS people, that could be possible but it doesn't make the series any less

valid. I see the series as an attempt to show the different sides of the conflict, allowing opinions from both sides to be heard. I saw none of the complaints made by AIM and I've watched the whole series twice, once when it originally came out and again for this course.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Rebekah Rundstrom - Saturday, April 27, 2013, 8:15 PM

I was thinking that both of them could be anti-war protestors. I don't know I guess that I was just thinking about what could possibly be driving them to make all these false or rather twisted forms of information. I agree the series shows many different sides of the war. I just want to know what encouraged them [AIM] to make these videos. Just like you I haven't seen any facts they have brought up in our PBS videos either. I am just trying to find a motive for the publication of these videos.

Perhaps I was too hasty in thinking out loud. But just wanted your opinion because through all the posts you seem very very passionate about this topic [which is great!] and I wanted to hear what you thought.

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by John Howland - Saturday, April 27, 2013, 9:30 PM

Any form of thinking is a good thing, it's when you stop thinking and believe anything put in front of you is when the problems start.

What you must understand is that, when the AIM clips were made, the powers that be were running around trying to figure out how to explain to the people of the US what happened in Vietnam. The far right conservatives wanted, no needed, to deny that the US had done anything wrong. If they admitted it then they must admit that they failed, and they can never admit defeat. They haven't changed to this very day..

So think out loud any time you want, it's a good thing!!😄

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Jon-wesley McLeod - Sunday, April 28, 2013, 2:35 PM

I think many Americans have been pumped so full of pride and nationalism systematically that they think America can do no wrong. There is justification for everything. Politicians/Military leaders create a Gulf of Tonkin situation, spin the evidence, and initiate retaliation based on unsubstantiated hearsay masking the true carpet bombing scheme that was planned months earlier. I appreciate McNamara admitting his involvement and the mistakes he made in Vietnam, but the damage was done, and the lives were lost from the constant rhetoric these politicians were spewing back and forth in Washington, halfway around the world from the front. Failed policies concocted by people with no clue about the situation on the ground gets good soldiers killed. After watching the PBS interviews in the fourth video and reading more of the Appy text really makes one understand and empathize (even though I could never comprehend) some of the soldiers thoughts before, during, and after the War. Some of the epiphanies they had while in the midst of battle are incredible, life altering realizations. The far reaching effect that a bureaucrat can have without even realizing the implications is scary as seen with James Thomson signing off on Air Reconnaissance missions without even realizing that he had given American pilots free range to attack not only Vietnam but other parts of Indochina. Finding out later he said "I was authorizing quite a bit of killing with no knowledge of what it was all about and it staggered me." (Appy p.116) I'm pretty sure the families of the innocent victims were more than "staggered"

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by John Howland - Sunday, April 28, 2013, 4:33 PM

Precisely, I couldn't have said it better. Although, I don't feel there is justification for everything, there

are excuses and reasons someone does something but justification has a higher meaning. To be "just" it must be in keeping with truth or fact.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion



by Patrick Haider - Sunday, April 28, 2013, 8:36 PM

That is the reason I have such a hard time watch the AIM series myself. It is hard to ignore politics of the time when trying to talk about the Vietnam War. It was a war that in some ways could be perceived as a reaction to public fear of communism, which was in my opinion a politically fueled fear.

It is easy to see the parallels to the Iraq war of today. Many people disagree with us going there in the first place, and our government lied about the reasons for us to go there. However, because of it's political nature the proponents of the Iraq War still strive to convince the public that it was a just cause. That is what I get from the AIM videos. It seems like a production put together for the purpose of convincing the public, and themselves, of the just nature of Americas actions in Vietnam.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion



by Michelle Coming - Sunday, April 28, 2013, 11:38 PM

I agree with you that the fear of communism was/is a politically fueled fear. I hear people using the word communist as an insult, and I wonder if they actually know what the word means or if they're just going off of the ingrained fear of communism.

I get the same thing from the AIM videos, they definitely seem to be trying to convince someone that our involvement in the Vietnam war was the right thing to do. The biggest issue I see with this crusade against communism is that no one ever

really explains why communism is the root of all evil as they portray it to be. All you hear about in arguments against communism is that it's a horrible way to rule a country but it's never backed with reasoning as to why that is.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Jon-wesley McLeod - Friday, April 26, 2013, 7:03 PM

The Herring Book does seem to have the best empirical evidence when presenting the Vietnam War. It's laid out in a manner that you can somewhat understand the positions that people were in while making decisions without being too critical of them in retrospect. The Appy book shows the emotion and unique personal eyewitness accounts that bring empathetic feelings essential to identifying with individuals who were a part of this war while the P.B.S. series gives us a visual account of one of the first highly documented conflicts.

While watching the AIM video, I also thought "was I watching the same P.B.S. series as these guys?" I have yet to see some of the same accusations, watching only half of them so far, but after reading the NY Times article said that the AIM video was "interested mostly with its own point of view." (Corry, NYTimes Article), my thoughts on the AIM video's biases were validated.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by John Howland - Saturday, April 27, 2013, 2:08 PM

I was surprised by the amount of people who couldn't see the AIM clips for what they were. I went so far as to go back and rewatch them to see if I had missed some redeeming value, to no avail. They tried to trash the PBS series using misinformation, omission of facts and outright propaganda. I am not alone!

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Cameron Cole - Saturday, April 27, 2013, 3:45 PM

I also had to watch the AIM clip a second time to see if I was missing anything that was significant. I felt almost like the AIM Film producers

were trying to persuade the viewers to take their side of what they thought really happened, "even though, (in my opinion) the information they were saying had many faults, especially the part when they were saying that we did not do anything wrong, when that was clearly not the case. crimes/faults were definitely made but the actions of few should not represent the whole reputation of our whole military during the war either

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Patrick Haider - Sunday, April 28, 2013, 8:52 PM

I found it interesting reading the NY Times article. In particular John Corry in the article states; "How can the medium present grievances against itself? Print journalism has op-ed pages, letters to the editor and other devices for this. With few exceptions - ABC's "Viewpoint," for one - television has none."

I think this quote really solidifies the article as a product of it's time. In the 1980's media forms were very seperated, and this just doesn't hold up today. In the age of the internet information is so widely available that all forms of media, be it books, television, or otherwise, have devices in place to present grievances. You could be watching an episode of the PBS documentary on YouTube and then with just a few clicks be on an article from a newspaper or magazine. You could even find other opinions and shows directly on YouTube.

These days I really don't see lack of informative devices as much of a problem, as long as you take the time to seek more than one. I would say that it is true that we still have inaccuracy in media, maybe even more so, but there are also many more resources to cross check. I for one get my daily news from multiple free media YouTube channels, as well as multiple podcasts. This helps me to get a diverse perspective on what is happening in the world.

This all makes me wonder what the public perception of the Vietnam War would have been like if they had had the number of resources back in the '70s and '80s as we have now?

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Continuing the discussion

by Cameron Cole - Sunday, April 28, 2013, 9:17 PM

You make a great point about the how the medium can create grievances against oneself. The Media today is more unified because of the countless news stations as well as the Internet as you pointed out. Back then I feel as though the media was separated into groups who believed in certain ideologies. Today there are just so many options to choose from to get certain information, which almost makes it impossible to created biased information on certain subjects. The key to finding reliable sources is to research your topic as deep as you can to find accurate information. For example, using textbooks, Internet, videos, friends, teachers, anything. If the people back in the 60 's 70's 80's had the type of information that we have now, (In my opinion) it would have been the same, if not worse, because that was the first televised war where the American people saw the disasters of war. It may have made it worse because it would have been more accurate and visual to the people. I do believe that people would have gotten the right information though as the decades went on though, which would have helped all the confusion about this conflict. You made great points in your response.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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