

HST 195: History of Vietnam War Sp17 (Escobar 42050)

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Week 3 Forum

Determining the Truth

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Determining the Truth

by Joe Escobar - Saturday, April 15, 2017, 6:28 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Determining the Truth topic.

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, something that describes which question(s) you are addressing . Do NOT simply leave it RE: Determining the Truth

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False depiction of Ho Chi Minh

by Maile Sur - Tuesday, April 18, 2017, 10:51 AM

I feel the most glaring contradiction for me was the way in which Ho Chi Minh was depicted in the PBS video series. I feel that my entire discussion last week was based off the impression that Diem was the one to blame, whereas the AIM video shows that Diem was actually favored over Ho Chi Minh, and the inhumane acts that Ho Chi Minh committed weren't even included. The PBS series dedicated quite a large portion of their second episode to talking about Diem's administration and the "secret police" carried out by his brother. The whole idea of the secret police really shifted my opinions of Diem and brought a harsher light to the kind of man he was. I'm not necessarily saying that I agreed with Ho Chi Minh because of any of that, but it

definitely made me forget about what Ho Chi Minh was doing in the mean time. Of which, we find out in the AIM video, that he was committing incredible acts of violence against basically anyone who didn't share the same communist goals. This includes the assassinations of non-communist people in 1945 and 1946 that is said to have totaled around ten thousand people (AIM historian "Morris," 20:46).

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Details of Ho Chi Minh in Soviet Union and China omitted

by Maile Sur - Tuesday, April 18, 2017, 11:33 AM

Was anyone else caught off guard by the the fact that the PBS video completely left out Ho Chi Minh's extensive education/time away? Not just his education in France, since they did talk about that momentarily, but the fact that he went on to Moscow to study at the Lennon Institute? I thought that whole segment in the AIM video where Dolf Droge was talking about Minh's educational pursuits and participation in the Soviet Union was extremely important, and by those details not being included in the PBS episode, I was given the wrong impression of Minh entirely. The part that talks about Minh bringing Vietnamese people to China to teach them about the revolution was quite important to me, as well. Since we find out that he would test them to see if they supported his communist views or not, and that he would secretly turn them in to the French for money, you can see that he was incredibly smart and pretty devious. And I think that's where the PBS series went wrong in not including these details. Finding out that Ho Chi Minh was devious gives me, at least, an entirely new outlook on his communist pursuits. For example, in the PBS video, I kind of viewed his rise to power as a noble story (minus the communist part, obviously). But they portrayed him as wanting a better life for himself and his people so he went to France to get an education and then he came back to implement all the good he learned while there. Whereas the AIM video kind of shows us that, yes, he did go to France and he did go to other countries and he did learn a lot. But he was devious in the ways he went about it. In the AIM video they say that the PBS video tried to portray Minh as a hero, and I agree with that statement. Had I known about the ways he went about his rise to power (specifically his betrayal of Vietnamese people that he would bring to China), I wouldn't have looked at him as a hero at all.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Details of Ho Chi Minh in Soviet Union and China omitted

by John Anderson - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 12:07 PM

I think it is very important to remember, Maile, that a large amount of 'truth' is a matter of perspective. Much of the AIM video's evidence that damned Ho Chi Minh was circumstantial at best. While I am not in any way attempting to defend Minh, I think that you should also take into account that the AIM video also chose to attack the Communist factor in the height of the cold war. During this period, it was not only popular to declare all communists mass murderers, it was insisted upon. The PBS series chose to take a more balanced approach to the causes of the war. This was not popular, regardless of the validity of their work.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Details of Ho Chi Minh in Soviet Union and China omitted

by Jay Autry - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 6:38 PM

Maile,

I could not agree more about how much important and defining information regarding Ho Chi Minh was conveniently left out of the PBS series. Although I agree somewhat with how they portray him as a nationalist, the ruthless communist side of his persona is completely left out. The PBS series did briefly mention the exodus of northern Catholics after the first Indochina war, but the reason behind this mass exodus is not thoroughly explained. I also found that the Herring text only briefly mentions this topic on pg. 57 which given its thoroughness on other topics I found surprising.

Your mention of his tactics towards his followers and how he would turn those with questionable loyalty over to the French was something I too found surprising. Although I have previous knowledge about some of the ruthless tactics, this was one that I was unaware of. It almost seems reflective of purges in other communist states such as the Soviet Union and even modern day North Korea. For Ho it was a way to keep absolute control but to an almost paranoid degree.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Contradiction and Debate

by Tyler Ritter - Tuesday, April 18, 2017, 1:18 PM

Tyler Ritter

Joe Escobar

April 18, 2017

Contradiction and Debate

Out of the info I have seen on both videos, I can say the most glaring subject of controversy with the PBS documentary is that they downplayed communism, "The communists weren't communist at all, they were nationalists" (6:50 Televisions Vietnam: The Real Story Part 1). I feel like, with this new info, it opens us up to see just how underplayed Ho Chi Minh and other communists were portrayed. It seems like they tried to undersell communism as not being that bad as long as you were also a nationalist, i.e. calling Ho Chi Minh a communist, but saying he was a nationalist first and foremost. Being new to Vietnam history I was willing to accept anything as fact, which I shouldn't have. I have been taught, especially in writing class, to research statements on your own.

I feel like we should go about misinformation with an understanding that everyone has different opinions, but facts can not be so easily disputed. I also think first person accounts can be very trustworthy, I mean they were actually there, but with a catch. Not everyone in the Vietnam war was up to speed, or knowledgeable of what was actually transpiring. I believe another

attribute to finding facts, is not trusting certain sources, like clickbait websites, tabloids, etc. If three verified expert sources say the same thing on a certain subject, does it give it a certain level of validity?

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Valid vs invalid

by Maile Sur - Tuesday, April 18, 2017, 2:59 PM

Hi Tyler,

I definitely agree with you. I'm very new to Vietnam history, as well, so I did the same thing and just automatically accepted the media in the way that the original video series presented it. There were a couple of dates and such that I had looked up just to make sure I was quoting the right information, but overall, I accepted it as fact. I also agree with your statement on first person accounts because like you mentioned, and like we see in our text, not everyone knew what was going on or what they were getting themselves into. A prime example is George Watkins. He said that he didn't know very much about Vietnam, and when he tried to learn more when he was there he said it was hard to find anything out (Appy, pg. 22, Watkins speaking).

As far as the question you posed there at the end goes, I feel that it is kind of difficult to determine that. To connect it to our class, there were multiple people who were involved in the making of the PBS video as far as writing and fact-checking go (more than 3), and their facts weren't necessarily wrong, they just didn't include everything there was to know. So if technically the information they included was valid, but just decided not to include all of the information, does that make their video valid or invalid? (I'm not saying I don't agree with your strategy of consulting three or more sources to determine if something is true or not, I'm just posing the question specifically in regards to the material we're looking at now)

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Valid vs invalid

by Tyler Ritter - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 8:37 PM

The question you posed is very interesting. I agree that they are technically not wrong since their info was valid. I just feel like they might not be trying to represent it in the most earnest way possible. Maybe they wanted to paint a different picture of the Vietnam war? Either way I think they are "pulling the wool over our eyes". There is not doubt that the PBS documentary did have valid facts, as well as pretty good opinions though.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Contradiction and Debate

by William Wyatt - Friday, April 21, 2017, 10:16 PM

Hey Tyler,

I couldn't agree more. From what we have watched in the PBS documentaries Ho Chi Minh seems to have been portrayed very inaccurately. Politician Abbot Moffat stated that Ho Chi Minh "was first a nationalist and second a communist." (21:15 Vietnam a Television History Episode 1). What is disappointing is that our government, according to the PBS documentary, "actually contributes to historical misunderstanding." (AIM Video), Ho Chi Minh's communist ideals were at times ruthless, and he certainly abused his power.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Re: Contradiction and Debate

by Tyler Ritter - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 4:38 PM

A little bit off my original topic, but does anyone agree with the notion that we (the U.S) where also just trying to "save face"? One instance I found of this was in the Appy book, "we cannon assert that a policy of sustained reprisal will succeed in changing the course of the contest in Vietnam. It may fail and we cannot estimate the odds of success with an accuracy.... What we can say is that even if it fails, the policy will be worth it. At a minimum it will damp down the charge that we did not do all that we could have done". (Appy, Pg. 81)

Also in the line, " Driving Washington forward, then, was the fear that a Communist victory in Vietnam would be an intolerable blow to American power and prestige." (Appy, Pg. 81) It really seems like in 1965, we cared more about saving face, then we did about stopping communism. Maybe I should say that we cared about saving face just as much as we did stopping the spread of communism.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: Contradiction and Debate

by William Wyatt - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 11:35 PM

Hey Tyler, I do agree with your notion of the U.S. trying to "save face." Fear of Communism was fabricated into the U.S. around WWII. The cold war, and the second Indochina war only intensified an increasingly prevalent belief that Communism could take over the world. In Lieu of those factors, I think the U.S. "saving face" and stopping communism where possibly two halves of the same coin. Before the second Indochina war any endeavor against communism whether successful or not was considered patriotic and heroic. On the other side, distressing events where occurring due to the spread of communism.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Re: Contradiction and Debate

by Kyle Martinson - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 1:39 PM

I agree with you that it seems like they were downplaying communism. Also the best way to get the most accurate information would be first person accounts although just like with everything else everyone would have their own version of what happened, that is what leads to the variety in the information available.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Re: Contradiction and Debate

by Jay Autry - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 7:03 PM

Tyler,

I also found the downplay of communism in the PBS series troubling. As you quoted, they referred to them as simply being nationalists and not communists at all. I do believe that this classification does apply more appropriately to the Viet Cong, as many of the southern villagers felt preyed upon and underrepresented by Saigon. Overall I do believe facts have proven that Ho Chi Mihn was indeed a firm nationalist (Herring pg. 6). Had he his request for democratic reforms been answered post WWI he may never have sought communist influence. That being said, those reforms did not take place and Ho became a founding member of the French Communist Part which eventually spiraled into the chain of events that would lead him back to Vietnam to exploit French vulnerability post WWII.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: Contradiction and Debate

by Maxwell Ahrenkiel - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 7:56 PM

Hey Tyler,

I like how you say we should go about dealing with contradictory information. It's really important to consider that everyone has their own point of view and that things can be interpreted in different ways. This is why in part that first person account can also be a bit deceiving. There can be a lot of bias. Although I do believe they can be helpful most of the time. In regards to your question, it's hard to say the exact level of validity gained from three sources saying the same thing. But I do believe that when multiple expert sources are in agreement, it definitely makes it seem more credible.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Determining the Truth, or at least as much as we can.

by Alexandria Villa - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 1:08 PM

First off, I wish to say that no matter how hard anyone tries, bias and inaccuracy will always be a problem. When it comes to wartime, this only gets worse. "A history in which every particular incident may be true may on the whole be false" (Thomas Babington Macaulay). "History portrays everything as if it could not have come otherwise. History is on the side of what happened" (Elias Canetti, *The Human Province*).

The stories change with the audience: there will always be a war diminished slightly because of the lenses of humanitarian groups, and stories in television documentaries left untold because of the demographic they are aired to. We are human, last I checked, and we are not perfect.

Now, the most glaring contradiction I came across was the blatant glossing of the entire Communist element. Communism is mentioned as a major threat against security, as was stated in all three of the PBS episodes as well as by the AIM video, but the significance is not really an element in the PBS documentaries. I remember going through Episode Three, 'LBJ Goes to War', and wondering what any of the actions and reactions contained in the video had to do with Communism. Everything I heard seemed to point to a Nationalistic endeavor, which I know is not quite what was going on. The Communistic side of Ho Chi Minh was missing from the whole story. The way the events were presented in Episode Three of the PBS series sounded like a bad comedy skit with too many missteps and overreactions. I am still asking what was going on, and why.

This is the point where multiple resources is a must. If one resource is flawed, another biased, and another so fact based that it needs supplementation, then we should probably take them all in account in order to weed out the unnecessary information and find truth, whether it be for the human side of war or the facts and timelines associated with it. Inconsistencies should be more obvious after comparing the material from several aspects. However, like I said before, no account will ever be perfect, no explanation will ever cover all aspects of reason, and no amount of tears or words will ever let us know the true nature of any scenario.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Determining the Truth, or at least as much as we can.

by Tyler Ritter - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 8:43 PM

"History is written by the victors" - Walter Benjamin. I agree that no matter how serious you try to be on finding facts and going over a documentary, theres still going to be indiscrepancies. Some "facts" might be fabrications spoken from the words of the victors, just like some first person accounts may not be the most reliable when it comes to figuring out what actually happened. I feel like this is especially true in the Vietnam war, where most soldiers have low moral and no idea what was going on. Vietnam? Wheres that? Why are we here?

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Determining the Truth, or at least as much as we can.

by Kyle Martinson - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 1:42 PM

I like how you used those quotes which clearly fit this topic. You are very correct when you say stories with the audience. I agree that every source will have its flaws like you say in the last paragraph.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

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Re: Determining the Truth

by Kyle Martinson - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 4:27 PM

One of the contradictions I found were that PBS initially says Ho Chi Minh was associated with the enbi rebellion which lead to demonstrations against their claims. When I come across conflicting information in academics I research the topic using trustworthy sources and try to

find the correct information. The textbooks should use the correct and most accurate information, so that students using them to learn correct information and are not misinformed.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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So Uncle Ho is the good guy..... Right?

by Jerrel Brown - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 4:55 PM

The most glaring contradiction I discovered while watching *Televisions Vietnam: The Real Story*, was that which was brought before the viewer by Bruce Loeb, a student of the Geneva agreement. Loeb begins by recounting to the viewer the most touch upon portion of the Vietnam War in the PBS series, especially episode 3, about how South Vietnam and the United States refused to hold the elections two years after the Geneva Accords were held, going as far to mention it 11 times during the episode (AIM; Bruce Loeb). He then reveals that there was in fact never any promise made for elections by the United States. The PBS series omitted a key statement from our representative viewing the Geneva accords Walter Bedell Smith, where he very clearly states that the United States openly opposed elections unless they were supervised by the United Nations to make sure they are free (Aim; Bruce Loeb). He then goes on to explain that this was done by PBS to paint a very clear picture of who was the hero of Vietnam, and who the villains. By omitting that statement and choosing to frame the events of the past the way they did, they then legitimized Ho Chi Mien's aggression towards the south and paint him as a nationalist and a hero, and casts the South Vietnamese government and the United States as the villains.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: So Uncle Ho is the good guy..... Right?

by Alexandria Villa - Friday, April 21, 2017, 3:45 AM

I agree with how glossed over the state of the Vietnamese elections were. The PBS documentary paints such a picture as to incite an image of the United States actively destroying a country's unity by helping to derail their first election, but the PBS documentary does not conclusively explain that, while I guess it could be seen in such a manner, that was not the case. The United States never really acknowledged the Geneva Accords, but we were supposed to respect it. The only reason we didn't was because the Accords seemed to be so tenuous, with little active regulation. Why support an election that could end up so corrupt and disadvantageous on a national and global scale?

In failing to take this into consideration, or at the very least articulate it, there definitely comes to light a question: What exactly did Ho Chi Minh do during the entire Diem debacle that shown he was the horrible and awful Communist that must be stopped? Everything sounded like it was just the effect of the United States meddling in ways it shouldn't have... Where is the evidence that 'Uncle Ho' was the bad guy? Diem was allowing his brother to make life a living hell for those in his side of Vietnam, but where was Minh? What was he doing? Was he just relaxing and waiting until the United States messed with the Elections? I feel like I was led to this train of thought while watching the PBS documentaries, specifically Episode 2: *LBJ Goes to War*.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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The Fraud that was Ho Chi Minh

by Emily Gibson - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 6:12 PM

After watching the AIM video, I was in shock about the information they gave about the PBS video. Out of all the information given, I find the misinformation of Ho Chi Minh the most significant. In the PBS series, the creators make out Ho Chi Minh to be a fatherly figure, who's ultimate goal was to liberate the Vietnamese people and nation. Since he was 19, Minh joined the French Communist Party, and since then he was dedicated to the international communist organization, the Boridan, through the Soviet Union. (AIM historian, Droge) His ultimate goal is misconstrued in the PBS video because they conveniently left out the violence he conflicted on people who were not communists. (AIM historian, Morris) Since the beginning, he brought Vietnamese people to study revolution in China, yet would only help them if they were open to learning and taking on a communist government. (AIM historian, Droge) A true nationalist would have been open to helping his country be free in any circumstances, yet Ho only agreed if they had open arms for a communist regime. Also mentioned in the AIM video, Ho never wanted to be known as a nationalist communist because he was one of the only internationalists left. (AIM historian, Stearman) He tricked the people of Vietnam to support him by betraying a friend, Fon Boi Chow, by giving him away to the French police in Shanghai China for gold. After, he used the money to fund a communist movement of Vietnamese people in China. (AIM historian, Droge) The list of the deceitful actions of Ho Chi Minh go on. What we learned from the AIM video is that the hero that the PBS portrays him as is totally incorrect and therefore gives viewers the wrong interpretation of not only him, but why America was in Vietnam to begin with.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Description Of Ho Chi Minh Contradiction

by Maxwell Ahrenkiel - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 6:45 PM

A contradiction I found to be glaring was the way Ho Chi Minh was being described in the different sources. In the AIM video, it seemed that Ho was described as being more violent than the other sources made him out to be. It was said that "... as a communist, he felt it necessary to use massive violence against non-communists who might potentially threaten his power." (7:55 into Part 1 Television's Vietnam: The Real Story) Ho seems very violent and ruthless. The other sources didn't make him seem so dark. In the PBS series, "He was quite an

interesting individual. He was very sensitive, very gentle. A rather frail type.” (20:50 into Episode 1, Vietnam Television History Video) They go on to talk about how he was a proud nationalist, then a communist and how he wanted what was best for his people. The AIM video seemed more blunt and realistic in their description of Ho. Although he was more of a gentle person like the PBS videos suggest, it’s important to note that he was also capable of killing many people, and he did. The AIM video portrays him as being much crueler than the PBS videos have made him out to be.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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separating the fact from the fiction

by Jerrel Brown - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 7:12 PM

When conflicting information comes up in various sources surrounding your course of study, the best course of action that comes to my mind is to cross reference the materials you have already have with other sources of information regarding the subject, and then look for the truth somewhere in the middle. For example, Wikipedia states that “Walter Bedell Smith, US representative at the Conference, read a statement on July 21, 1954, in which the US' willingness to abide by the terms of the agreements was implied, and it promised to "refrain from the threat or use of force to disturb" them. Specifically, the statement seemed to promise not only US acquiescence to the mandated elections, but aid in executing them.” (Wikipedia: Geneva Agreements)

While a second source at alphahistory.com paints a different picture, stating; “Both South Vietnam and its main benefactor, the United States, “acknowledged” the Accords but refused to sign them or commit to honoring their terms.” (AlphaHistory.com)

This presents a difficult problem; we have two sources recounting the same pivotal moment in world history and two very different outcomes resulting from each source. Wikipedia arranges quotes in a manner that paints a picture that the United States was openly ready and willing to participate and even aid in the execution of elections, Whereas Alpha History simply stated the dry facts, stating that America never agreed to any commitment presented by the Geneva Accords. Luckily in the AIM video we are recite article 7 of the final declaration of the Geneva Accords (AIM; Bruce Lobes) where it clearly states that the US out rightly opposed the elections unless they were to be supervised by the United Nations, so we really don’t have to do very much digging to find the true answer the proposed question. This will not be the case most of the time though, so in those instances the best course of action is to widen your pool of information and look for the truth in between both sources.

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Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



Re: separating the fact from the fiction

by Alexandria Villa - Friday, April 21, 2017, 3:52 AM

I thought in a similar manner. After all, there is no way to make sure we have the full, unadulterated, official/unofficial story. Conflicting information pops up all the time, making it a task to sort through the fiction in order to find the fact. I agree with you that 'widening' your pool of information is probably the best bet. It takes time and digging, with frequent moments of fact checking, especially when dealing with testimony, but the results you come up with afterword will be more accurate than many of the individual sources out there. At the very least, there will be more depth to your studies.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1



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Re: separating the fact from the fiction

by Emily Gibson - Friday, April 21, 2017, 7:52 PM

Jerrel,

Separating information is probably the hardest thing for people who study history. It reminds me of Fall Term when I was taking a history course my professor mentioned how people categorize America's "Founding Fathers" into a certain set of beliefs. For example, "Our Founding Fathers would shake their heads if they see what is happening in America today." He explained that this statement is false, because each "Founding Father" had a different set of beliefs. In order to make a correct statement you would have to do more research into what each Founding Father believed.

Looking into different sources I think is the best way to truly decipher through the array of information we are given. Before watching the AIM video, I thought the PBS series did a great job illustrating the Vietnam War to its viewers. The problem is, what sources are reliable to look at and which are not. I have trouble looking into Wikipedia, even though I know a lot of the information is correct, a lot of people can mess with it. I decided to go onto the library database at Lane and looked up "Geneva Accords, Vietnam, Elections." One of the sources to come up was from the *Monthly Review: An Independent Socialist Magazine*. They said "Because of the United States pressures, this election was never held." (Fifty Years Ago, pg. 42) Although this is from a database, I know it has bias because the magazine is associated with a political party. In another source I found from the database called *Fateful Decisions 1945-1972* says that the United States just supported Diem's choice is his rejection of elections, but they did not conduct it. (Oliviera, pg.1) This source seems reliable but on the page is states that it was not peer reviewed.

Where are some places you look for information? Do you agree that the United States disagreed with the elections from the beginning or did they go against their original decision?

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



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Re: separating the fact from the fiction

by Jerrel Brown - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 12:16 AM

It is true that separating fact from fiction is far from the easiest task in studying, but it is the most important task all the same, because if we cannot separate the fact from the fiction there really isn't any reason to study in the first place.

As for your frustrations with the malleability with Wikipedia I totally understand.

Sometimes thinking of how easily someone can log on and post incorrect information 'willie nillie' strikes a sensitive cord in my being aswell. However I do not believe that you should shy away from it completely, and I have 2 main reasons as to why.

reason 1.) dated information.

Data bases are excellent sources of information, but often they store books and articles that are incredibly old and out dated, or just not sufficiently vetted, and therefore not useful for study (unless your studies are anthropological in nature). Your sources from the posting above are perfect examples of this.

And reason 2.) what we know is always changing.

Everyday we are learning more and more about life and our role in it, and because of that I argue that Wiki is actually a great source of information because it can be updated with ease if our understanding of something is changed due to recent discoveries in various fields of study. Papers and stories peer reviewed 10 years after a war that ended 42 years ago might no longer be accurate due to the accumulation of new facts over the years.

That being said, when I am looking for information, I often look through at least 3 different sources. usually one source will come from a .EDU domain, the next a .ORG, and then usually I will check wikipedia for good measure.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



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Re: separating the fact from the fiction

by Emily Gibson - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 5:07 PM

I have to agree with you there. You can find a lot of information through databases but a lot of times the information is outdated. For example, I took a Food and Nutrition course last term and I had a hard time finding good articles, that were peer reviewed by an RN, but also had up to date information. The problem is, to make sure you have correct information it goes a through a long process of being peer reviewed, corrected, etc. With how fast technology is changing and how many new discoveries are being found each day, it's hard to keep up on the outsource of information to readers and making sure all is correct. Also, it's hard to find information that is not bias. I agree that looking at the sources and making sure not all your info comes from a .com is important.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: separating the fact from the fiction

by Wenxuan Nie - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 7:51 PM

Interesting, when I searched Geneva Agreements in Baidu Baike (literally: "Baidu Encyclopedia", which a Chinese-language, encyclopedia owned and produced by the Chinese search engine Baidu) The translation one looks like this: "The United States did not sign the final declaration and stated that "no threat or force" would hamper the implementation of the agreement, but then it did not fulfill that promise. The signing of the agreement marks the victory of the Indochina People's Resistance War and the end of the French colonial rule in Indochina... But North Vietnam because of late free elections, leading to the long-term split between North and South. And the United States did not sign, only to ensure that "the agreement is not under threat to be implemented." (Baidu Baike, Geneva Agreements)

In Chinese edition, the Indochina war is a fight to anti-colonial of French. And the United States didn't hold a positive role. It intentionally broke the agreement in later years. Sometimes I feel confused in searching for information. The different forms of information (video, book, Wiki) holds different opinions; the different country holds different ones, too. What's why history is so complicated.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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using dependable sources of information and real life experiences of those who lived through it to check any discrepancies in the PBS documentary.

by Jerrel Brown - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 8:21 PM

It's easy to see that finding a single source of information that is 100% accurate and honest in its representation of the facts is never going to be an easy thing to come by, but we can all rest assured that there is still hope for us to find reliable information by studying from different sources provided by historians of differing backgrounds and beliefs to get a more complete and accurate picture of the past.

The 2 books (Appy & Herring) from which our required readings for the class are located are an excellent example of just that. The Herring book gives a very detailed account of the Vietnam War and is extremely well researched, as made evident by the very long list of citations used to compile the information in the book, which provides an important frame work and back drop for the story being told. The Appy book is mostly a collection of stories and personal accounts from people of all different nationalities and political ideologies, which provides the very important human experience component, people who actually lived through these events and how they effected them.

So to summarize; The Appy and Herring books are excellent tools to separate the possible fact from fiction in the PBS documentary through the very well researched recounting of the Vietnam war from one (Herring), and the personal experiences of people that lived through the war on both sides and how it effected them (Appy).

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: using dependable sources of information and real life experiences of those who lived through it to check any discrepancies in the PBS documentary.

by Alexandria Villa - Friday, April 21, 2017, 3:59 AM

I just have to ask, since I agree that the Appy book brings the aspect of human experience, while the Herring book is loaded with fact, which do you read first?

I personally read the Herring book first on some occasions, as it is the framework to fit the personal experiences into. However, I have also read the Appy book first, which gave a depth to the factual information of the Herring book and turned it into something that feels 'relevant' or 'urgent' (These are not the words I am looking for, but for some reason, the ones I *am* looking for are eluding me completely) in some cases.

I am just wondering what other people think about the order.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: using dependable sources of information and real life experiences of those who lived through it to check any discrepancies in the PBS documentary.

by Jerrel Brown - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 11:36 PM

That is a very fair question to raise. If given the option on how to approach my research for any class I always rely on the empirical facts surrounding the topic of study. This allows me to form my own opinion or understanding of the material presented to me. So as a rule of study I will always read the herring book to get my own grasp on the historical facts surrounding the topic of that weeks readings, and then afterwards read the Appy book to provide the context for the readings that preceded it on both sides.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: using dependable sources of information and real life experiences of those who lived through it to check any discrepancies in the PBS documentary.

by Maxwell Ahrenkiel - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 6:37 PM

I don't necessarily think the particular order is all that important, but I personally like to read the Herring book first because it seems to provide more general information about given events and how they played out. While the Appy book, since it's made up of personal accounts, adds more emotion and points of view to see throughout the war,

which I think is really helpful to evaluate how important certain people were, or analyze the significance of certain events. For example, in regards to how Ho Chi Minh has been perceived, the AIM video made him appear to be very smart, but at the same time, devious.(8:45 into AIM historian “Droge”) While one account in the Appy book made him seem like a caring and respectable person. Vo Nguyen Giap wrote, “All his life Uncle Ho devoted his love and energy to the country and the people. A few days before he died in 1969, he wanted to talk with me and other leaders. He was rather sick and we said we would come to see him. But he insisted on coming to see us instead.”(p.42 Appy) He went on to talk about the memories he has working with Ho throughout his career. This kind of account allows readers to see how those close to Ho felt, which isn’t really covered in all of our sources. I think that having these to different kinds of readings (one being more factual and one being more personal) helps a lot with confidently saying what really happened, also what it was like for everyone involved in any particular situation.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: using dependable sources of information and real life experiences of those who lived through it to check any discrepancies in the PBS documentary.

by Wenxuan Nie - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 8:17 PM

I personally would read Appy book first. Since I already watched the PBS as a general information obtained. Read Appy book is more focus on human emotion, the personal story, which I believe more make people empathy. There are people hate this war for infinite death. " one million people still suffer from cancers linked to Agent Orange exposure, and there are about one hundred thousand people still alive with birth defects that we've believed were caused by dioxyn poisoning." (Appy, p. 141) There are people think the fight is to against Communists brutally. "Take the North Vietnamese city of Vinh hostage." (Appy, P. 124) You can always find the flash and struggle of humanity.

Then I will read the Herring's book. One reason I left it behind is there are too many details. As a non-English speaker, sometimes it's hard to grasp the central point from trifle information.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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True portrayals of Ho and Diem

by Jay Autry - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 8:58 PM

The most glaring contradictions that I have seen so far in the PBS series have been the portrayals of both Ho Chi Mihn and Ngo Dihn Diem. As pointed out by the AIM video, PBS portrays Mihn as a righteous nationalist hero and Diem the bumbling puppet of the United States who is unqualified for his position. The AIM video does a very good job at looking deeper into these claims and providing a more accurate historical account in order to identify discrepancies.

Another surprising oversight by the PBS series was the absence of any information regarding communist persecution against the northern Vietnamese Catholics and other refugees that eventually made their way down south. The PBS series fails to mention the violence and assassination campaign that was carried out by the communists against any groups with opposing views (AIM historian Stephen Morris, 20:30). It is quite alarming that they chose to overlook this information as it abruptly changes the viewer's opinion of "Uncle Ho" from a caring patriotic nationalist into a brutal dictator. This is the type of systematic violence that Americans were afraid of during the red scare. More importantly it is why President Kennedy said America would pay any price and endure any hardship in order to assure the survival and success of liberty (PBS Episode 3, 2:25).

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: True portrayals of Ho and Diem

by Emily Gibson - Friday, April 21, 2017, 7:49 PM

Jay,

I was also surprised of how much information they conveniently left out by the PBS video. I already expressed how surprised I was by the differences of Ho Chi Minh, but Diem's are huge too. Diem being a so called "puppet" is not the case at all. After reading this week's readings in the Herring book I realize how they portray Diem is completely different than the PBS does. He definitely was not a puppet. Herring says "Diem sought the kind of aid that would help his country be strong and independent. He feared and was angry by its growing reliance on the United States." (Herring, pg. 77) Diem was determined to have his own government without the interference with any country, especially the United States. But, he still did want our money, of course. He later goes onto use violence against people who disagreed with him, which the United States did not support. Later Herring says "If Diem remained obdurate, the United States was prepared to dump him." (Herring, pg. 121) These two passages prove that PBS's portrayal of Diem was not accurate. Diem was a very independent man, and was not at all a puppet for the United States. He actually caused a lot more problems in the end for the U.S.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



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Charlton friggin Heston and bias

by John Anderson - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 9:03 PM

The Vietnam era was a time of great rifts between people of differing ideologies in the world. If anyone were to say differently they are either lying or trying to sell something. Perhaps the greatest of these rifts involved the onset of communism in the world outside of the United States. In the AIM video they claim that there is "nothing in the [PBS] series that an American can be proud of." In actual fact, both of these videos operate with a level of what they deem acceptable bias. They each describe differing aspects of the conflict. Much like in most historical accounts, they see from different viewpoints. Part of the nation was convinced that

Vietnam was largely a mistake for one of two reasons. Either we shouldn't have been there, or we should have been there and too many people opposed what had to be done both domestically and in southeast Asia.

This raises a very fundamental question about what we view as accuracy in our historical record. Charlton Heston states at the beginning of the film that "you have to understand history so you can plan for the future." While I don't agree with many things that Heston has stood for, this I can get behind. The important point to garner from this statement, however, is that understanding history really means understanding who is telling that history. Much of the PBS and AIM videos only approach Vietnam from one perspective or another. The PBS videos largely blames the S Vietnamese government for the shortcomings that led to its eventual collapse. They do this by showing the failures and corruption in that government's approach to democracy. They paint the N Vietnamese as an enemy that we just didn't truly understand. The men we sent to Vietnam were not there for the right reasons and the war on communism that we thought was necessary was not exactly needed.

In the AIM video that was created to discredit the PBS piece, they make some very good points about some of the intent in the PBS video but fail at proving their points about the content of the PBS video. The content is referred to as a "Kaleidoscope of images" by D Pike, of Berkeley. In Pike's opinion, because some of the facts were inaccurate the entire piece was largely a failure. They fail to address which facts they believe were explicitly wrong and which ones were successful with the notable exception of addressing the final video.

The major flaw in this train of thought as it links to later discussions in the AIM film is that the viewpoint of these individuals is largely anti-communist in its nature. They start from the perspective of demonizing all of the north as murderous villains. This makes it quite easy to hate them, and even easier to hate the producers of the PBS series who claim that it was more complex than that. Over and over the AIM video jabs at how communist leaders are all murderers and dictators.

As students we all need to understand that perspective and bias are major issues in the delivering of History. History, as it is said, is often written by the victor.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3



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Re: Charlton friggin Heston and bias

by Alexandria Villa - Friday, April 21, 2017, 4:12 AM

I really liked this post... and it definitely helps when you have a title like that.

I think a really important aspect to also take into consideration is the target audience for the PBS Documentaries. After all, this is a series that is presented to the general public, from the grandmother who bakes cookies for the neighbors, the child who has no idea what war even is, to the veterans who were there and the politicians who were not. I also think this was funded by largely humanitarian based groups, which makes things a little shaky when speaking of war as well as Communism.

However, to go on a slight tangent, marketing wise, using Charlton Heston as the narrator was genius. In the AIM video, there were definitely moments where it sounded like they were nitpicking the documentary series, mostly in ways that related to 'glossing over' major details. (I don't see a humanitarian funded program delving into the major atrocities of Ho Chi Minh, like what he did/did not do to/for his people, but who knows?) There is nothing

like hearing, 'Everything you heard from this 'documentary' is *WRONG!*'... then getting to see one of the most famous faces to hit the silver screen. How many people went: "If Heston is endorsing this, then it must be complete fact!"

Charlton frigging Heston, indeed.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) 2

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Re: Charlton friggin Heston and bias

by John Anderson - Friday, April 21, 2017, 3:52 PM

First off, thank you for the reply. Secondly, I feel that maybe I should give a little more background for both the title and some of the implicit information that I tried to convey. Heston is someone that had, during his life, stood for many things. Most notable of these things were his religious beliefs, his political aspirations, and his association with the NRA. You may remember him from such films as Moses, or Bowling for Columbine. While Heston originally supported civil rights and Democratic Politicians in the 1960's, he later became an avid supporter of Reagan and a dedicated Republican and NRA spokesperson. While I may not personally agree with these general philosophies, It is important to understand who you are listening to when you are watching a film like this, and how do they benefit. Heston, and the people who believed like him, did not support any conclusion that the US may have not belonged in Vietnam. The PBS series largely took a more realistic assignment of events and while they didn't have all the information to support all of their points, they most certainly did not agree with Heston's ilk.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) 2

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Re: Charlton friggin Heston and bias

by William Wyatt - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 7:32 PM

Hey John,

Great in depth analysis on Heston. I Agree when you stated that, "It is important to understand who you are listening to when you are watching a film like this, and how do they benefit." I too believe that a cautious attitude t'words a new source is fundamental when trying to figure out whether said source is biased or not. Furthermore, I also feel that the PBS series took a more practical approach when discussing Americas intervention in Indochina.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) 1

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Glaring contradiction (PBS documentary and AIM video.

by William Wyatt - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 10:25 PM

Hello,

The PBS Series became "Only a kaleidoscope of images." (AIM historian "Douglas Pike"), A glaring contradiction to me was that "The PBS series doesn't show connection between these horrendous events and their cause." (AIM Historian "Reed Irvine"), When Irvine says "these horrendous events" He is referring to the tragedies of communist rule in Indochina. Without connections in the PBS documentary between communist actions and their causes, it's difficult to get the full perspective on how bad communism was. People like Pol Pot & Ho Chi Minh didn't fight for freedom in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, but were fighting for power.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) 2

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Re: Glaring contradiction (PBS documentary and AIM video.

by John Anderson - Friday, April 21, 2017, 4:12 PM

If I can address a few points that I believe you are trying to make here, I believe that the greatest achievement of the PBS series was its even-handed nature when approaching much of the cause and effect surrounding the Vietnam Conflict. In its review of the series, The New York Times called it "determinedly even-handed" and "delicately balanced." This success in approaching the subject from a position that was more balanced and took into account that both the left and right wings were partially to blame for the failure of US involvement in southeast Asia. Furthermore, while the AIM video took information from a few experts it failed to effectively disprove the bulk of points made by the PBS series. Instead of actually discussing what was broached in the series, Heston and his cohorts, react like children, lashing out irrationally at how someone could blame anything but the communists. Because of course all communists, like the AIM video suggests, are like Ho Chi Minh and Pol Pot.

Sum of ratings:1 (1) 1

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Re: Glaring contradiction (PBS documentary and AIM video.

by William Wyatt - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 10:58 PM

I Appreciate your reply. The PBS series so far has done a good job portraying the failure of US involvement in Indochina. I'm also not surprised that "Heston and his cohorts" were unsuccessful in disproving major points in the AIM video. Accuracy in Media (AIM), built a reputation around conservative bias. The attention of AIM media usually moves wherever they think liberal bias may exist. I Think the main point of the AIM video was to say that Americans didn't get an accurate picture of Communism in Indochina from the PBS series alone. Because AIM took such an offensive stance to start, by the end of the video they set an undertone that portrayed all communists to be bad. Which is obviously incorrect.

Sum of ratings:0 (1) 0

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Conflicting Information

by William Wyatt - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 10:25 PM

Hello,

Conflicting information isn't necessarily always bad. In fact, I surmise that misinformation in many ways leads us to the correct conclusion. Regardless of whether the sources are conflicting, it's important to keep track of all the data pertaining to the topic. I Think a good way to deal academically with conflicting sources presented in the PBS and AIM Video, is to look at the information we have been given as pieces of evidence that will hopefully lead us to the correct consensus as a class.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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The fault of communist or America

by Wenxuan Nie - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 10:34 PM

The AIM video and the PBS have contradiction about deciding Hu Chi Minn is communism or nationalism. In the AIM video, it mentions it ignores the role of South Army and reduce the description of how Vietnam treat American prisoners brutally. "We already know that Hu Chi Minn had not been fighting for Marxism and freedom, and Vietnam North, but the producers of PBS series said they did not know this "(AIM historian "Smith"). Also, after PBS released, people, become angry for the unreal expression, then they went to protest, including American and Vietnamese. Also, it mentions the boat people fled Vietnam because of the devastated living environment and the mass killing at Cambodia.

But in the PBS, the video condemns America. " When Lyndon Johnson inherited the presidency, he inherited many things, But one of them was the legacy of the Vietnam War and the Democratic president's felt-need not to lose one square foot of territory to communism, particularly in Asia. To draw the line, to hold the line and to keep the presidency thereby, because if you lose, the final domino in the domino sequence it's not some Asian country, it's the presidency itself " (PBS Episode 3) It mentions that Hu Chi Minn is a nationalism fighter and American invert only to keep the power position.

However, I believe the the Herring's book support the PBS's point, which American try to smearing Hu Chi Minn's communism role. "...and he was acutely sensitive to the political damage that could come from the loss of additional Asian real estate. Thus he was even less willing than Truman and Eisenhower to permit the fall of Vietnam to communism" (Herring p.91)

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Determining the Truth

by Brandon Dibble - Wednesday, April 19, 2017, 11:26 PM

One of the most glaring contradiction I have noticed after having watched the first couple episodes of the PBS series "Vietnam: A Television History" and then watching Television's "Vietnam: The Real Story pt.1" was their portrayal of Ho Chi Minh. A huge focus of Television's "Vietnam: The Real Story, Part 1" was portraying Ho Chi Minh as being primarily a

communist at his core (as argued by Stephen Morris, Vietnam: The Real Story 7:15), whereas the PBS documentary paint a different picture of Ho Chi Minh stating that he was “First a nationalist, second a communist” (Vietnam: A Television History, ep 1 21:15). During part 1 of “Vietnam: The True Story” they said “Communists (referring to Ho Chi Minh) had been successful over the years as passing themselves off as nationalists and patriots, like had been seen before in Cuba and in Nicaragua. (Vietnam, The Real Story 13:40)”. This is what was believed to had happened, Ho Chi Minh was simple a communist posing as a nationalist to gain support for the full takeover of “his” country.

“Vietnam: The True Story pt.1” goes on to talk about the violence associated with Ho Chi Minh that you do not hear about in the PBS series. These actions were those of a truly barbaric communist leader, such as killing individuals that were part of the nationalist movement that did not share his ideology when considering communism. Stephen Morris (Vietnam: The True Story, 20:30) stated that this violence was key to the success of the communists in Vietnam. Ho Chi Ming was said to have had every nationalist that was unsporting of communism assassinated if they were within reach. This would have at the time secured Ho Chi Minh’s true communist intentions, and he would not have individuals around who disagreed with him.

When considering all the information at hand, it is hard to tell what sources are telling the true history of Vietnam when the information is as conflicting as we see here. We have a video program we are told to watch and then presented with a direct counter series that explains all the shortcomings of the PBS series. “Vietnam: The True Story” goes out of its way to correct these falsehoods seen in the PBS series, but is everything they say true in itself?

Sum of ratings:3 (1) 3

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Irony from the question you pose

by Maile Sur - Thursday, April 20, 2017, 1:18 PM

Hi Brandon,

I think the question you pose about the AIM video is a good one. Automatically, because Professor Escobar told us to watch the AIM video, I believed it to be credible. More credible, in fact, than the PBS video. This is also because in the intro of the AIM video they state that they are going to correct all of the false statements the PBS video made. I think this is sort of ironic because I just stated in my previous post that you shouldn't take everything you see to be 100% true, and sure enough, I did just that with the new information in the AIM video. Do you think that situations are different, however, when it comes to doing research on your own versus when a professor tells you to read/watch something? Since most times, professors will only tell you to read or watch credible sources of information, wouldn't it make sense for us to automatically believe it to be true? I mean, technically the issue at hand here isn't if what the PBS series said was valid (since only one or two of their statements were actually incorrect), but rather the way in which they presented the information. Would you agree or disagree?

Sum of ratings:1 (1) 1

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Re: Irony from the question you pose

by John Anderson - Friday, April 21, 2017, 4:19 PM

I would venture to say, Maile, that a GREAT many things in the subject of history depend entirely on point of view. Because of this, truth, as an objective tool, is impossible to fully apply to the subject. Credibility is in this sense, a moot point. Take for example Ben Carson, the Republican. Carson is a neurosurgeon that is known around the world for his skill and knowledge on the subject of medicine. Carson also believes that the world is 6000 years old and believes prison can make you gay. Just because someone is an expert does not mean they are devoid of personal bias. The subject of Vietnam especially inspires much passion and often evokes this bias.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Re: Irony from the question you pose

by Brandon Dibble - Friday, April 21, 2017, 6:42 PM

Hey Maile,

I would definitely agree with the fact that the way the information was presented between these two contrasting series is the issue at hand here and I also agree with the instructor presenting us with credible information. I feel that it would add to the credibility of the information in the "Vietnam: The True Story" because the instructor wants the class to see different perspectives like this and the order in which he presents them to the class is premeditated. It would make sense for us to believe this as true because of the order that the information we were given was presented in. I do not think the instructor wants us to automatically determine that any of the information we receive in the course is true or false, but rather decide what actually happened when we take in all the information from different sources, and for us to finally fabricate our own idea of what really happened.

With that being said, to answer my own question after thinking about the subject a bit more, I would say that the information presented to us in the AIM Video does seem credible. More so than the PBS series for a couple different reasons. The first being that AIM is a non-profit organization that just wants the truth of the matter to be told, and be available for people who care to seek out this information. The second being how the instructor presented this information to us, having the class view the PBS series first and then revealing the AIM series so we can see different opinions on the matter.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Determining the Truth

by Emily Gibson - Friday, April 21, 2017, 7:48 PM

Brandon,

I was also intrigued by the debate of who Ho Chi Minh really is. I found it funny that the PBS video not only made Ho Chi Minh look close to innocent in the whole war, but also made America look like the enemy. With history, it's so difficult to know if what being told is

factual. Bias is something that can be easily slipped in based on who is telling the story. In the AIM video, it's easy to believe what they introduced because of the sources they used in telling the story. But, if you look at the PBS video, most of the time they used people who had been there and experienced the war. I think the only way to really distinguish between factual and not factual information is to do more research into the subject. Library databases are a good source for information. Also the other sources given to us this term could aid in us trying to sort through information. The Appy book gives us good accounts on people who had been interviewed about their own personal experience in the war, but they can always show a little bias. The Herring book is another source we must look into. I noticed they also mention the bad side to Diem, that I don't think either video does a great job of showing. The author says "Diem's anti-communist campaigns executed more than 2,000 suspected Communists, some by the guillotine." (Herring, pg. 82) Do you think the Herring book is a good source for information? Have you done any more research on Ho Chi Minh other than the materials given to us?

Sum of ratings:2 (1) 2

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Re: Determining the Truth

by Brandon Dibble - Friday, April 21, 2017, 11:39 PM

Hey Emily,

To answer your question, I do believe Herring's book is a great place to look for additional information! It is great to have so many different pieces of material to compare and contrast. I have not taken the time to do any research outside of the material that has already been given to us by the instructor though unfortunately, but I am sure there is no lack of information out there. If you have found any additional sources of information that you would like to share, I would gladly read it.

One interesting similarity I did notice between Herring's book "America's Longest War" and the AIM series "Vietnam: The Real Story" was that both Herring and Stephen Morris mentioned the executions or "assassinations" that Ho Chi Minh had conducted in northern Vietnam eradicating "capitalists" as said by Herring. On the same page of the text Herring also talks about Ngo Dinh Diem's executions of communists, but the PBS series omitted any information regarding these events if I remember correctly. I agree with you in saying that neither video did a great job of showing this part of Ngo Dinh Diem. I believe these points are brought up in (America's Longest War, pg.82) and (Television's "Vietnam: The Real Story" 25:20).

Sum of ratings:2 (1) 2

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Re: Determining the Truth

by Emily Gibson - Saturday, April 22, 2017, 6:24 PM

Brandon,

Me being the curious/history nerd that I am decided to do a bit more research on the subject, therefore helping us distinguish which videos bias was correct. I searched Lane's library database with "Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam War" and a lot of articles came

up. I clicked on one that was a biography titled "Ho Chi Minh." The author states "Many of **Ho's** policies resulted in bloodshed. Countless people were executed as enemies of the revolution." (Forster, pg.1) There is no disagreeing with the fact that the things Ho did to the people who disagreed, was vulgar. But does this make him a communist over anything else in his character? I also find it kind of weird that he changed his name to Ho Chi Minh, meaning the enlightened, if he didn't want to persuade and convince people that his ideas were above all others. He later goes on to explain that the debate of Ho Chi Minh's true character and ideals still remain a mystery. It's almost like it's a "to be determined" subject in history.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2



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Re: Determining the Truth

by Brandon Dibble - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 9:56 PM

Emily,

It would seem that every piece of information we have been subjected to and even some sources we have found ourselves, excluding the PBS series, paints the same picture of Ho Chi Minh as a communist that used the guise of a nationalist to secure his ideals of communism over Vietnam. I believed that his name change to "Ho Chi Minh" was also a ruse constructed to help people see him as the revolutionary individual for the whole of Vietnam. The information you have found from an external source is very similar to a source of information I have found as well. History.com has a section on Vietnam, and specifically Ho Chi Minh, that speaks upon how Ho used words of nationalism, seeking the independence of Vietnam, but at the same time tried to gain aid from communist governments like China to accomplish this and help usher in his communist reign. I feel that after taking all of this information in, it feels safe to say that Ho Chi Minh's roots are that of a communist and not a nationalist, but more research on the matter could never hurt.

Article by History.com that speaks about the early life, and more importantly, choices made by Ho Chi Minh during the build up to the Vietnam wars.

(<http://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/ho-chi-minh>)

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Learning the truth from all sides

by Jay Autry - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 12:15 PM

Dealing with inaccurate and conflicting information is a common and concerning issue that we face when studying history. History is something that historically has always been written by the winning side. With our current topic, the Vietnam War, the U.S. was obviously not the winner but remains a global power with much influence. It is unfair to judge decisions made by individuals or governments because facts are often much clearer in hindsight.

As the AIM video pointed out, the PBS series either told half truths or blatantly left out key facts about the Vietnam war that paint an almost alternate history of what actually happens. When watching the PBS series along, without the additional knowledge learned from our textbooks, the viewer forms different opinions on certain historical events and individuals. Specific examples that the AIM video points out are the inaccuracies of Ho Chi Minh's communist and nationalist loyalties, the absence of facts regarding the northern Catholic refugees, and the false impressions of Diem being a "puppet" of the U.S. government.

By using this alternate view from the AIM video we are able to identify the inconsistencies shown in the PBS series. However, a more powerful tool to help learn the real truth is in our two textbooks. *Americas Longest War* gives a historical timeline of events leading up to the second Indochina war and the reasons why actions of key individuals took place. While this is a useful third party resource to help and guide our learning, *Patriots* gives us real first hand accounts from the people that were there. By reading those stories we are able to gain valuable insight from people that lived this conflict rather than someone who studied it from afar.

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Re: Learning the truth from all sides

by Wenxuan Nie - Sunday, April 23, 2017, 7:34 PM

Jay, I feel the same that History should be learned from two sides. On the one hand, AIM was right to criticize PBS built Ho Chi Minh as a nationalist rather than communist. But on the contrary, the AIM attacks all points of view except their own. Politically, AIM and PBS both not hold neutral opinions. AIM oppose communist, PBS somehow hiding some truth to save comrade's face.

People will have their own judges to judge the history, even the people who been through it. "We walked for a week on relatively flat land until we reached the beginning of the Ho Chi Minh Trail on the western border...We saw a lot of volunteers, mostly young girls...nothing was more essential than our sandals." (Patriots, p190) In this part, Vu Hy Thu mentioned a large US strike on the Ho Chi Minh trail that caused hundreds of casualties and feels ashamed, even though he fight for the U.S., So I guess the point is accepting the diversity history opinion and learn from it.

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