

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

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Week 2 - Continuing the discussion



by Joe Escobar - Sunday, April 20, 2014, 10:14 PM

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 (NOT overall), as having the more correct/accurate/truthful interpretation or reinterpretation?

Sum of ratings: -

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Re: Week 2 - Continuing the discussion



by Name Withheld-3161 - Wednesday, April 23, 2014, 8:50 AM

In all foreign wars in American history, the Vietnam War for the first time is the most widely reported by American mass media. At all stages of the war, the mass media also showed a different attitude to the government's war policy. Emerging from the initial strongly support to doubt, until finally a fundamental shift in attitude, and fiercely attacked the government, anti-war development climax.

In the United States, the mass media profoundly affects public political bias and political atmosphere. Sometimes even for some special political purpose and they intended to convey some distorted or misleading information. Most people think that if they do not accept some kind of politics, they will be excluded from the mainstream politics, so that they show identity to political inclination of media. Along with the Vietnam war and the increasingly serious domestic problems, American media's attitude for the government is different from the previous. Changes have taken place. During this period, the media exercise of the right for the President and his government to strengthen the supervision and restraint, which lead the government had problems with the news media. The mass media and the government interact in the war, media reported on the war strongly and turned in key stage of the war, which to some extent contributed to the end of the war.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Media manipulation

by Patricia Richards - Wednesday, April 23, 2014, 2:47 PM

It sounds like you're linking the end of the American Vietnam war with the bias of the media, which affected the political strategies. This is a valid point and I had a similar connection when viewing the second part of the AIM video, specifically when they mentioned the "parade that never was". If you remember, this parade was said to be the third longest parade ever, having lasted nine hours, down Fifth Avenue in NYC. American citizens marched in support of our troops, with signs saying, "VICTORY!" and other messages supporting the commitments in Vietnam. Like the AIM video mentioned, the anti-war protests received far more news coverage than stories of support, such as the parade on Fifth Avenue. I, too, see the relationship of politics and media, one reason being the fact that our country, the world even, had never watched a war from their dinner tables. I imagine the shocking sight of atrocities molded many opinions. Another reason is that we Americans have proven to be so affected by, sometimes distorted by, what the media chooses to throw at us, whether it be product marketing or politics and culture; for lack of better words, the media "owns" us. Like a domino affect, we disapprove, the politicians feel their oh-so-precious approval rates diminishing, they make decisions. By no means am I saying every war decision is based on media and public opinion, but it certainly contributes.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Media Control

by Justyn Dockery - Wednesday, April 23, 2014, 3:07 PM

Patricia,

I could not agree with you more in your claim that the media owns us, and I also agree that the media and public opinion do contribute to the decisions made when our nation is at war. However, I believe that the government itself has control over a large portion of what the media does show or tell about, so indirectly the government is controlling the media that controls "we the people" which allows the government to make the decisions they want to make with the support of the people since the government has control of our main sources of information. So with that being said, I would like to ask you how do you decipher between what information is being presented to you as more of form of propaganda or government/media biased angle and actual cold hard fact, or do you feel like the government does not have any direct or indirect control over the media and the bias or inaccuracies lie solely with the publishers and broadcasters of the media in question?

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**Re: Media Control**

by Name Withheld-3161 - Saturday, April 26, 2014, 8:53 AM

Justyn,

As for the role of mass media in political, or the political functions of the news media, the function of news media has two sides. On the one hand, it can be effective restriction of government and the political process, and guarantee citizens' basic rights. On the other hand, it could be used by the ruling group, become the tool government use to control the society.

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**Re: Media Control**

by Juncheng Qian - Sunday, April 27, 2014, 10:27 PM

I agree with your point, citizens should keep their own judgment not just totally follow that media or government said.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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**Re: Media manipulation**

by Jessica Mitchell - Wednesday, April 23, 2014, 8:34 PM

Patricia,

My conclusions were very similar to yours in regard to media's oversaturation of anti-war coverage as opposed to coverage of things that supported the war effort. I think your point about it being the first war that was watched from the dinner tables is important too. That fact gave a whole new level of meaning to the propaganda machine. They could reach people, daily, in their homes, and by providing one bit of information over another could sway public opinion and favor in whatever direction they wanted.

I think this is a practice that still at least tries to work today. Though in our time we have more sources of news and information and can root out what we find to have the most truth now.

Regarding the "parade that never was" the AIM video most definitely has my vote for accuracy, as it is the only source that bothers to mention it. How anything that large could go without mention in a documentary about Vietnam is beyond me. As Mr. Heston says, "Popular support for our troops was never as newsworthy as demonstrations against the war." And while I immediately find that troubling, I also find that telling, about the state of the media's biases during the war.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Media manipulation

by Name Withheld-3161 - Saturday, April 26, 2014, 8:58 AM

Jessica,

Channels of news media are not only the performance of public opinion, but also can make broad and deep reports based on specific events and attract the public attention to the event, thus opinions naturally formed among most people. Media, especially television, Internet and other modern media, through information bombing and image, is easy to create immediate public sentiment and public pressure. This leads that the government should take corresponding political action.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Media manipulation

by Name Withheld-3161 - Saturday, April 26, 2014, 8:56 AM

Patricia,

The mass media, as a specialized organization, meet the need of social demand in mass communication activities. The activity was infiltration to the all process of society and all areas of life. That is to say, media activities is never alone and isolated. Through reflection, clarify, all kinds of social phenomenon and social problems, realize its social value. But it also affected by politics, economy, culture and other various kinds of relationship of bound and control. Dissemination of information is one of the media function. Mass media is in the important position of political socialization, and it's the media as the mouthpiece of the essential attribute.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 2 - The Debate of Inaccuracies Lingers

by Justyn Dockery - Wednesday, April 23, 2014, 2:57 PM

Between the reading and video viewing assignments for this week there is one inaccuracy, or incomplete picture portrayed in the PBS video that stands out in my mind more than anything else; not telling the behind the scenes reasoning for increased US military personnel in Vietnam. In the PBS video series we see President Johnson talking about why the US is involved in Vietnam, and we hear Johnson say that the US must fulfill its promise to those who believe in us in preventing terrorism. Although this series of scenes is not blatantly wrong or inaccurate, the PBS video does not paint the larger picture regarding America's reasons for a continuation of the nations involvement in the Vietnam War. Furthermore, the PBS video does not seem to shed much light, if any, on the propaganda of the Johnson's administrations many flag campaign among our nations allies. (Herring 180)

In the Herring book we learn the tactical strategy employed by Westmorland required a regular increase of personnel commit me in Vietnam, and the text reads as though the Johnson administration launched the many flags campaign in response to the needs of Westmorland's tactics. (Herring 180) However, the PBS video seems to ignore the fact that the US needs to send more military personnel to Vietnam for tactical reasons, but instead the PBS video seems to focus in on the mobility and tactics used by the NVA and guerilla fighters.

Lastly, with respect to what source to be more correct or truthful when conflicting information arises I continually find it harder for myself to choose one source over the other; especially when comparing the videos, because both the PBS and AIM videos seem to be more concerned with pushing their own personal beliefs or understandings of the events that led up to and occurred during and after the war instead of giving a holistic and accurate depiction of the events that truly occurred. However, I personally have not been able to find any blatant or obvious biasness or inaccuracies from the Herring book, so I will choose to continue to take the Herring text as the most accurate source for this course.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 2 - The Debate of Inaccuracies Lingers



by Kelsey Rodgers - Sunday, April 27, 2014, 9:31 PM

I couldn't agree with you more on pretty much every point you have made. I too felt that the PBS series seemed to leave stuff out. I don't feel they really gave so much as false information, but that they seemed to just not mention certain events. The Herring book went into a lot more detail about events and explaining why things happened the way they did.

I really liked that you brought up the fact that both the PBS series and the AIM videos had their own own beliefs of like you said understandings of what happened and were trying to force people to see it their way. I agreed with some things the AIM video pointed out that the PBS video didn't mention. Mostly because I also read those events in the Herring book. In some parts though, the AIM video said things that I felt they were taking out of context and trying to push what they believed onto people.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 2 - The Debate of Inaccuracies Lingers



by Justyn Dockery - Sunday, April 27, 2014, 10:15 PM

Kelsey,

In regards to your last statement about the AIM video trying to push its own agenda, I could not agree with you more. When examining the AIM video, I find it of paramount importance to recognize who the narrator, Charlton Heston, is and what he stands for. According to Wikipedia, Heston was originally a democrat in favor of more liberal polices, but he eventually became conservative and supported the Republican Party. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlton_Heston) Furthermore, I believe it is important to add that one of Hestons most important or memorable contributions to the political realm was in his five-term presidency in the NRA (national rifle association). Even without having this knowledge of Heston, one can easily see the conservative views within the AIM video being project in a manner that encourages the viewer to agree completely with the information being presented; but once anyone knows any background information about Heston, the narrator, it becomes even more apparent that the AIM video is trying to push a conservative ideology of information regarding the pertinent information of the Vietnam War and the problems within the PBS video series.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Looking at the best sources.

by Bryan Sanders - Wednesday, April 23, 2014, 3:10 PM

All of these sources we've been presented with have provided us with lots of detail about the war. They've also offered us various interpretations and angles on events that happened. Episode 4 of the television history on Vietnam reinforces the idea that America is trying to crush a legitimate Nationalist movement and causing more harm than good. American soldiers and Vietnamese peasants are interviewed to back this up. However, any atrocities that the NVA and Viet Cong committed are largely ignored. Ho Chi Minh's communism is mentioned early in this series, but subsequent episodes diminish this aspect of Ho. The AIM documentary didn't hesitate in painting Ho as a communist. The NYT article touched on the television history and the subsequent rebuttal wonderfully.

I also appreciated the AIM documentary's mention of the Tet Offensive, which was spun as a loss by the media but in reality was a tactical victory for us. The television history episode 1 told us this was the first televised war, and the AIM documentary told us the effect mass media played at the time.

On Ho's communism, I thought AIM did a better job of covering it.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Looking at the best sources.

by Juncheng Qian - Sunday, April 27, 2014, 5:19 PM

I have the same feel with you, the PBS series are trying to transfer an idea of anti-war into our mind, that makes me feel more about the both PBS and AIM series have their own tendency.

Sum of ratings: (1)

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Re: Looking at the best sources.

by Kelsey Rodgers - Sunday, April 27, 2014, 9:37 PM

Although I agree with you on most points that you made, I feel that the AIM video wasn't that much better than the PBS series that we have watched. PBS and AIM just seemed to have very different views on things. PBS in a way to me seemed to leave out some information but then even when they did tell an event the I felt the AIM video twisted their words a little. Partially because they didn't agree with how something might have been worded. I just got the feeling that AIM was more pro war and PBS maybe slightly less and leaned more towards the anti war. I guess what I am trying to say is they both seemed opinionated and may have strayed from the facts a little to benefit their own story.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Looking at the best sources.

by Bryan Sanders - Sunday, April 27, 2014, 10:13 PM

Both the PBS series and AIM documentary contained bias. This bias is what drove each to interpret events differently. Their treatment of Ho Chi Minh and Ngo Dinh Diem is case in point, with PBS sympathetic to Ho and AIM sympathetic to Diem. The straying from the facts you mentioned was omission of information. They reported on events and details, but only the ones benefitting their side. This is not to say their bias completely ruined it. AIM critiqued Ho well, just as PBS critiqued Diem.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Define reliable.....

by Patricia Richards - Wednesday, April 23, 2014, 3:13 PM

The big question in my mind this week, was whether or not "we" (the U.S. troops) were the good guys or the bad guys. In episode 4 of the PBS series, one of the Vietnam vets correlated the revolutionary war to the Vietnam war. This was a comparison I made in last week's forum, regarding the strong-willed Colonial army being much like the North Vietnamese army. It was not until I heard this vet's analogy of feeling like a "red coat", hinting that he felt like the Americans were coming in and strong-arming a people that were passionately fighting for their independence. The was a revelation for me because I think we too often assume the U.S. indeed is on the right side of a war.

Between the PBS series and the AIM video, it is fairly clear that the series is more liberal in it's approach, whereas the AIM video is more conservative. I personally get a more human view from the series and a more political view from the AIM video. Although it can be difficult to decipher between which is a more accurate portrayal of the mindset of the American troops, it is crucial to hear both renditions and form your own conclusions.

My vote for most accurate seeming form of information we have been exposed to at this point in the course, would be the Herring book. It seems this text more equally deals with both the human side and the political and/or military side of the war, in comparison to the Appy book, which absolutely deals more with the human side. Yes, I prefer the read of the Appy book, mainly for the emotional connection, but the Herring book has a more equalized tone of sorts. Specifically, Herring gains reliable credibility by utilizing historical facts, dates, and quotes; Appy information is mostly derived from personal accounts, memories, and opinions.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Defining what's reliable

by Bryan Sanders - Thursday, April 24, 2014, 8:38 PM

There is a political slant in both sources, but defining one over the other as 'human' depends on what you consider more 'human.' If you mean which one invokes emotion better than the other, the PBS series does a good job with episode 4 alone showing soldiers and Vietnamese shaken up by what happened. The AIM video, on the other hand, shows the atrocities committed in Cambodia. Both seek to invoke emotion to help win people over to their thinking.

Whether we were good guys or bad guys in the Vietnam War may be harder to ascertain. We helped a lot of people there, but as we've seen there were some misunderstandings and unnecessary bloodshed. If you see Ho Chi Minh as more a nationalist than communist, then it's easier to see the United States as the bad guy. If you see it the other way around, then Ho looks more like a villain.

Our Appy book, *Patriots*, actually mentioned at the beginning of Part 3: Escalations that China and Russia were some of the suppliers of the NVA and Viet Cong. This account comes prior to the interviews shown later in the chapter done with the people involved in the conflict. Also, Ho's prior travel to places like France and training in Moscow were mentioned in the PBS documentary. Page 13 of the Herring textbook said that Ho held prior ties to Moscow.

On the other hand, the PBS documentary showed us Archimedes Patti, who believed we missed a chance to make Ho an ally. Abbot Low Moffat said in Episode 1 that Ho Chi Minh was primarily a Nationalist before a Communist. Ho even used our Declaration of Independence in a speech he gave when World War II ended.

On our side you had policy makers who believed containing Communism had to be a priority, so backing efforts in Indochina wasn't a stretch for them. Ho the Nationalist would then be the unfortunate target of a misguided policy. Ho the Communist would be just another puppet of Moscow.

The U.S. troops themselves went over following orders. As we've seen there was plenty of good and bad. In the long run whether we can say the troops were the ultimate good or bad guys may just depend on interpretation.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Define reliable.....



by Jessica Mitchell - Saturday, April 26, 2014, 4:24 PM

Patricia,

My stance is that there was not a good and bad guy in this conflict. What I draw from all of the sources is that, rather than there being a right side or a wrong side, there were many sides all either misunderstanding each other or assuming, or posturing or just completely naive to each others positions. There was clearly manipulation and propaganda going on from all sides, as well as factions attempting to capitalize on the situations for personal gain, and the gain of their parties and platforms. I think that is what I take away from them primarily. And because that is the impression I get when I put them all together, I see all of the sources coming from a very human standpoint. I think politics is human. And I honestly think the feel and humanistic approach that the PBS program shoots for is highly motivated by politics.

The most unpolitical source is the Appy book. Though some political viewpoints are expressed, they are that of individuals and not of producers or political parties. I see those as being the ones I connected with most emotionally in the class thus far. The Herring book, I agree is the most accurate single source of information so far. It is the most universal of the sources in balance as well.

I trust all the sources to a degree, some more than others. When I am watching the PBS episodes I watch it with the knowledge that is going to lean slightly to the left of the issues in this conflict. I watched the AIM videos knowing that they would lean more to the right of the conflict. I read the Corry article from a completely unbiased standpoint, and came away from reading it and seeing that it seems to criticize AIM as well as praise it where it is fitting, that it does seem to be unbiased in political stance.

In summation I think all of our sources are valuable to our understanding this conflict as best as we can. I also think it is important to state that there really was no clear right or wrong side to this war. It would seem that every re-telling, and every opinion of it varies in some way from the next. So, even if there was a right or wrong side, we may never know for sure.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Re: Define reliable.....



by Debra Moran - Sunday, April 27, 2014, 10:30 AM

Jessica

I agree that the Corry article is the most unbiased of them all and since it was written in 1985 and the initial flurry of controversy had passed it should be the most unbiased of them all. It is refreshing to read something that doesn't seem to have a political agenda.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Can Reliability be Defined



by Justyn Dockery - Sunday, April 27, 2014, 8:20 PM

Jessica,

I believe you make a bold statement in regards to the Appy book having the least amount of bias because, as you say, the viewpoints expressed are that of the individuals and not of producers or political parties. I would have to agree with your reasoning behind your belief of the Appy book being unbiased, but how do you, I, or any of our colleagues know definitively that the stories presented inside this book are in fact directly from the individuals telling their stories, and the stories have not been altered in anyway by Appy or the publisher? I personally believe that the Appy book has stories from such a large amount of varying perspectives that the book is unlikely to be biased, but I feel as though we are all having to make informed assumptions in regards to factual accuracy and biasness.

Lastly, and in regards to the Corry article, bringing attention to the fact that this article gives both praise and criticism of the AIM video is an important piece of information, in my opinion, and the lack of apparent bias from the Corry article has helped my own understandings or beliefs in what source to believe and when. However, I am still not convinced that we will ever be able to know the whole truth about this war or any war with supreme accuracy, because there will always be conflicting information and room for bias between the various perspectives of the people involved in the wars.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Define reliable.....



by Name Withheld-3161 - Saturday, April 26, 2014, 10:55 PM

Patricia,

As for what source to be more correct or truthful when conflicting information, from my perspective, both the PBS and AIM videos seem to be more concerned with pushing their own parties' personal beliefs or understandings of the events, rather than giving a holistic and accurate depiction of the events that truly occurred. I hold similar point with you. I personally will choose to continue to take the Herring text as the most accurate source for this course.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Define reliable.....



by Juncheng Qian - Sunday, April 27, 2014, 10:37 PM

I feel like PBS series and AIM video are stand in two different party's support, reporting by two different way of view. Like PBS series feels like metaphor American's troops are not that good in the war.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Media madness



by Debra Moran - Wednesday, April 23, 2014, 9:43 PM

My personal choice of the materials provided tend to lean towards the text (Herring) it seems to be the most accurate I mean it is a textbook with the use of facts, dates etc. Herring's book is less inclined to propaganda. The media played too big of a role in the war, and that weighed in with the American public and created an animosity that would never have happened without the bias influence of the media. I find that the videos tend to leave me feeling like I am being twisted to believe their agendas. I have always been troubled with the fact that the media was so bias in their anti-war stance to the total disregard of the soldiers. Heston was dead on when he said and I am paraphrasing, popular support for our soldiers was not as important as anti-war protesters. The PBS video reminds me of the 5'o'clock news at times and I can remember my getting so ticked off at the TV my mom

outlawed it during dinner, That is how I feel sometimes watching these things I get angry on behalf of the soldiers.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Media madness

by Name Withheld-3161 - Saturday, April 26, 2014, 10:17 PM

Debra,

Couldn't agree more with your point that a textbook with the use of facts,dates,events is more convincing when looking back at history. When a program is funded or controlled by certain parties, its opinion would be greatly influenced by the parties' standing points, which will be biased. As for the PBS series and AIM video, they may be at the standing point of democrats and republicans. In conclusion, Herrings book is less inclined to propaganda and I tend to concern more about Herring just like you.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Media madness

by Jessica Mitchell - Sunday, April 27, 2014, 3:51 PM

Debra,

I completely agree that the media had a heavy hand in how the war transpired. They intentionally sowed seeds of discontent and it did the U.S. no favors with it's tactics. I think the same issues have happened in recent engagements that the U.S. has been involved in. Regardless of political stance, it effected our soldiers negatively to push an agenda via the news media rather then just reporting the news.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Media madness

by Juncheng Qian - Sunday, April 27, 2014, 4:31 PM

Media report could be provocative and prejudice, but I think the Herrings book also have some sign of trend of personal point even it trying to keep in the middle, that cannot avoid so as readers we need compare and keep claim to think about what the side of them.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 2 - Continuing the discussion



by Kelsey Rodgers - Wednesday, April 23, 2014, 10:26 PM

I have noticed that the three different sources we read and watch every week are all a little different in their own ways. The Appy book is specific when talking about the feelings of the soldiers. It really goes into their personal experiences. The Herring book, although it can be personable, it mostly shows the political moves and how the governments were reacting to things. The video on the other hand seems to show a narrow view of the war and sometimes matches up really well with the Herring book, but sometimes it doesn't mention or completely leaves out certain events. As the AIM video mentions PBS doesn't exactly praise the troops a lot especially the south vietnamese troops. What I liked was in chapter five of the Herring book and in many chapters up to it, they mention how all the change and sudden money made things harder in vietnam. Also the fact that there was a government in South Vietnam that wasn't liked that the U.S. was clearly supporting. The book I felt made things more clear and somewhat showed that it wasn't exactly just our troops keeping things going in Vietnam, it was also the South trying to fight for what they wanted. By far for information I am liking the Herring book. It has so much information, specific and a broader picture. The Appy book is great for the personal effect but it does jump around a little. The Herring book is well organized and pretty clear and seems so much more accurate. Personal views can exaggerate and change stories a lot. The Herring book seems factual and doesn't seem to leave out even the bitter information that some Americans might not want to know.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 2 - Continuing the discussion



by Debra Moran - Sunday, April 27, 2014, 10:09 AM

Kelsey-

I find myself going to the Herring book for the specifics or the historical accuracy, but I do enjoy the more emotional side of the Appy book. I do agree with you that the Herring book is definitely more factual but I do have to disagree with you with your statement that some Americans might not want to know the "bitter information" about the war. Americans for the most part support the troops as well as the government whether they agree or not and during the war the media played a big role in what they saw and since there was a large anti-war party they whipped it into a frenzy. But most Americans I feel, want to know even the most bitter information to form their own opinions.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 2 - Political Bickering



by Zoe Valentine - Thursday, April 24, 2014, 9:43 AM

My final conclusion and feelings about the PBS series and the AIM video, is that it's just another conflict between democrats and republicans, and frankly, it is tiresome. I think both the PBS series and AIM provide both truths, but also party-influenced falsehoods or

"exaggerations." It's hard to believe something that seems so obviously funded or backed by one specific political party. Like I said last week, I think it's important to keep an open and critical mind, and refer to many different educated sources.

While watching the last half of the AIM video, I found myself particularly bothered by the way it was portraying Diem – that he wasn't really a cruel dictator, just a man trying to rule the country as best he could. To me, this seems particularly like a government trying to save face for bad decisions. On this point, I am more inclined to take the side of the Herring book or the PBS video. Diem may have been a man trying to rule his country the best he could, but I would not say that he was a strong ruler who knew well how to run a country. To me, he seemed paranoid, stubborn and dependent to a fatal fault. The AIM video likes to claim that there was nothing "puppet-like" about Diem, and there may not have been... but he was so dependent on the U.S. that he would've collapsed immediately if we hadn't been by his side. "... the [Eisenhower] administration publicly proclaimed miraculous success where little existed and applauded South Vietnam's stability while producing an almost totally dependent regime that consumed millions of U.S. dollars." (Herring 87)

However, this is not to say that while watching the AIM video, I totally disagreed with everything they had to say. I have been rather disappointed in the PBS series for not showing much of anything positive about the American involvement. I do agree that there were a lot of mistakes made by the U.S. in Vietnam, but the events which happened after we pulled out have always disturbed me. The treatment of Southeast Asia by the Pol Pot regime makes me sick. "What we were trying to prevent came to pass, and the results were horrendous for the people of Indochina." (Stearman, AIM video). In this way, I think that the U.S. involvement must have at least been doing *something* good.

So to conclude, there are aspects of both the AIM and PBS videos that I find legitimate. However, because of the political slant you can find in each, I am most inclined to fall back on the Herring text as a kind of guide towards what I should believe. Herring's writing seems to try and be as neutral as possible, which I think is important when writing a history.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Portrayal of Diem



by Bryan Sanders - Friday, April 25, 2014, 4:59 PM

The point you made about Diem was covered by the Herring book. On page 79 it says Michigan State University Professor Wesley Fishel conceded, "Diem had employed authoritarian methods but argued that Vietnam's lack of experience with democracy and the threat of communism left him no choice." Page 76 says that democracy was alien to Diem, and on the following page it says Diem's model was Emperor Ming Mang. This helps to explain Diem's actions during his presidency.

On Diem, the Herring book sides more with the PBS series. Ideas we take for granted like religious freedom were never embraced by Diem. We see this with his treatment of the Buddhists during his presidency described at page 114 with the Buddhist crisis. Diem had a habit of resisting calls for reform in his country by the United States, reform which may have helped him preserve peace and order.

His belligerence to the United States doesn't convince me he was a puppet. However,

on Diem and his authoritarianism the PBS series and especially the textbook did a better job. Diem's reputation as an anticommunist appears to be enough for the creators of the AIM documentary to overlook the flaws of Diem. On that subject, they are what the textbook would call apologists on page 79.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Week 2 - Political Bickering

by Name Withheld-3161 - Saturday, April 26, 2014, 10:44 PM

Zoe,

I agree with your point that some source of information can reflect history more reliably, just like you said that Herring text try to be as neutral as possible. To a degree, I trust all the sources, but some more than others. Further more, in my point of view, all of our sources are valuable to our understanding this war, whether it stands for the democrats or the republicans, the left or the right, the north or the south, etc. They reflect their own standing points from different parties. As they are parties involved in the war or spectators or the witness, they together made the history. So all these sources of information contribute to our understanding of history. We should be diligent when watching all of them and get our own conclusion.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Week 2 - Political Bickering

by Jessica Mitchell - Sunday, April 27, 2014, 3:43 PM

Zoe,

I have found it disappointing also that the PBS series is painting an entirely negative and self serving portrait of the role the U.S. played in this conflict. The very fact that what we had been trying to prevent did indeed come to pass once we pulled out is an excellent bit of truth. Both PBS and AIM have obvious biases they are trying to convey in their programs, and that is unfortunate, as it makes learning from what happened both difficult for us as students studying the conflict, and our country learning from its mistakes a very hard task.

When news and media sources aren't unbiased and honest in their accounting of events the value of their information plummets. When producers and politicians both learn how to inform their audience without using propaganda, we will all be better equipped to learn from our past.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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