

HST 195: History of the Vietnam War Sp14 (Escobar Meta 42384)

Home ► My courses ► Spring 2014 ► HST 195 Sp14 (Escobar Meta 42384) ► April 13 - April 19 ►

Forum 1 ► Week 1 - Determining the Truth

Search forums

Forum 1

Display replies in nested form

Move this discussion to ...

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



Week 1 - Determining the Truth

by Joe Escobar - Monday, April 14, 2014, 10:42 AM

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.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post.

To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Week 1 - Determining the Truth

Sum of ratings: -

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Confidence in Accuracy

by Jessica Mitchell - Tuesday, April 15, 2014, 9:48 PM

When I look at the various materials, I look at them expecting to see different views. This was a war that was seen in vastly different perspectives. That was the common knowledge I came into this class with. I also have an expectation to see materials that cover the various sides of the story. Both of those expectations have been met so far.

I was surprised to learn what I did when watching the AIM video, though. To have such big details and pieces of the puzzle missing, the murders of 1945 & 46 of non-communist national leaders, a possible 10,000 people killed, (AIM historian Morris) for example, makes me wonder what other big pieces PBS may have omitted from their program.

That being said, I think our jobs as students is to question the material that is put in front of us. Ask ourselves what points and facts match up, what is more plausible of two differing points, etc. Weigh the facts we are given out and decide which has most substance. Don't just blindly accept, but really question them. I think going into it with a mindset of uncovering the truth, rather than a mentality of memorizing facts is a beneficial one. Also to realize that each of the books and the videos aren't meant to give a complete picture on their own, but each is meant to fill in a bit of the puzzle, and when put together, a whole picture is formed.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Confidence in Accuracy

by Ryan Ronning - Sunday, April 20, 2014, 7:45 PM

Hi Jessica,

I am just like you, I look at our materials expecting to see different views, and honestly I enjoy the different views because it give me a much better grasp on what really happened.

I am also very disappointed to find out that their were some very large pieces of the PBS movie missing, I feel this does us a large injustice as students when trying to gain knowledge of the Vietnam war. I applaud you for thinking outside of the box and how you look to match up information to come to a true conclusion of the events that took place. I just wish we had multiple reliable sources for out studies. I my opinion the PBS movies are no longer a credible source of information. I will continue to watch these movies but I think I will always question their credibility.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Confidence in Accuracy

by Dylan Ornas - Sunday, April 20, 2014, 10:26 PM

Hey there Ryan,

I feel I should caution you about completely discrediting the PBS documentary. While it does leave out information, most of it is covered in either of the two books we are assigned. In fact I feel we can learn possibly even more about the Vietnam war era just by looking at the partial bias the documentary shows. It allows a limited view into the psyche of the american film producers 8 years after the war and how there still was very little will to show the other side of the picture in full.

On a slightly different note, it is a film documentary. There is not necessarily time

to include everything in such. Especially given that the series is already 12 episodes long. This isn't to say that there are things that really SHOULD have been mentioned that give a clearer picture of the whole conflict but I believe that is where our other class materials come in.

In a way we are forced to take a more critical look at the course materials and fact check in between the three when omissions or discrepancies are revealed. In effect forcing us to really mix the three to get a full picture and not just skimming or watching the video with very little reflection.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Accuracy vs. Mislead views

by Jordan Derrick - Wednesday, April 16, 2014, 9:14 AM

Hello classmates and Joe,

In the readings most, but not all the stories match up between the two text books and PBS video. The stories that do not match up are usually from two different sides of the war for example, the wife of Diem in the PBS video called the burning of the monk a "barbecue." While in the text book by Appy Malcolm Browne talks about how the monk sacrificed himself and had the reader feeling empathy towards the monks and taking their side. A specific example is when Malcolm states (page 69 of Appy) "I was numb, but at the same time I realized that this was something of great, great importance, so the immediate task was getting the film set by air..."

Malcolm Browne's wife Le Lieu Browne, has a different opinion of Diem's wife. She thinks that when Diem's wife talked about the "barbecue" she was having a translation problem, and she wasn't actually that rude, but instead; " was a victim of her own ignorance."

Now, the text book is not misleading, it is giving the opinion of two different sides in this case, and one may feel like it is misleading, but it is all in the way the stories are studied. Our text books can help us approach the video, and help us feel confident that we are learning the truth, because usually between the Herring text or Appy text there is a story that matches up to the PBS video.

Between the texts, and the PBS video we have a good idea of what happened, but I believe that no one will ever be able to know the exact truth of what happened and why it happened.

I hope everyone has a great rest of the week, and I look forward to reading everyone's posts.

Sincerely,

Jordan Derrick

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Accuracy vs. Mislead views

by Ryan Ronning - Sunday, April 20, 2014, 11:09 PM

Jordan,

Great forum post. You brought up something I have failed to realize and that is different views and a language barrier of sorts. When the monks sacrifice was described as a bbq that is something quite harsh and not true at all, but from that persons point of view bbq was the right word, perhaps because the man was on fire like a bbq.

After thinking about this I now plan to read and watch with a more open mind as far as language goes. I will pay more attention to the tone that the writer is using and that should paint a good picture of the tone they are trying to use.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Forum 1, Who to Believe

by Katherine Frank - Wednesday, April 16, 2014, 1:37 PM

There are many dissimilarities between the Aim video, the PBS video and our book (Herring). I chose to focus on the mass emigration of the Catholic population from North to South. According to the book "Viewing a mass emigration from North Vietnam as a possible means of tipping the political balance toward the South and perhaps even winning the(proposed) 1956 elections, the French and Americans actively encouraged the Northerners to cross the seventeenth parallel. Within weeks, Northern Catholics began pouring into the South, at the rate of 7,000 a day".(Herring, page 57)

According to the PBS video (episode 1) the CIA dropped leaflets on the North suggesting that the communists would attack and kill the Catholics, so we put them on transports and dumped them in the South, a predominately Buddhist area.

Yet again, the AIM video suggests that the Catholics fled to the South on their own because they had already been attacked by the communists under Ho Chi Minh and they were afraid of more attacks.

I believe all of the above are true. Having watched our governments actions behind the scenes in other instances, I believe we advocated for and encouraged the 900,000 mass exodus of Catholics for our own purposes. However I don't think it was very hard to convince people to leave a country that had attacked them before.

As far as the Ho Chi Minh trail not being mentioned (AIM video, Durbrow) or acknowledged in 1960, according to the PBS video (episode 1) Group 559 enlarged and constructed the infiltration route that became known as the Ho Chi Min Trail.

I can find fault with all of our resources, but when we put them all together we get a better picture of the actual events, all of it still troubling.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Flaws of Western History



by Coulter Dawson - Friday, April 18, 2014, 2:40 PM

Finding fault in all of these sources is easy since history is usually written by the victor who was usually a white male. In this case the victor was not a white male. The victor was Vietnamese male and female guerrilla soldiers.

In this case history would be flawed with any historians from the losing side trying to write about the Vietnam War. Shifting blame of why we were in Vietnam in the first place. With so many speculations such as the Domino Theory, aiding the French after World War II, and to end Colonialism.

With the AIM video, PBS series, and Herring's America's Longest War not factually supporting one another in multiple events, it shows why the losing side should never write the history. They cannot agree on the events of the war and will never admit that they are wrong. The only way to find truth in the events of the Vietnam War would be Vietnamese recounts of the war to support or deny facts in our history of the war.

Another example that would happen later in history would be the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Soviet history cannot agree on many accounts of the war and neither can US historians. If the real truth is wanted the Mujahadeen would provide the best historical accuracy.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Flaws of Western History



by Jessica Mitchell - Friday, April 18, 2014, 8:52 PM

Hi Coulter, I have to disagree with you that only the victor of any given war should be the teller of the tale. In any war the victor and the loser will surely disagree as to what took place. And for that reason it is essential that both are part of the re-telling.

It is impossible for any one side of something like a war to know and understand comprehensively what happened on the other side, what motives were had on the other side, what strategies were had and for what reason on the other side.

I think it is impossible to believe any one sides accounting completely, all sides will have bias. Whether they have won the war or lost the war. Our job as students is to look at the materials subjectively and recognize the information will be relative to the writer.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Flaws of Western History



by Justyn Dockery - Sunday, April 20, 2014, 10:51 AM



Jessica,

I agree with you that it is wrong for only the victor of a war should not be the only one telling the story of what happened in a war. However, often times the side of the fallen is usually untold, or the victor suppresses the story of the fallen to the point where no one ever hears about it.

When I think back about the history I learned throughout grade school, I remember reading and discussing history from a Eurocentric, Anglican, or White vantage point. I believe that the history we are exposed to within the United States is biased towards white people, because in a majority of historical stories or events I learned about growing up the "good guys" were the white people, and the information or stories presented from the "bad guys" was either nonexistent or marginalized.

Lastly, you close your post with, "our job as students is to look at the material subjectively and recognize the information will be relative to the writer." I would agree this statement, but I must ask, how does a student decipher between the legitimate facts and the information that is only relative to the writer?

Sum of ratings: 2 (1) Show parent | Edit | Split | Delete | Reply



Re: Flaws of Western History

by Jessica Mitchell - Sunday, April 20, 2014, 7:19 PM

Justyn,

I guess I would start by saying I don't think there is a clear cut yes or no answer as to how to do that. The only way anyone can know something to be fact completely is to see or hear it ourselves. Since we can't do that a great deal of the time we have to choose what has the most weight, what is most believable, what has the most evidence to prove it. Lies and mistruth can sound authentic and truth and fact can sound far fetched. All we can do is use our best judgement, take as much information as we can and try to put the puzzle together.

It's also important to say that just because the information is relevant to the writer it doesn't make it false. Not all of the people who are telling a story have the whole story to tell. They can be being truthful even without providing the whole story. They could be telling the truth of what they witnessed, unaware that they missed a whole scene of the show.

In response to the notion that the history we were exposed to as children was biased to the "good guys" or white people, maybe that is true. But I think it is also true that in the present those white people are painted as a lot worse then they were or are. The way stories get told

sometimes changes depending on the climate of society at the time it is being told. Current politics and opinions have a tendency to affect the way people see and relate our past.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Political Slant in History

by Zoe Valentine - Wednesday, April 16, 2014, 4:59 PM

Personally, I find that political slant that comes from party affiliations sometimes will have an affect on how the people choose to present their information. It's pretty clear in the AIM video that it has a more conservative view, and with the PBS video, there is more of a liberal trend. Unfortunately, I think political slant sometimes causes people to omit important historical information in order to win the audience over to an opinion they're trying to convey. I do believe this happened in the PBS video. A good example is when they are discussing the elections that were part of the Geneva accords. As the AIM video points out, "no elections were promised at Geneva," (AIM historian "Loebs") and the United States were never bound the the Accords. The AIM video claims that this is a strategy to make the United States and Diem appear as the villains, while turning Ho Chi Minh into a hero figure. I personally found it a little odd that the PBS video was showing a lot of sympathy towards Ho Chi Minh. However, the AIM video seemed to have a hint of "Communist fear-mongering" in it – at some points almost seeming to claim that PBS is a supporter of Communism.

I think it's very important when you're learning about history to try and look at it from as many sides as possible. There is definitely an opportunity for that in this class. For instance, I think the Herring book is very neutral – it doesn't seem to villainize one side over the other. And where the PBS video apparently fails, I think the Herring book does well. Going back to the instance about the elections, it honestly surprised me when the AIM video said the PBS video omitted this. I think this was because I remembered reading it in the Herring book, so it was already present in the back of my mind. In Herring's book, he states that during the Geneva Convention, the United States chose to remain neutral – "If the agreement lived up to its standards, the administration would issue a unilateral statement of endorsement. Otherwise, it would reserve the freedom to 'publicly disassociate itself.' Under no circumstances would it be a 'cosignatory with the Communists,' and it would not guarantee the results." (Herring, p 48)

The “moral” of the story is to not let yourself get clouded over by political rhetoric. I think it’s important to have an inquisitive mind when learning about a topic where a hugely vast set of opinions are involved. Always checking for sources, or seeing what another expert has to say is really valuable – I think this is the best way to deal with conflicts of information.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Truth vs. Reality

by Keeler McJunkin - Wednesday, April 16, 2014, 5:08 PM

When looking at all of the information we've been provided, I find it hard to figure out who and what to believe. Learning about any war throughout history there are going to be many different opinions, stories and ways events are presented to us. We have to decide what is "real" and what isn't. This is expanded even more regarding a war like Vietnam. Widely regarded as the most controversial of American wars with so many differing views and perspectives on why and what we were fighting for. The AIM video really reinforced my thoughts on this. No matter what we look at, some people will always say it's not true or that it really happened in a different manner.

For the most part I have liked the PBS videos we have watched. They seem well put together, informative and make it fun to learn more about the subject. The AIM video made me question this a little bit. Did they really leave out such pertinent information as the non communist leaders being killed or the murders of up to 10,000 people? If this is true we are forced to question some of what we are learning. Are we getting the whole story? Like I said, I don't think we can ever really know for sure what exactly happened and why. We have to form our opinions based upon what we learn and what's presented to us as factual information. We weren't there on hand when the events happened, So unfortunately it's our only option. All we can do is take all the information out there, carefully look at it and try to make a well informed decision on what we want to believe.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Truth vs. Reality

by Dylan Ornas - Wednesday, April 16, 2014, 9:44 PM

Hey there Keeler,

I definitely agree with you when you refer to making an informed decision. I also believe however that it isn't necessarily what source to trust or which not to trust. There seems to be much overlap between all of the materials. This isn't to say that the PBS video doesn't have its moderately obvious hero/villain complex going. We may have to take into account all the materials together. Our reading in Appy's compilation did reveal the non communists left in the north being persecuted during the radical land reform campaign. (Appy p.46-47) It seems as though some materials in the course are almost meant to check the others. It seems very hard to write or produce something about the Vietnam war without some sort of bias one way or another.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Quest for Factual Accuracy

by Justyn Dockery - Wednesday, April 16, 2014, 6:17 PM

Before this class started and I looked through the materials list for this course, I had made the assumption that I would be learning about the Vietnam War from several different perspectives. However, I had never really considered I may be exposed to information that could be contradictory or misleading but, after all, this is a history class, and trying to decipher the truth with complete accuracy is likely an impossibility.

When it comes to dealing with conflicting information, especially in an academic setting, I believe we must start examining the sources of information and there motives or reasoning's for sharing

the information contained within there works. For example, the Herring book was written for a collegiate audience and, as quoted on the back of the book, "America's Longest War: The most widely used book for history of the Vietnam War in colleges today, and it is likely safe to say the Herring book was written to inform college students about the history of the Vietnam War in a factual manner. So, considering this book was originally written for the collegiate world and is very popular with several colleges, I believe the information contained within this book has been careful read and checked for accuracy from countless scholars.

On the other side of motivation behind sharing information you have the PBS video series. Although Douglas Pike explains the goals of the PBS video series as supplying a contribution to the historical record, provide an antidote to the misuses of history, to contribute to healing and notional esteem in the post war era, and the series will contribute to historical methodology, but as pointed out by Pike, these goals were presented so PBS could receive funding to produce the videos. (AIM, "PIKE" 2:23-4:24) Unfortunately PBS did not accomplish their goals as outlined in their proposal for funding, but I believe PBS did accomplish their true main goal, although possibly hidden, to produce a video series that entertains people, so PBS can make a profit. After all, we are living in a capitalist society, and even though PBS is publicly funded, the corporation and its employees have to make a living just like anyone else.

With the afore mentioned reasoning's or motivations behind the Herring book and the PBS video, I believe it should be fairly easy to take the information presented within the Herring book as factual, because I believe this book was written for the purpose of providing factual information. As far as the information contained within the PBS video is concerned, I believe that the information contained within the video that coincides with the Herring book should be considered factual, and when the PBS video series information is a contradiction to the information in the Herring book, the Herring book should be considered the accurate information.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Quest for Factual Accuracy

by Katherine Frank - Friday, April 18, 2014, 11:41 AM

Hi Justyn,

I, like you believe that we will read, see and hear many sides to the Question of the Vietnam War. I , however believe that we need to keep an open mind on all of this material. With that in mind, Pikes AIM video started with a comment by Irvine about Pol Pot and the "Fall" of Cambodia intimating that it fell because of the domino effect. It fails to mention that Pol Pot was a communist who, after killing approximately 2 million of his own people was overthrown by the North Vietnamese army, fled to the jungle and was there after supported politically by the U.S. and the U.N.

Maybe we should be evaluating the PBS video on its own merits, the AIM point of view on its merits and the book in the same way. I do believe, as you point out that the book seems to be very factual. While AIM suggests that Diem was very well known, honest, strong character and the best known living nationalist. The book and PBS seem to disagree(Herring, page 66) leaving us to ponder the motivation for the AIM video.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the Truth

by Cody Lloyd - Wednesday, April 16, 2014, 9:03 PM

When you are evaluating information on something as controversial as a war you need to realize before hand that you are going to hear very conflicting information on the same events. Some sources giving information may have ulterior motives, bias opinions, and maybe even distorted memories of these events. I feel that academically it is important that each student understands this and does their own additional research to find the truth for themselves. When you evaluate information you need to look at accuracy, similarities with other information you have found and look into how credible the author really is. Does this author have a reason to bend the truth or tell the story from a different light? The truth will always be consistent.

I feel that the text book states both sides with both views with the interviews and is probably very accurate. This helps me feel confident because many of the events in the videos match up to the book.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Llyod has a point

by Jordan Derrick - Thursday, April 17, 2014, 5:04 PM

Hello Cody Llyod,

I enjoyed reading your post, and agree with most of your statements. "When you are evaluating information on something as controversial as a war you need to realize before hand that you are going to hear very conflicting information on the same events." (Llyod)

I totally agree with your point here, and I think that there is two truths about the war, one from both sides of the war. On my post above I talk about about a couple from the Vietnam war. Each has a different view about the war Malcolm Browne believes the monk's suicide was really heart wrenching and then his wife sort of justifies when Diem's wife who called the suicide a BBQ. I explain the whole situation from my view point above.

Also, there are different opinions of Ho Chi Minh. In chapter one of the Herring book he seems to be a good leader to the country, but in the PBS movie I feel like Diem is put on a higher pedestal. I would love to hear your opinion on this. I could be wrong, and would appreciate some advice.

Thank you,

Jordan Derrick

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Week 1 - History, what to believe

by Ryan Ronning - Wednesday, April 16, 2014, 9:10 PM

History is one of those interesting subjects where you are learning about events that have taken place in the past, those events should speak for their self and the facts should never change, right? That's where I begin to realize the "facts" become a blurred picture of what was once a reality. Some things are set in stone and the cold hard facts of those events will never change, however a war that lasted as long as Vietnam will always have conflicting reports. I aim to achieve a better knowledge of this war through this class and reading multiple reports of events seems to be helping me do this.

For me when I come across conflicting reports I always look at the source of the information first. Was the person was there? Do they have anything to gain by falsifying their reports? For me I have found in this class the stories from the book Patriots to be the most accurate. These stories are first hand accounts from different perspectives, it allows for more than one view/opinion. hearing the first hand accounts is the best way in my opinion to gain knowledge, from my experience every time a story is passed onto another person a part of that story is lost and or forgotten, as seems to be the case with the PBS DVD's.

I found myself to be discouraged when watching the AIM video, I was not disappointed with the (AIM) video but rather the 3 PBS episodes I have watched thus far. As Charlton Hesston proclaimed in (AIM) (Vietnam a Television History 1983) was terribly flawed. I was not sure what he meant by this at first but after further explanation It became clear. This was a series designed to fit certain needs and they did not live up to their obligation of reporting on accurate history.

I hope to not let this get in the way off how I gather information from future PBS episodes but I am sure in the back of my mind I will be wondering if the information I am hearing is accurate or not. The books however I seem to believe on a much higher level and I am getting a lot out off Patriots so far.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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How to decipher true from false.

by Jordan Derrick - Saturday, April 19, 2014, 11:14 PM

Hello Ryan,

I hope your first forum has been going well for you.

I enjoyed your forum post for this week, and agreed with you in many areas, like when you talked about how Vietnam is such a long war that there will always be conflicting reports.

Your second paragraph helps me out a lot, and I think it will help the rest of the class out as well. You made a "list" of how to tell us how to figure out if a source is valuable or not.

I am really worried about the PBS videos now, I don't want to get my facts mixed up with what might be true in the books, but the movies contradict. I feel like they are jumbled in my head right now. I also, feel like the Patriots book with all the personal

stories is the one feeding me the most information. Perhaps it is, because it is easiest to read?

Hope your weekend is great,

Jordan Derrick

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - History, what to believe



by Kelsey Rodgers - Sunday, April 20, 2014, 9:43 PM

I also found myself believing in many of the personal accounts of the Vietnam war. I felt that if the person was there then who am I to tell them that they are wrong about something. Although another student brought to my attention that some accounts might not be quite as accurate because of the fact that a person had lack of knowledge about certain things. Or the fact that people also sometimes have a bias.

I agree with you about watching the videos though. It's hard not to question everything they tell you. Although reading the books certainly does help fill some of the holes in information PBS seemed to have just decided not to mention.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - History, what to believe



by Cody Lloyd - Sunday, April 20, 2014, 10:12 PM

I have to agree with you Kelsey when you say "I also found myself believing in many of the personal accounts of the Vietnam war. I felt that if the person was there then who am I to tell them that they are wrong about something." (Kelsey Rodger) I find it hard to argue with someone who was actually there. The only reason I am able to question this is because I think emotion can really change the way you remember things. The war was very hard and ugly and I can imagine it was hard not to let that change the way you perceive what happen. I tend to question the information given from any source. Some people have injuries that might change their mind because they don't remember it correctly, they might have a bias opinion, and they might not have all the information about what was going on.

Good response!

Thanks!!!

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the Truth



by Kelsey Rodgers - Wednesday, April 16, 2014, 10:09 PM

While reading the books and watching the videos I did realize there was some conflicting information. I found that a lot of the information was a little different because there were different points of views on things. For example in the Appy book a man from vietnam who fought in the war claimed the U.S. planned to bomb them the whole time and that it wasn't just because of their attack. Where the video and book hints that there wasn't really a plan to bomb vietnam until after they had decided to attack. In the video I also noticed that they played down the fact that the United States helped avoid a nation wide election because it favored them. They actually seemed to avoid saying a lot about how the United states were pushing their ways of life onto the people of vietnam instead of just making it mold more to the vietnamese values.

Big events for the most part were the same between the Herring book and the PBS video. When you read the personal accounts of the war though, is when you start to question how things really were. For example the reporter from the Appy book said "I'd heard stories that U.S. pilots were actually dropping bombs, so one day early in '61 I went out to Bien Hoa, the biggest military airfield in South Vietnam, to have a look. I was barred from entering but I watched from outside the perimeter fence and saw two-seat T-28s taking off with racks full of bombs. When they returned, I could see that their racks were empty and there were smoke stains behind their guns. As often as not, a vietnamese was sitting in the back and actual pilot was blond and blue-eyed and obviously not from vietnam." (Appy p.66-67).

To figure out if I am learning the right thing I try to check multiple resources like you already have us doing. There is almost always a bias coming from people but having multiple views helps us understand what really happened. The video makes me check back and see if the stories match up. This way I feel more comfortable knowing that I am learning accurate information. Having the two books to compare to the video is also very helpful because it does fill in a lot of the pieces that the PBS series doesn't mention.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the Truth



by Dylan Ornas - Sunday, April 20, 2014, 6:40 PM

Hello there Kelsey,

While reading your post, I couldn't help but agree with your statement regarding the need to take all available information and compare and contrast it. As you say, it is so important to have a critical eye when reading (or watching) historical material as it tends to be bias towards the victor (when talking about conflicts).

One thing that your post got me thinking about however was the accuracy of eye witness accounts. For all intensive purposes reporters tend to try for no bias. This is not to say that they don't have any, just saying that that is the general attempt. Bias, however, is not the only thing that can skew a story or start a rumor.

With these following statements I am referring to the excerpt from the story regarding american pilots dropping bombs before "officially" being allowed to. The United States military supplied South Vietnam with all the weapons of war long before U.S. direct involvement. This included the pilots trained to fly western military aircraft. Unfortunately the US took a dim view of the skills of Vietnamese fighting forces and

were hesitant to pass of an aircraft worth a substantial amount of money to an ill trained pilot.

What I am getting at here is that in eyewitness reports, there may be many sources of error. Included could be a lack of knowledge on military hardware. The T-28 Trojan attack aircraft was a two seater. As with most two seater attack aircraft the pilot sits in front, while the bombardier/weapons specialist is seated behind. The story on page 66 of Appy's book has a technical yet glaring mistake. It specifically points out that americans were flying the aircraft. If the story is to be believed, than the americans (at least in this specific instance) could not be the ones dropping the bombs, it would have to be their vietnamese bombardiers. In all reality this may have been a convenient way for the US military to be directly involved without having to admit that they themselves dropped the bombs. I am not saying that Malcolm Brown was wrong in saying that US pilots were actually dropping bombs, I am merely saying that every bit of information must be taken with a grain of salt and a judgment (like Brown made) should not be hastily concluded.

This has been a theme I have found while reading Appy. It is really hard to determine if an eyewitness account is accurate without knowing the extent of expertise in the field they are talking about.

Herring and the PBS documentary seem to be less susceptible to this and yet more susceptible to a bias by producers or editors. Moral of the story, I agree with you wholeheartedly when it comes to the need to survey all the material and not allow ourselves to deem one more accurate than another without the facts.

Anyways have a great rest of your Sunday evening.

-Dylan

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Room for Error



by Justyn Dockery - Sunday, April 20, 2014, 8:43 PM

Dylan,

Before reading your contribution to the forum, I never thought about the possible errors in eyewitness accounts. When you wrote, "What I am getting at here is that in eyewitness reports, there may be many sources of error. Included could be a lack of knowledge on military hardware," I began considering the possibilities. I realized I might have made my decisions on who or what to believe between the two texts compared to themselves and or the videos.

In Regards to the credibility in the Appy book, I never realized regardless of report bias from the authors and publishers that errors in an eyewitness story could occur. The example you provide of a lack in aircraft knowledge skewing the eyewitnesses' view of an aircraft bombing made me realize I need to compare the information with more detail and scrutiny.

Thank you for bringing this to my attention,

Justyn "Doc" Dockery

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the Truth



by Kelsey Rodgers - Sunday, April 20, 2014, 9:36 PM

I guess I really never thought of it that way. When reading the Appy book I honestly just believed that the eyewitness accounts were all true. I understand where you are coming from though, some people misunderstand things and it could lead to things being interpreted wrong. Also do like your point on PBS having their own certain bias. It was helpful getting your feed back, I think it helps me understand more of why some things don't match up completely. Everyone, in a way, has their own personal agendas, knowledge, and memory of what happened. These are all things that can slightly misinterpret a story.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the Truth



by Coulter Dawson - Wednesday, April 16, 2014, 10:21 PM

Dealing with academically conflicting information was hard to do back in 1983 when the PBS series Vietnam: A Television History was produced. People had to read through archives, book and declassified documents to get facts or supposed facts about the events and other happenings during the Vietnam War. With the war ending 8 years from the series production, the media, soldiers, and civilians' accounts of events that happened during the war were very different from each other at some points. Separating fact from fiction was difficult at the time. The PBS series was called a "kaleidoscope of images" and "contributes to historical misunderstandings" by Accuracy In Media for the inaccuracies in the PBS series (AIM Historian Heston).

Our two text books, Patriots by Christian Appy and America's Longest War by George C. Herring, can help approach the information in these videos since the two authors are both very well versed in the subject and have done loads of research. Both being published author, they have their writing reviewed by their publisher and probably a third party so that the information in the book is true and relevant.

Conflicting information from the books and PBS series compared to the AIM video is rare and catastrophic. Such that in the AIM video, they said that Ho sold out his partner that helped form the Communist Party in Indochina to the French police in China for gold and then used that gold to protest his partners arrest(AIM historian Heston). But that was never mentions in the books or the PBS series.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the Truth

by Katherine Frank - Thursday, April 17, 2014, 2:24 PM

Hi Coulter,

I agree that the PBS video was only 8 years past the turmoil of the Vietnam era so it would have been difficult to do a completely impartial program. It may still be. I have to look at the history of Charlton Heston, the NRA and AIM and see where they stand on other issues to decide how much weight to attribute to their video. PBS does seem to be putting forth a somewhat biased video, but having graduated high school in 1965 and seeing and hearing first hand the beginnings of this faze of the war, it doesn't feel that far off. I too look to the book for a more historically correct portrayal of events. As far as "Uncle Ho" is concerned, as with Hitler, the more we learn the less we like. It'll be interesting to see where PBS goes from here.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the Truth

by Name Withheld-3161 - Wednesday, April 16, 2014, 10:54 PM

what is a history? I think history is using multiple way to record what happened in the past. And it also should be record truth to public. We all know war is unmerciful thing, we can not really choose a side to judge it. There are no reason to start war and killing people anyway, even if media told people which side they should choose. Text and Video are two common way to tell people history. however, people who record the history, they also has own opinions about that memory. They would add this opinions to their book and video in subconsciousness. To me, i don't really believe any opinions of history recorder. The reason is government never accept the book has opposed view against their proposition. The government will not tell you the truth about war.

The historical knowledge can let me know what happened in that special time. we have thousand of book describe the war from different history recorder(Appy p12), some of them are U.S policy maker. They only tell people what they think from that history. in the another way, in Vietnam would have silence about that war, and young generation will not remember and respect people who die in this war(Appy p13). War is a monster which kill people have no right reasons, but we also need remember this history to avoid war happen.

Thanks so much.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the Truth

by Zoe Valentine - Saturday, April 19, 2014, 4:31 PM

Hello! I like what you had to say. I also think it's good to hold some skepticism about any one person's historical account. Subconsciousness has a powerful sway over what people write, even if they are trying, consciously, to not let previous opinions get in the way of neutrality. This is especially true with government accounts, as the government always wants to make itself look good. I think the best method is to gather

lots of information from all kinds of sources, and form your own opinions on the subject.

But, like you said, it's very important not to ignore history. We all need to learn from the past mistakes.- Zoë

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Zoe's reply

by Jordan Derrick - Sunday, April 20, 2014, 7:17 PM

Hello Zoe,

I think that your reply post mentions some good points, when looking at history it is important to "hold some skepticism," and when you mentioned that "subconsciousness has a powerful sway over what people write," I agreed with you. When you talked about the government wanting to make themselves look good I laughed a little, because it is in general true. I wonder how the war would have ended up if the government would have been more honest with its people about the status of the war?

I also, wonder if your statement about, how subconsciousness has power in the mind if that is true to everyone, at least in some degree. I hope that if someone relied on me to tell my important story, that I would be able to do so exactly how it happened.

Thanks,

Jordan Derrick

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 1 - Determining the Truth

by Shelby Wilson - Thursday, April 17, 2014, 7:57 PM

As early as my American history class in high school we have discussed how fluid history is. We were told to try and imagine how the history book of German student would be concerning world war 2. Since every situation has two sides facts will reflect

For example from the story from Roger Donlon "We were babes in arms in every way."

"The central government was trying to do some things to give the impression that it was in control..." (Appy, 12) The people the government was trying to convince would only be able to infer by what information they were exposed to: the same can be said for history.

With that, I believe that we, as the curious creatures we are, must seek out information and make deductions from there.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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