

HST 195: History of Vietnam War Sp18 (Escobar 41945)

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Week 4 Forum Continuing the Discussion

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Continuing the Discussion

by [Joe Escobar](#) - Sunday, April 22, 2018, 9:50 AM

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IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

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Suspicion of PBS and understand the story.

by [Haonan Bai](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 1:06 AM

Excerpt from Losers are Pirates are significances criticize the authenticity of PBS program about "Vietnam: A Television History". James Banerian said the PBS program contained a lot of misinformation and they didn't give the audience for the right education about the history. So, he was helped in by his Vietnamese friends to send a protest letter to PBS (James, P.1, Preface). James expressed strong dissatisfaction with PBS, so he decided to produce a book in order to review the series and correct some of the fact that the film was ignored or devalued. There is a great proof which can prove the unreality of PBS series: "Nguyen Ngoc Huy, a political scientist and negotiator for South Vietnam at the Paris Peace Talks, is currently engaged in translating Losers Are Pirates into Vietnamese and French for the edification for a larger audience." (James, P.6, Preface). This fully proves the PBS had a wrong description of history because Nguyen Ngoc Huy wanted more people even Vietnamese to read the book and understood history. He also wanted all Vietnamese know that people and military in South Vietnam are not as puppets and aggressor as what PBS series described. It has been demonized.

After reading these materials, I have some doubts about the history which described by PBS. Whether it is South or North Vietnam, they are all fighting for freedom and liberation, it is just only because of the different social policies. South Vietnam is a capitalism that supported by the United States, but North Vietnam is a communism that supported by China and the Soviet Union. Every country has the local difference between north and south. It is not right if we degrade South Vietnam only because North won this war. Just like William Jayne said in the video, the PBS didn't talk about any great detail about veterans, it seems like the image of veterans as the loser, victim. PBS didn't give another side of the picture about veterans (8:17, William Jayne, Television's Vietnam: The Real Story-part 2).

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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We Could've/Should've/Would've Won

by [Danielle Wardrip](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 2:37 PM

What are the significances of the Losers are Pirates excerpt and your understanding of how the story of the war is/was being told?

The Losers are Pirates excerpt was significant because Banerian does not only give his opinion but gives us reasons to believe that he is a credible source. Banerian talks about, and even quotes, Vietnamese citizens. He does not say that they were not involved in the war, but it is implied. By using these Vietnamese sources, he can find out and relay to his readers how the Vietnamese felt about the war that took place in their homeland, and how they felt about the views portrayed in both the PBS and the AIM productions. This makes him credible because he is not only showing the view of

himself, but he is showing the view of those that were directly affected by the war but did not choose to fight on either side. When making his purpose known on page 7, James Banerian writes “We do not deny that mistakes were made by the American government in its understanding and handling of the war.” This tells us that he knows that America was not innocent in the war and that he is not advocating for the way they handled every single situation. Three paragraphs later, he says “We do not deny that the Television History contains some truth in parts of its presentation.” (page 7) So, after giving off the impression that he absolutely hated the PBS production, he concedes that it was not completely incorrect. This adds to his credibility because his mind is not totally against the Television History. If he had not stated this, we would be able to assume that he was so blinded by what was wrong with the show, that he did not see what was right. That would mean that he would only be looking for evidence that helped his argument, thereby succumbing to the confirmation bias. This way, we know that he has looked at every avenue and though he may be writing his opinion, there is sufficient evidence to back him up.

How I understood the story being told in the PBS series was that they wanted to portray a view that they thought that their viewers would enjoy. As Banerian writes, “the series does not contain a balance of opinions on some essential topics nor does it necessarily give a true or complete picture of the war and what was actually happening on the field.” (page 5) They eliminated facts that they thought the people would not like. At the time, the majority of the American people did not agree with the Vietnam War, as I’m sure is till the case today. This means that, in order to satisfy their viewers and probably themselves, they created a storyline that told how North Vietnam would have seen the war. They showed America as corrupt and ignorant, Ngo Dinh Diem as a monster, Ho Chi Minh as a father-figure, and the Viet Minhs as heroes. Banerian regarding PBS: “Persons who defend U.S. involvement in Vietnam get very little attention in the program, while critics are portrayed so generously that one can almost see haloes shimmering over their heads.” (page ii) Maybe they didn’t tell it accurately because they didn’t see it accurately. Or, maybe they didn’t tell it accurately because they thought the public didn’t want to hear it accurately. Either way, it wasn’t accurate, that much is undeniable.

Contrastly, I think Banerian leans more towards the patriotic side of things. He doesn’t attack the U.S. for making bad decisions. I think he would support the United States’ involvement, while many others would not have, at the time. He says on page 3, “when they returned to the States, they were often met with coldness or hostility.” Banerian spends a paragraph talking about how hard it was for the Vietnam Veterans after the war. So, maybe he didn’t have a soft spot for America, as much as he had a soft spot for the soldiers of America.

Banerian is biased. spending almost two pages on how horrible Communism turned

out to be for Southeast Asia. This shows us that he would support America's fight against Communism and wishes that we had been able to make better decisions and win the war, as we could have.

Sum of ratings: **3 (1)**

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Re: Continuing the Discussion

by [Jonathen Gray](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 4:57 PM

Something that was surprisingly left out of the PBS series was mistreatment of [American POWs](#). It could be argued that the brutality was too much for the casual viewer to handle. However, the overall absence of any mention is fairly consistent in attempting to tell the false narrative that there was no abuse of [American POWs](#). According to John Corry of the NY Times "[Vietnam: A Television History] ... minimizes the brutal treatment of American prisoners of war (Corry p. 2, Televisions Vietnam: The Real Story). John McCain reinforces this observation when discussing that while specific instances of individual torture existed the US had no established practice of POW torture and that "the North Vietnamese, on the other hand, had a calculated program of mistreatment, psychological and physical, in order to exploit the POWs for propaganda purposes. I think at a great difference, I don't think that difference was drawn and I think it needs to be in fairness to the American government and the Southern Vietnamese government." (2:55 Televisions Vietnam Part 2).

Such a huge issue not included in the PBS series is partial to say the least. It boggles the mind that they failed to shore up an issue like this. The PBS series tend to spin its narrative against the Vietnam war and Television's Vietnam tends to spin its narrative in favor of America and it's actions. However by completely leaving out such a huge established part of the Vietnam (POW torture) they not only demonstrate poor journalism but poor narrative strategy. James Banerian critiqued the issue quite well by saying "persons who defend U.S. involvement in Vietnam get very little attention in the program, while critics are portrayed so generously that one can almost see haloes shimmering over their heads"(Banerian, p. 3, Preface). That over-arching sentiment can be seen while watching the PBS series. The real question is why? Certainly they are trying to portray their narrative (Vietnam was a horrible mistake) but it also seems as if they wanted to passively contribute to the mistreatment of American Vietnam veterans in order to scare the US from future wars. That may be too far in the tin foil hat to be true but if it is true the failure of showing POW torture (in any serious way) was unproductive for the purposes of their narrative.

In general, the AIM video, Televisions Vietnam, fails on a lot of levels to include bias, logic, and presentation but the PBS video Vietnam, a Television History, fails to deliver

on even attempting to address one of the most critical aspects of the war.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1) 3

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Re: Continuing the Discussion

by [Danielle Wardrip](#) - Wednesday, April 25, 2018, 4:12 PM

"Such a huge issue not included in the PBS series is partial to say the least."

I haven't watched past the Episode 4 of the PBS series, but I do think that the lack of information given about the prisoners of war is disconcerting. I mean, the POW/MIA flag is still flown today by people of all walks of life. I think any true American would know what the POW/MIA flag is and what it stands for. (Of course, there are exceptions; the elderly suffering from amnesia, dementia, etc. and young children.) I mean, the message behind the flag was so powerful that it is still felt by Americans nationwide, almost half a century later. One cannot deny the significance of the fight for the prisoners of war. After being divided in half for decades because of the Vietnam War, the United States was reunified. Every American strove to gain their fellow countrymen's freedom. Even if there was no proof of abuse in the prisons, Americans everywhere could, and probably did, assume that our soldiers were being mistreated. You don't start a war on Communism without proof of Communist ties (like PBS portrays that America did) and then believe that the big, bad Communists that you were just fighting against are keeping your POWs at fancy B&Bs and playing bridge with them on Thursday nights (like PBS portrays they would). That's preposterous. If PBS truly did leave out their mistreatment, I would certainly question their integrity. In fact, I would have a hard time believing anything else they said without seeking out secondary opinions.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1) 2

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Re: Finding the Truth

by [Maria Cecilia Contreras Sanchez](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 5:13 PM

According to the information presented in the second part of AIM. PBS videos also have given bad information regarding the US military force. It is shown as the means of communication that in this case is PBS, it gives us bad information and that those who are not familiar with the subject can get to misinterprets this information. The article and the book read in this part helps us clarify things a bit more. The article will compare one video with the other and the reason of each video. We can clearly see the controversy that each video shows us. The book written by James Banerian, refers to a person who was present oh who knows more about the subject. Their disagreement is clearly about the information presented in PBS videos and how this type of media

clearly about the information presented in PBS videos and how this type of media influences when considered educational.

One of the things that caught my attention in the article was when it says, "And, of course, that's exactly what Mr. Irvine and AIM are doing. They are expressing their opinion on what are essentially political questions", which make me to ask myself what kind of political question? It is hard to know that a "educational" program can be biased and gives misinformation to the public.

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Political questions

by [Miles Arnold](#) - Wednesday, April 25, 2018, 7:59 PM

The New York Times article is talking about the "political questions" being argued by AIM and "Inside Story."

Four of them are referred to by the Times as, "intelligent criticisms" that claim the PBS documentary "makes Ho Chi Minh into a nationalist rather than a Communist, it ignores the role of the South Vietnamese Army, it minimizes the brutal treatment of American prisoners of war," and finally, "it slights the actual conduct of military operations."

It seems to me that at least two of those four issues, Ho Chi Minh's political affiliation and the role of the South Vietnamese army are reoccurring political themes throughout the history of the War.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

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Re: Political questions

by [Alysia Knapp](#) - Saturday, April 28, 2018, 5:35 PM

It seems like the NYT article can be summarized by this sentence: "And, of course, that's exactly what Mr. Irvine and AIM are doing. They are expressing their opinion on what are essentially political questions." (NYT, pg2). The author, John Corry, mentions they both PBS and AIM are biased and giving their opinions about these "political questions."

I'm not sure if I can give my full opinion yet about which source has my approval regarding these issues, as we have only seen 4 episodes of PBS and the second AIM video discusses PBS video number 13 a lot. I liked the PBS series before the AIM videos made me question everything. I have learned so much from those videos so far, and even Losers are Pirates says PBS presents some facts.

"We do not deny that the Television History contains some truth in parts of its presentation." (Losers are Pirates, pg 7)

Losers are Pirates also explains why a viewer might approve the PBS series: "Based on the reviews seen by this writer, approval for the series seems to come from two groups: those who opposed America's involvement in the war and others who have limited background in the history of Southeast Asia and the war. Persons in the first group find that the series confirms many of their perceptions and prejudices, thereby justifying their past anti-war attitude. If they have any complaint, it is that the series does not criticize the U.S. harshly enough. Persons in the latter group are simply not in a position to judge the overall balance and accuracy of the program. They are satisfied, since the series reflects what they learned largely through the media - a matter of the blind leading the blind."

I considered myself to be part of the second group. Even with the understanding that PBS presents biased information, I still feel like it gave me some basic knowledge about the war, so far.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

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Inaccurate Depictions of troops

by [Kishahn Fellows](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 5:14 PM

One inconsistency I found was the Vietnam documentaries depiction of South Vietnamese and U.S. troops. While it spends a good portion of the time talking up the North Vietnamese, it seems to disparage the south and the U.S. frequently. For example the segment in episode 1 where the series brings up drug use among troops (6:20) the film makes it seem like this is the norm for the troops by having a man mention several drugs and their cheap prices overlaying a video of a group of troops getting high, this by no means makes a common place. Especially since this is some of the only footage I've seen of U.S. troops in vietnam using drugs. Historian Kenneth Moorefield brings up more discrepancies between the film's depiction and actual troops " the distinct impression I got from the series was that the American fighting Man were not the equal of their adversaries. The quality of the American fighting man in Vietnam is on par or higher then we've had in any other previous war, I can say as a company Commander...my men were fantastic."(6:50 AIM pt.2)

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

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Re: Inaccurate Depictions of troops



by [Jonathen Gray](#) - Wednesday, April 25, 2018, 2:27 PM

"The film makes it seem like this is the norm for the troops by having a man mention several drugs and their cheap prices overlaying a video of a group of troops getting high, this by no means makes a common place"

That alone does not make it common place. However, drug use was rampant in Vietnam and is something the [VA struggles with to this day](#) with Vietnam vets. I agree that the PBS series fails to highlight American successes and downplays American soldier accomplishments / involvement but drug use in Vietnam is something that has been thoroughly documented by the [NCBI](#), the American Journal of Addictions, and countless [other publications](#) / government agencies, and documentaries. I wonder if some of the material later weeks actually covers drug use. The fact that PBS has not really delved that far into soldier drug use in Vietnam is interesting noting their pro-North Vietnamese documentary slant.

One of the more cited statistic is from the [American Journal of Addictions](#) listing 35% of soldiers experimented with heroin while in Vietnam and up to 19% continuing usage post-Vietnam. I'd take it with a grain of salt as I believe their methodology isn't as established as I would like (617 soldier sample size and all front line infantry) but there is no doubt that it was certainly a problem.

Sum of ratings: [2 \(1\)](#)

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Re: Inaccurate Depictions of troops

by [Danielle Wardrip](#) - Wednesday, April 25, 2018, 4:46 PM

I just saw your post, after I had posted my response to Kshahn Fellows' "Inaccurate Depictions of troops" post. I agree. It will be interesting to see how and if the PBS series covers the drug use in Vietnam.

Sum of ratings: [0 \(1\)](#)

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AIM video paints a more well adjusted veteran population

by [Paul Geu](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 7:22 PM

While I believe that a majority of soldiers probably did not engage in rampant drug use, I do agree with you that there are also many veterans that are still dealing with the issue today. The first episode of the PBS documentary did have several scenes of soldiers engaging in drug use and gives the impression that was the norm for many soldiers.

The AIM video paints a different view that a majority of veterans are well adjusted a productive members of society, with many assuming leadership rolls today (AIM, historian Jayne). The historian also mentioned that the war was a reason while these veterans have taken a leadership roll and did not see the conflict as a hardship (AIM, historian Jayne). The AIM video took exception to the portrayal of soldiers as being loser victims or being haunted by their experiences. However like you mentioned in your forum post there were many soldiers that did take solace in drugs as a form of escape from the issues of war.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

1

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Re: Inaccurate Depictions of troops

by [Danielle Wardrip](#) - Wednesday, April 25, 2018, 4:43 PM

"Especially since this is some of the only footage I've seen of U.S. troops in Vietnam using drugs."

For the sole purpose of playing the devil's advocate (I have no real opinion on the matter because I do not know enough about it), I will say that just because you have not seen more footage of U.S. soldier using drugs in Vietnam, does not mean it does not exist. In fact, there are many sources that indicate that commanding officers would give government-issued drugs to soldiers in order to heighten their senses and kill any pain.

Also, in a writing titled *Dramatic Protests, Creative Communities: VVAW and the Expressive Politics of the Sixties Counterculture*, Ryan J. Kirkby points out that "drugs formed part of the basis of this dissident subgroup." (page 38) Some soldiers came home from Vietnam and brought their drug use and their political and cultural attitudes home with them. Kirkby writes that "they grew their hair long, sported beards and mustaches, listened to rock music, experimented with drugs, and in lieu of suits and ties wore their olive-drab jungle fatigues for a more radical effect." (page 39) Some of these members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) only started using drugs once they got to Vietnam.

But there are not that many accounts that specify what drugs were used most often by the soldiers. Do these sources consider tobacco and alcohol drugs? You might think of illegal drugs (amphetamines, heroin, opium, LSD, cocaine, etc.) when you hear about drug use, but they could just be talking about legalized drug use (tobacco, alcohol, etc.). Marijuana would have been in the illegal section back then, but I suppose it's legal now.

You are correct though: there are not many visual representations of soldiers using

...are correct enough, there are not many visual representations of soldiers using drugs, other than countless photos of them smoking what could very well be marijuana-laced cigarettes.

The fact that the PBS series has not delved further into this subject is odd. You would think that they would leap at the chance to make the U.S. look like irresponsible druggies. I suppose that we shall see later on if they decide to go down that road.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

2

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Prisoners of War and Propaganda (Footage)

by [Jacob Fagan](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 7:27 PM

After watching the second part of the AIM program, I noticed at the three-minute mark comments from John McCain, who was shot down and spent over six years as a prisoner of war in North Vietnam, that he disliked the picture the PBS series painted that [American POWs](#) were treated better than Vietcong prisoners. He said, "There is not one one single documented case of mistreatment of Vietcong or North Vietnamese prisoner once they were in the prison compound" (AIM, McCain). On the other hand, he said, North Vietnamese had a plan to psychologically and physically "in order to exploit the POWs for propaganda purposes; I think there was a great purpose and I don't think that purpose was drawn (in the PBS series)" (AIM, McCain). This is a big argument made by many scholars and pieces that disagreed with PBS' work. In *Losers are Pirates*, by James Banerian he criticized PBS' seemingly one-sided coverage on Vietnam veterans and the point of the U.S. being involved. He said, "Persons who defend U.S. involvement in Vietnam get very little attention in the program, while critics are portrayed so generously that one can almost see haloes shimmering over their heads" (Banerian, *Losers are Pirates*).

In the New York Times article, "'Television's Vietnam: The Real Story,' on PBS," John Corry brings up a point that there are very little falsities in the AIM series, but Professor Miller stated, "It seems to me what you're doing is projecting your opinion" (Miller, NYT). Corry agreed because they were seemingly offering their viewpoints on political questions. While this makes the video less resourceful, it still shows problematic tactics with PBS' game plan and execution. AIM brought to light the issues with not showing "both sides" about Vietnam veterans and how they didn't all struggle collectively, but a good amount had successful lives after the war. Or how showing North Vietnamese propaganda videos with POWs doesn't teach anything objective about what really happened to the POWs. I prefer AIM's video for these reasons, but all the presented pieces show us that we need to research ourselves instead of rely on just one source of information.

Sum of ratings:3 (1) 3

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Propaganda helped North Vietnam win the war at home**by [Paul Geu](#) - Friday, April 27, 2018, 12:14 PM

I agree with you that the use of propaganda videos had in no way shown how [American POWs](#) were actually treated during the war. In the interview with John McCain, he also mentions how the Vietcong used people like Jane Fonda and Wesley Clark to spread "falsehoods" about the treatment of the same seven [American POWs](#) that were seen in the propaganda videos and this did a great service for the Vietnamese(AIM, McCain). The use of propaganda was very important to the North because Ho Chi Minh said in 1965 "We wont win the war on the battlefields of Indochina, we'll win the war on the streets of San Francisco, Detroit, New York, and Washington DC," (AIM, McCain).

One aspect of the AIM video that I believe reduces it's power is the fact that a conservative media group produced it which gives it a more biased viewpoint. Like you stated from the New York Times article that the video was mainly used to project their opinion on the war (NYT, Curry). The article also mentions that there were very few falsities in the program, and in conjunction with the many books like Losers are Pirates shows that the PBS program does have holes in their narrative. It is our task, as students to fill in the gaps and allow us to get a fuller understanding of the War.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) 2

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Propaganda helped North Vietnam win the war at home**by [Alysia Knapp](#) - Saturday, April 28, 2018, 5:12 PM

Yes, propaganda should not be a main source of information when studying history, since they are made with promotional or persuasive notions regarding specific views. Even though propaganda can be extremely biased that does not mean we shouldn't view it at all. We should get an understanding of the views expressed in propaganda videos, but there has to be a balance.

Balance comes up a lot in Losers are Pirates. This sentence is a good generalization of the issues with the PBS series: "Throughout the program Communist officials, soldiers and political cadres are interviewed without an opportunity being given to nonCommunist sources to provide a balance." (Losers are Pirates, pg 6). While the AIM videos discuss important issues presented in PBS, they also seem to present their information in an unbalance manner.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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**Re: Propaganda helped North Vietnam win the war at home**by [Jacob Fagan](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 2:50 PM

Balance does come up a lot in *Losers are Pirates* and shows that the AIM and PBS videos have their biases; balance in journalism is completely ridiculous. There's no balance needed if the things you are reporting on are facts.

I also agree that propaganda isn't completely useless because it gives us an idea about how things work politically in the country but to use the videos as PBS' main source of footage is lazy and while it was obvious it was propaganda film, they didn't bother to tell us the context.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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**Giving context allows the viewer to decide**by [Paul Geu](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 10:38 PM

I agree with you that balance is not needed if you report on the facts. However, with almost everything in life, facts depend on what point of view you are looking at. Like you mention in the post down below with YouTube users, facts can be distorted by the media by showing what people want to see and making them report what you want them to report.

I wish that the PBS video would also have put in a disclaimer on many of the videos on who supplied the material, whether it was United States forces or the NLF. By showing the source of the material it provides the viewer the knowledge of who made the video but also gives them a chance to know that it was a propaganda film. There were many times I did not know that we were watching a staged scene or that it was purely fictional.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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**Re: Propaganda helped North Vietnam win the war at home**by [Jacob Fagan](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 2:43 PM

I appreciate the response. When the AIM video was first presented to me as a

superior film than the PBS one, I immediately thought it was going to be accurate and make sense for the most part, but after reading the NYT article, it really did nothing for me other than make me realize that it's incredibly hard to be impartial when making a any kind of journalism or entertainment and it's important for us students and scholars to learn things from everything released and come up with what we think are the facts.

And yes, I forgot to mention the Jane Fonda part, but that was interesting, because it reminds me of what North Korea has done with American youtubers. They allow them to enter the country, but only show them the "good" parts of the nation and blocks them off from everything else; North Korea even had to check the videos before they posted them to sign them off. If that's not considered propaganda, same with Fonda's appearance, than I don't know what is. Fonda was so anti-war that she basically made friends with the North Vietnamese and made it seem like they weren't controlled by a communist leader.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

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AIM is Biased

by [Myles Arnold](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 7:53 PM

The first part of the AIM documentary had me thinking that the PBS doc was leading us astray. After seeing part 2 its clear to me now that its simply a very pro-American documentary that tries to discredit almost every part of the PBS documentary. They highlight a "Pro- Vietnam " rally that PBS "failed" to show. Col.Harry Williams talks about anti war protestors saying that after being on campus' and talking with the media during the height of the war, saying, "It was obvious that the people protesting the war desperately needed a moral justification for what they were doing." It feels like an all out effort at times to not only discredit the PBS doc but to completely justify the United States involvement in Vietnam.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

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Marches and Parades

by [Kate Adkisson](#) - Wednesday, April 25, 2018, 6:42 PM

Miles,

I agree with your thoughts surrounding the AIM video and its tone that heavily favors the actions of the American government in Vietnam. You mention the

"Pro-Vietnam" war that PBS neglected to show, which Charles Heston describes as less "newsworthy" than demonstrations against the war (Television's Vietnam, 10:40). I would argue the protesters of the war had plenty justification to demonstrate, if not more justification than the Pro-war paraders. The people in the parade are seen showing signs such as "win", and "support our boys in Vietnam". Do the people marching even know why we are there, how much money is going towards the war, how many lives are being lost? And why? What exactly are the American people supporting, what do they think "winning" will result in? I think that rather than a pro-War rally, it was a Pro-our sons rally. Of course families missed their sons, and wanted them to know they were loved. Young men were being sent off in the thousands to die supposedly protecting freedom, and and to wipe out the evil that was the enemy. The anti-war protesters are protesting exactly that, needing no justification, as it is plain to the public to see. The AIM videos follows the mentality of the Pro-war paraders, in that being against the war is somehow being disrespectful to or against American soldiers. I would say that being pro-Vietnam war is directly a slap in the face to those men. The war cost them their friends, a chunk of their lives, and probably resulted in lasting negative mental health/physical health problems. And for what? To secure the interests of the United States on an economic, political, and social level. Not for freedom, and not for the protection or enhancement of normal American civilian life, in my opinion.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

1

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**Re: Marches and Parades**by [Miles Arnold](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 7:22 PM

Im not sure that being "pro-Vietnam" is like a slap in the face of the soldiers. At least not at that time. All war costs soldiers "their friends, a chunk of their lives," and "lasting negative mental health/ physical health problems," as you pointed out. But, I have to keep telling myself that those documentaries were made just a few years after the conflict ended and that a lot of those events were still fresh. I think now, the general consensus is sympathy. Now that we can look back and continue to analyze the conflict we see that the soldiers were in a position unlike any before. They were being TOLD to join the Army and go fight a war that no one totally didn't understand at the time.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

1

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Anti-war protests did not turn American people against war according to Herring book

by [Paul Geu](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 11:03 PM

One major visual aspect of the war was the protests by the Anti-War movement and the perception that this movement changed the average American's opinion of the War and helped North Vietnam hold out for victory. However, the Herring book states that the effectiveness of the movement was basically limited by the many divisions within it's own ranks (Herring, pg 219). Herring further states that public opinion poles found the antiwar movement was "more obnoxious than the war itself," (Herring, pg 219).

The impact of the anti-war movement was more subtle by forcing the war into the public consciousness and challenged the need for the war and the policies of the government itself. Herring finally stated that the disturbances set off by the movement caused fatigue and anxiety among the public and finally the policy makers that encouraged efforts to find a way out of the war (Herring, pg 220).

Sum of ratings: [2 \(1\)](#)

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Re: AIM is Biased

by [Jonathen Gray](#) - Friday, April 27, 2018, 2:39 PM

I thought the line about "desperately needing a moral justification" for avoiding the draft, protesting, and fleeing to Canada was one of the weakest propaganda points in the AIM video. It doesn't matter your opinion on the war, at the end of the day it's a proxy war fought with soldiers drafted against their will for objectives that are fuzzy at best. The protesters didn't exactly have to look for justification.

Harry Summers goes on to say that anti-war activists like to freeze time at 1969-1970 (10:30 Televisions Vietnam Part 2) as if that is some justification as to why the protesters wouldn't feel justified. That's the time period of the Mai Li Massacres, the release of the [Pentagon Papers](#), and the [peak of war casualties](#).

When else would they like anti-war activists to focus on? the time of the "Parade that never was" in 1967 (11:07 Televisions Vietnam Part 2)? Which was the time period of low death tolls and the population believing we'd be out of the war quickly. the 1969-1970 timeframe was the period that absolutely capsulated anti-war sentiment. When victory timelines stretched from quickly and efficiently to an utter

quagmire. I wish either series would have addressed public support in actual linear timeframes and in conjunction with death tolls.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Re: AIM is Biased

by [Jonus Woolley](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 8:55 PM

"It feels like an all out effort at times to not only discredit the PBS doc but to completely justify the United States involvement in Vietnam."

I agree with your statement on the AIM video. Last week, I was definitely certain that the PBS documentary was full of biased opinions and not actual facts, and 100% believed the AIM documentary. I guess that was foolish of me to be swayed so easily.

I also agree with the second part of your statement, "...to completely justify the United States involvement in Vietnam."

I think it was definitely really strange to have such a drastic change between this week's video/sources and last week's video/sources.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

0

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The Parade That Never Was

by [Jonus Woolley](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 9:58 PM

"The parade that never was" was a big contradiction to me. In the AIM video the narrator says that PBS, like the media of the time, glossed over this uprising of angry americans. The war was righteous in the eyes of PBS and in the AIM video they try to show that more than just war was happening. I feel like there are two very different ways to look at the vietnam war and PBS shows it from the same stand point that the news and media of the time did, while AIM shows us more of how people really felt.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: The Parade That Never Was

by [Maria Cecilia Contreras Sanchez](#) - Friday, April 27, 2018, 9:58 PM

I agree with you that PBS was a medium and was used as propaganda during that time. However, the book and the article say that both videos fall in some points

time. However, the book and the article say that both videos fail in some points. Nevertheless, the videos of AIM only focus on certain points. The book gives us an example of how AIM touches on points related to Ho Chi Min was initially nationalist, but did fail to put the war in post-war perspective. On the other hand the article which also mention the previous, it also tells us that AIM ignores the important participation of South Vietnam army on that time.

Sum of ratings: 0 (1)

0

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Re: The Parade That Never Was

by [Jacob Fagan](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 8:42 PM

"The parade that never was" was super interesting, because it was said that most Americans didn't agree with the war, but national media, including the PBS series, didn't cover this huge parade for the "pro-war" side. While this was just one instance of oversight by media sources, this is a metaphor of what can happen during wartime and trying to find out what actually happened in Vietnam and other places. I don't think AIM really told us how most people felt, they just showed that there were more people who were for the war or for the soldiers (even though I don't actually believe people hated the courage of soldiers, only what they were asked to do).

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

1

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Many signs said support the troops

by [Paul Geu](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 9:11 PM

When I read a the signs from the parade that never was I noticed a majority asked for people to support the troops, similar to what has happened with the Iraq war in recent history. While I believe a majority of Americans did indeed support the troops, a large amount of anti-war protestors also protested against the men and women who returned home. In the Appy book one of the interviews was of a former flight attendant named Helen Hegelheimer. In her interview she gave a great picture of how the anti-war protestors treated normal troops. She even had to warn soldiers to change out of their uniforms to that they would be less likely to the targeted by the protestors (Appy, pg 110). To her it seemed that the "protest movement targeted the soldiers rather than the policy makers," (Appy, pg 110) I have recalled friends of my family that had served there being called baby killers even though they did not even serve in combat duty during their service.

AIM historian Summers stated that the pro-war movement wasn't as newsworthy

as the protests and he states that the PBS shows this by showing a protesting parachute drop while the pro-war parade is only 200 yards away (AIM, Historian Summers). While sometimes media sources might have an over cite, there are sometimes many instances that media has not reported things that might be against the narrative they want to report. While I hope that this is seen more in the Op-ed pages there has always been a media bias during War and the AIM video stated that popular media bias was a major reason the US lost the war.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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New York Times, AIM, and PBS

by [Kate Adkisson](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 10:19 PM

After reading the New York Times article, I feel like my position on the PBS source and the AIM source stayed mostly the same. Reading through the article a few times, I cannot gauge exactly what the author's stance is on the war or either source but I do know that he tries to give AIM some credit, explaining their rebuttal as just expressing an opinion. On page 2 of the article, John Corry writes, "They are expressing their opinion on what are essentially political questions" (NYT, p.2). I'm not entirely sure what political questions the author is referring to. Could they be along the lines of was the war justified, or was Ho Chi Minh a communist, or even simply why Vietnam? According to the AIM video, the opinions expressed seem to only attempt to answer Ho Chi Minh's political ideology and just how badly PBS had screwed up. The AIM videos did not set out to answer those big questions from a conservative view, I believe they set out to discredit the program simply because it leaned left and expressed views other than America first.

The AIM film, in my opinion, doesn't share an opinion of the War, but of the PBS series, which I feel does a disservice to the people and takes away from understanding because it creates hostility by directly challenging this work. Why not just create a rebuttal series that expressed conservative tones and the information they wanted to present, rather than make a film narrated by a right-wing movie star to get your point across that the series "makes Ho Chi Minh into a nationalist rather than a Communist; it ignores the role of the South Vietnamese Army; it minimizes the brutal treatment of American prisoners of war; it slights the actual conduct of military operations" (NYT, p.2) Directly challenging someone's opinion is obviously going to make people tune out, so the rebuttal was counterproductive, however well-intentioned.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

**Portrayal of Veterans**by [Alysia Knapp](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 10:54 PM

After watching part 2, I can confidently say how influential portrayal and opinions are when presenting history. While these videos may claim to share facts, how they describe them changes the “facts” meaning. I think that both PBS and AIM share a lot of personal opinions that may or may not alter how the facts are perceived by the audience. One thing that stood out to me in the AIM video was this:

(Referring to PBS describing veterans) “It seems that the image of a veteran is very much the stereotyped image of a veteran as a loser/victim. The word they used is ‘haunted’. PBS didn’t give the other side of the picture which is that veterans are not only well adjusted members of society but that many veterans are now assuming leadership roles” (AIM 8:26)

“.... their success in life so far has been achieved, many of them say, in part because of their experience serving their country, not in spite of it.” (AIM 9:00)

That is big assumption to make. While both portrayals of veterans may be true, it can only depend on each, individual veteran. My Grandpa, a Vietnam veteran, had a different view of his experience at war compared to other Vietnam veterans. I don’t think it is very fair or accurate to assume a majority of veterans are “haunted” or “leaders”.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

3

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**Re: Portrayal of Veterans**by [Maria Cecilia Contreras Sanchez](#) - Thursday, April 26, 2018, 11:42 AM

I agree with you in that both videos have different opinions expressed. That is why the book, Losers and pirates, helps us with this issue at the same time as the New York time article, also makes comparison of both. Banerian videos It explains the feelings of those who suffered during the war with respect to the two videos presented to the public making their opinion and comments more valid. Of course there will always be an unknown in knowing who tells the truth and who does not

Sum of ratings: 0 (1)

0

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**Re: Portrayal of Veterans**by [Jacob Fagan](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 8:47 PM

It still was opinionated of AIM to say PBS felt that way about soldiers or even portrayed them that way, but it's also important to remember these soldiers were courageous to fight for their country even if you think the orders were unethical.

Both videos were extremely opinionated, indirectly and directly and there's no reason use one or the other on its own without doing any more research of your own.

Sum of ratings: 0 (1)

0

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Re: Portrayal of Veterans

by [Jonus Woolley](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 9:16 PM

"I don't think it is very fair or accurate to assume a majority of veterans are "haunted" or "leaders"."

I agree with this. I have heard a lot of first-hand stories about being apart of the Vietnam War, and I found it to be drastically different from both the AIM and the PBS video. I find it disappointing that it would generalize such big facts about each and every war veteran. You are right, it is definitely unfair.

With that being said, I also find your statement, "I think that both PBS and AIM share a lot of personal opinions that may or may not alter how the facts are perceived by the audience", to be very interesting. After reading and analyzing several posts in this forum, I find this to be a very popular idea. Again, I cannot stress how disappointing it is to be fed information that is almost all opinion and still be left terribly confused at the end of the day.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

1

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Week 4 Reply

by [Spencer Gutierrez](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 10:58 PM

Upon reviewing the NYT article, Losers are Pirates, and the two videos for this week it is evident that both of the shows are opinionated and while the PBS documentary focuses mainly on the success of the North Vietnamese it has some accuracy but mainly the documentary is a product of false media and the bad that america did in the war. In the book Losers are Pirates the author clearly states on pg 13 that "It is our intention to defend the South Vietnamese government in all its actions or individuals within the government for personal actions they might have committed

while they were in power. Every government in the world has its problems and South Vietnam, too, had its share.” What the author is trying to say is that the South Vietnamese were defending their freedom and today are still paying for the hardships that followed the war. I would say the AIM documentary provided more historical accuracy.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

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AIM as the more reputable source

by [Kate Adkisson](#) - Saturday, April 28, 2018, 1:12 PM

Spencer,

I would have to disagree with your claim that “the AIM documentary provided more historical accuracy.” The AIM video did not attempt to explain the events of the war like the PBS series did, its only purpose was to correct mistakes from PBS. The AIM video does not paint a clear picture of the entire war, with most of the airtime being dedicated to attacking PBS rather than providing history, only explaining the historical context when addressing an error in the PBS series. If I had just watched the AIM series, I feel I would have no idea what the war was actually about or the elements of the Vietnamese armies. Though PBS is obviously biased, (as AIM is), and may have a few historical inaccuracies, the goal of the PBS series is to inform the viewer on subjects they may have been ignorant of. The feeling towards the war at the time of the documentary release among the American public mixed, however, as noted by James Banerian, who attests, “ The dilemmas, the questions, and the uncertainty remain in the minds of those who cared about our country's involvement in that difficult war. We are concerned about the nation's strength and honor, its position in the world and directions for the future. We are troubled by our government's decisions and our military's actions and their implications in our lives now. Our anger and frustration have been bottled up inside us for nine years, ever since our historic defeat in Vietnam. We still have not learned how to deal with this reality and place it in perspective” (Losers are Pirates, p.2). Thus, the PBS series set out to help unbottle that frustration and provide some sort of answers to the people questioning the war, whether left or right. AIM, however, does not help matters of uncertainty, it is only concerned with the honor of our nation, time and time again pointing out that the documentary makes our country and soldiers look bad and the North Vietnamese look like angels. While I believe the North Vietnamese fighters were not entirely angelic and perfect beings, their quest and goal was honorable, for they were fighting for their freedom from foreign rulers, however the U.S’ quest and goals were not honorable, because we went there simply to secure our role on the Global scale, rather than make some sort of a difference in the people’s lives. Our goals were in the interest of America, not the interests of the Vietnamese people, Southern or Northern. Of course the PBS series has its flaws, but it also provides an opinion invaluable

in times of uncertainty of our country, and that opinion is maybe America isn't that great, and maybe we should stay out of affairs that have nothing to do with us.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

2

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AIM Review

by [Spencer Gutierrez](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 12:59 PM

Yes I would have to say that I now agree that neither sources are the right one, after further reviewing the series again I can see that the AIM documentary is spent mostly trying to make our veterans look good. I believe that the AIM documentary wanted to sort of regain some sort of honor for these people and they were too caught up with that to properly cover what happened during the war. (pg.3) of Losers are Pirates its stated that "For many of the young men and women who served during the war, the experience was perhaps the most profound one of their lives, and at the same time the one most difficult to face. Many had felt they were not receiving the support of those back home; when they returned to the States, they were often met with coldness or hostility." This is something that we all know, and I believe that the PBS documentary kind of gave a false hype to the viewers that it would restore how they still felt after the war, which I think is part of the reason the fixation the whole time of the AIM documentary is to make the vets feel better.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

1

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Re: AIM Review

by [Haonan Bai](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 9:17 PM

I like the way you think about this problem, I think it's very interesting to me. I have never considered that these two sources are not correct. I am just comparing the two sources which are more truthful. But your opinion inspired me.

In my mind, PBS merely gave the audience an acceptable history but may not be true. Perhaps this expression can make many people feel good. The reason why AIM refuted PBS for the authenticity of history is that to give recognition to those veterans. "For the young men and women who served during the war, the experience was perhaps the most profound one of their lives, and at the same time the one most difficult to face Many had felt they were not receiving

the support of the folks back home; when they returned to the States, they were often met with coldness or hostility” (Losers are Pirates, p3). The example you gave is a good illustration of how AIM wants to give some comfort to these people.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

1

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Re: AIM as the more reputable source

by [Danielle Wardrip](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 4:33 PM

"the documentary makes our country and soldiers look bad and the North Vietnamese look like angels."

I am in agreement with your statement. AIM bashes PBS on multiple instances about their tendency towards portraying the Americans as the bad guys. "I think the great unjustness of this film is that it portrays the American soldier in Vietnam as a drug addict, a racial bigot, and a man who murdered his officers and NCOs almost at will." (AIM, 5:59) Now, I haven't gotten that impression from the PBS series, but I also have the perspective that not every example is a rule. For example, there were many atrocities committed during the war by both sides, but that doesn't mean that I am going to think badly of every soldier that served.

Another example of how the AIM video tries to victimize the military is when Charlton Heston says, "Popular support for our troops was never as newsworthy as demonstrations against the war." (AIM, 10:40) This leads the viewer to think that no one paid attention to supporting the troops and that there were no newscasts that covered it. If this is true, how did they obtain what looks like a news-grade video of the "Support Our Men in Vietnam Parade" on May 13, 1967? This question may only be a speculation and the answer may be simple (ie. a bystander had a good camera and released it themselves). Further research would be required.

However, my point is that the AIM video makes large generalizations and does not even touch on the perspective of the North Vietnamese. Maybe the South Vietnamese really did want to fight the North. That doesn't mean that America is a hero for supporting them. It also doesn't mean that North Vietnam is a villain for fighting back. There were bad decisions made on both sides and the AIM video does not acknowledge that, choosing instead to ignore it completely. I would say that the PBS series does lean more towards supporting Ho, but it at least touches on the mistakes made by both the United States and the Vietnamese.

Given all supplied resources, I would conclude that the good AND the bad of

BOTH countries is necessary to understand what happened during the war and the gravity of it all.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Re: Week 4 Reply

by [Jonus Woolley](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 8:41 PM

I think that I'm going to have to disagree with your statement, "I would say the AIM documentary provided more historical accuracy." In my opinion, the AIM video didn't necessarily try to inform anyone of what happened in the Vietnam War, but to "correct" the PBS video. I say "correct" because both of the videos seem very opinionated, and it sways the way we view historical facts. I would say that neither of the videos are too terribly historically accurate.

Sum of ratings: 0 (1)

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Re: Week 4 Reply

by [Haonan Bai](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 8:44 PM

You are right, both organizations have their own insights and ideas. PBS is emphasizing victory and communism in North Vietnam. But you will find that there is much different information between PBS and AIM. Such as the author of the book Losers said in the preface, James Banerian gave a lot of evidence to prove that PBS series is not true. and also the video from Part 2, John McCain said he does not like what PBS describes the prisoners in Hanoi Hilton. He was one of the prisoners from Hanoi Hilton. Through these descriptions, I prefer to believe that AIM has a more realistic explanation.

I also said that each country has different political parties and different policies. South Vietnam did indeed fight against North Vietnam for freedom. This is just a confrontation between the two parties. Which is between communism and capitalism. For South Vietnam and North Vietnam, there is no right or wrong. They just fight for their own party.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Losers are Pirates casts light on historical inaccuracy

by [Paul Geu](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 11:37 PM

After reading the Losers are Pirates excerpt I was left with a sense that a multitude of

people throughout the world had serious issues with Vietnam: A Television History to the point that the author wrote a book detailing some of the historical inaccuracies portrayed in the program.

One of the main significances of the excerpt was the author stating that there was a political motivation for the program that lead to bias in the telling of the Vietnam War. The author states that more of than a few of the program's critics thought that the producers were "trying to influence public opinion" for goals ranging from improving diplomatic relations between the United States and Vietnam, to influencing the public to avoid conflicts elsewhere to prevent a "second Vietnam" (Losers are Pirates, pg 6). The author goes into detail regarding the AIM video that we are currently reviewing in these forums informing the author of some of their main arguments against A Television History. One note that the author makes that caught my eye was grouping those that approved the program into two groups: 1: Those that were opposed to US involvement in Vietnam and 2: Those that have a limited background in the history of the region and the War itself. (Losers are Pirates, Pg 5). The author notes that those in the second group have formed their opinion mainly on what they have learned about the war in the main stream media in what he calls "A matter of the blind leading the blind" (Losers are Pirates. Pg 5).

While the author of the book does state that the book is limited due to the size and complexity of the topic, he does spell out what he wanted to accomplish with the text. This is similar to what the AIM video did with the objectives of the PBS program. This step wise approach to me shows how the PBS program can have flaws in the program, such as the use of Vietnamese Communist propaganda films, and shows that we should have an open mind when viewing the program and not taking it as fact.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Left side balance

by [Casandra Fountain](#) - Tuesday, April 24, 2018, 11:47 PM

I enjoyed the excerpt of Losers are Pirates. James Banerian touched on how the PBS series was criticized or lack thereof from some, gave a little history of the end of the war and what you could expect from his review. I found the responses of his letters to the producers very telling. I expected a limited response from producers of a big network such as PBS but what I didn't expect was the answers he described he go. I want to believe they would try to address a writer's concerns and not turn it around and blame their viewer for their mistake. Example being, " He chided me for using 'loaded language' in my letters, such as the term 'Communist' which I applied to certain characters in the war. This type of language, he wrote has 'pejorative implications' that did not promote rational understanding of the issues." (Preface V

implications that did not promote rational understanding of the issues. (Preface v, Losers are Pirates) Banerian sheds light on his opinion of the two groups reviewing the PBS series, one being those who opposed America's involvement in the war and others who have limited background in the history of Southeast Asia and the war. The first group of people find that the series confirms many of their perceptions and prejudices, thereby justifying their past anti-war attitude. If they have any complaint, it is that the series does not criticize the U.S. harshly enough. Persons in the latter group are simply not in a position to judge the overall balance and accuracy of the program. They are satisfied, since the series reflects what they learned largely through the media - a matter of the blind leading the blind. (p.5) He also explains Vietnamese refugee had complaints about the program. One common complaint being the way the program uses propaganda information from Communist sources that is often inaccurate and always biased. (p.6) Many times Communist officials, soldiers or political leaders would be interviewed but there was never a non-Communist source to provide a balance to the information given.

This article among the others given this week show even more of how the story of the war was highlighted in the PBS program. It was a biased outlook on the war and as quoted by the editor Reed Irvine of AIM who disputed the program's claim to balance, declaring that "the balance all too often seemed to come out balanced on the left". (p.5)

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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NYT article shows political bias on both sides.

by [Paul Geu](#) - Wednesday, April 25, 2018, 9:48 PM

After reading the article from the New York Times, I was left with a sense of both programs having some political bias which decreases the effectiveness of their message. While the AIM video does make multiple good points especially on topics that were left out of the PBS program like the treatment of [American POWs](#) in the war, the controversy that the Times article mentions is that the producer of the program, Accuracy in Media (AIM), is a conservative group that monitors media while the PBS corporation has a history of more liberal doctrine. (NYT, pg 1).

The article does also mention that the producers were unwilling to revise their view of Southeast Asia years after the War and after the broadcasting of the AIM program giving a criticism of their work. The author suggests that due to their opposition to the AIM video, history should not be "reinterpreted unless the reinterpretation has their approval (NYT pg 3).

Based on the information from the New York Times article, I feel that the best way to

evaluate both programs is to take the information they both present, not as gospel, but with a grain of salt. I feel that best way to learn both sides of the argument of the war is to continue to learn about the topic with all the material we have, and only then make my own opinion of the conflict.

After reading both the Herring and Appy books in regards to whether Ho Chi Minh was a nationalist first and a communist second I feel that the PBS program was more accurate than the AIM video. The Herring book also stated that Ho Chi Minh was also replaced by the more War Hawk faction of the communist party as the war drug on and the horrible things that happened to the people of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam were done after Minh's death. While we will never know if he would have personally done these crimes, I think that he would have been happy that his country was finally free first before doing anything related to communism.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

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Re: NYT article shows policital bias on both sides.

by [Maria Cecilia Contreras Sanchez](#) - Friday, April 27, 2018, 11:08 PM

Both videos have their bias on the subject. And I am perfectly in agreement that we have much to learn from the Vietnam War and if it is necessary to evaluate the information that each video wants to give us. As Banerian says, "So at some time or other America must look back at the war in Southeast Asia and across the waters of the Pacific to see what is happening now in order to learn, to understand and to find some personal answers." (3) Banerian also said, that PBS does show us part of the Vietnam War, but also gives us some examples where the information is misinterpreted. Also, it explains how Veterans and the people who were directly involved felt with the videos that PBS showed to the public. Critics made many theories about the PBS Videos from political issues to an imbalance of opinions in some important topics.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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"cloud of perplexity and shame"

by [Alysia Knapp](#) - Saturday, April 28, 2018, 5:43 PM

"The war has left a bad taste in the mouths of many Americans. Few people are interested in talking about it One can almost visualize a cloud of perplexity and shame hanging over people's heads when the subject comes up. A sinister image has been laid on us, an image of horrible mistakes, of senseless destruction, of blood on our hands " (Pirates are Losers, pg 9)

names. (names are below, pg 6)

I am curious to see what you guys think of this quote. It seems like people were confused about the Vietnam War when it was going on, and are still confused today. I feel like many people know the war was "bad" but they do not know why. Do you think American propaganda or historical videos, like PBS, have pushed people to be too ashamed or embarrassed to learn more about the Vietnam War?

Sum of ratings: -

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Re: "cloud of perplexity and shame"

by [Danielle Wardrip](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 4:49 PM

I believe that us getting involved in the war was a grave mistake. However, I can also understand the reasoning behind the decision to do so. My objection to our involvement is solely based on the fact that I have the advantage of hindsight. I can say "We never should have done that, look what happened." I cannot say that I would have been able to say "We should not do that, look what will happen" had I been alive at the time.

I think that many people, though they may not know it, are not aware of what actually happened in Vietnam. I also believe that videos like the PBS series and the AIM video are one of the leading reasons why Americans misunderstand the war as they do. I agree that people were and are confused about the war.

I am sure that many people are also ashamed in our involvement, perhaps due to the dramatic acts of the radical counterculture movement that took place because of it. I will readily admit that when I first heard about the hippies that refused to serve their country, I was irate. I could not imagine how someone could defy their country like that. This is because I would consider myself to be very patriotic. If our country were to go to war (and if I was physically able to), I would join the military only to support my country. After more research, though, I saw that they refused to fight because they did not agree with the terrors that were taking place overseas. Now, I am also very religious. If I were to join the military, I do not think I would be able to kill anyone. I loathe the idea of people losing their lives like that. In this view, I understand why they did not want to join the military.

My patriotism and my religion create turmoil within me. This said, I am certain that the leaders of our great country felt some sort of the same turmoil.

Sum of ratings: [2 \(1\)](#)

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**Re: "cloud of perplexity and shame"**by [Casandra Fountain](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 5:34 PM

I feel this quote is very accurate in showing the people's disdain from this war that happened over 40 years. I live in a small town and work on and off at the market there. We have a few veterans that live out there and had served in Vietnam, I know this because they wear the trademark hat. I am fairly close to one whose is a "regular" and told him I was studying the Vietnam War in school this term and his reply was that war was a waste of energy and lives and he doesn't like talking about that time in his life. Most of us will never experience something like the Vietnam War in our lifetime, nor should we ever have too. The cloud of shame and perplexity does hang over individuals who remember that time of history. The media did not help the cause of understanding something so complicated and fragile to the public's mind. Of course the Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson administrations had their motives about sending "advisors" at first then becoming militarily involved in 1965. I don't think the propaganda has pushed people away from learning but it certainly has distorted people idea of the war. In the last few minutes of the AIM video, Reed Irvine summarizes media's role and impact. He states one great lesson we can learn from the Vietnam War is how enemy was able to use our free uncontrolled media to achieve their own objectives and PBS series ignored this. (22:55 AIM) Irvine follows up with one example, the Tet offensive. Our media showed this turning point in the war as a defeat but in reality it was a very outstanding military victory for America. The Viet Cong suffered many losses which they really never fully recovered. In the fall of 1968, producer at NBC, Jack Fern, recognized that they got the story wrong. He proposed to his senior producer, Robert Norshield, that they set record straight, after little review he turned the proposal down. Norshield's reasoning was because Tet had been established in the public mind as defeat, therefore, it was an American defeat. Now think about that, the first time in our history a victory that our men had won on the battlefield was transmuted into a defeat by our own news media. (23:00 AIM) This is quite disturbing and has only gotten worse in today's media. Everything is about angles and perspectives and to know if it's the right side is nearly impossible.

Sum of ratings: **3 (1)**

3

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**Re: "cloud of perplexity and shame"**by [Alysia Knapp](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 10:03 PM

Yes, perspective plays a major role in how historical facts are perceived. The New York Times article mentions a program called "Vietnam Rewritten" (pg 2). This brings up questions about revised history and views, like whether reinterpreted history is considered rewritten. I think as time goes on new information might be

discovered, so inevitably opinions might be revised. It sounds like Fern wanted to present his altered view of the war, but Norshield seemed determined to follow through with the angle they already had chosen. He chose to not reinterpret history when given new information.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

1

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cloud of shame over Washington instead of soldiers

by [Kate Adkisson](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 6:41 PM

I don't think the reason people misunderstand the Vietnam war is because they're hesitant to research on account of shame or embarrassment. I think the reasons we are ignorant of this war is because of the way the authorities have chosen to present it to the public. Misleading the public about the overall scale, roots, and outcomes is shown in our readings, with our government time and time again either outright omitting facts to the public in order to keep morale towards the war high, or being dishonest concerning the actual reality of the men on the ground. Of course it was broadcast back home, but you would just be seeing soldiers shooting, not learning about political history, just the war in action.

You mention Mr. Banerian's quote, "A sinister image has been laid on us, an image of horrible mistakes, of senseless destruction, of blood on our hands." There is blood on our hands, regardless of it the fighters' intention, whether that be fighting for freedom, fighting for country, or fighting for whatever cause they thought they were fighting for.

In the 4th episode of the PBS series, Private Bill Ehrhart is interviewed about his time in the war. He paints a story of a young boy dreaming to fight for his country, enlisting in the marines underage with the consent of his parents. He explains, "When the government said that the Communists were taking over Vietnam and if we didn't stop them there, we would have to stop them eventually in San Diego. I took that at face value" (PBS Episode 4, 5:40). Our soldiers were fed propaganda and their bravery was taken advantage of. Shame should not be cast on the soldiers who fought there, and understanding and love should be shed to the men who endured horrifying sights and experiences while they were overseas. Shame should be cast on our government who acts silently, behind the backs of the people, using their money to finance a war the American people knew little about, or even knew where on the map Vietnam was. So I would agree with Banier's statement that there is that cloud hanging over us, however that cloud should hang closer over the government's head instead of our soldiers, who were following orders, and in their minds, vanquishing an evil that supposedly threatened they and their family's livelihoods.

Private Ehrhart expresses a disconcerting sentiment half way through the episode. He tells

us, “What really began to happen after a few months is that you could get as far as understanding that this was crazy, what was going on here was nuts, but you didn’t dare begin to draw conclusions from that, because they pointed in directions that were just terrifying. America might not be the guys on the white horses with the white hat, maybe we shouldn’t be in Vietnam. Maybe I got my ass out here in the bushes for nothing” (PBS Episode 4, 23:25). I think this is a very telling insider message. I doubt the Viet Cong ever doubted their positions as warriors, because if they did, they would immediately remember French colonialism and that their country had been fighting for independence for longer than America had been a country.

Sum of ratings: **3 (1)**

3

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Re: cloud of shame over Washington instead of soldiers

by [Casandra Fountain](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 11:42 PM

Without a doubt our government should have had more of the burden on their shoulders instead of the men who fought to stay alive. The last fifteen minutes of the fourth episode of the PBS series I found very telling how the various interviewed marines felt after serving. First on the screen was Specialist Charlie Sabatier. He was a naive twenty year old who was drafted for the war. He ended up getting shot in the back while trying to help an injured friend. In what he thought was his final thoughts he flashed back to his training and had a realization. He was a trained killer, he didn’t want to be but he was. In that moment he really started to think, What is communism? He couldn’t define it. (47:25, PBS pt4) I wonder how many soldiers didn’t know either. How could someone be fighting for something they didn’t even know about or what it stood for.

Next was Private Mark Smith who stated what is now the obvious. “Someone was taking advantage of our bravery and our courage and I think there was that to no good end. We were being used really for God knows what purpose.” (50:10) If only there was a super power for hindsight. These men were fed propaganda as you stated and thought it was their moral duty to defeat evil. What these ads didn’t entail are the sleepless night, freezing to scorching temperatures, undefined battlefields, and lifetime of debilitating memories when you leave.

What is even more problematic is when you start believing you’re the bad guy. Private Bill Ehrhart thought this. He remember learning about the redcoats in school and injustice upon the American people. Pretty soon Private Ehrhart thought he was a redcoat. “I wasn’t a hero, I wasn’t a good guy.” When on leave

in Hong Kong he had serious thoughts of deserting his company. All it took was eight months for the getty volunteer hurrying off to do his duty to seriously contemplate dissertation (51:30) This show the moral confusion in the soldiers. After months of killing, thinking you're doing the right thing, and months of no luck one starts to doubt what they're even fighting for. The government hyped this "kids" up thinking they were stopping the evils of communism and fighting for the good of humanity for the Vietnamese. They most certainly could have had their own agendas behind closed doors. And above else the media did not help the soldier's mentality of believing they were still doing good in the heartless jungle of Vietnam.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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Re: "cloud of perplexity and shame"

by [Jonus Woolley](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 8:51 PM

I had always learned back in high school that the Vietnam War was the first real televised war, so Americans back in the States were able to see what it was really like, and what they saw was something that they did not like. I guess looking back on that now, I am realizing that I have no idea what exactly was shown to Americans who were watching. All that I am really sure of is that we are extremely ashamed of the Vietnam War.

As for your question, "Do you think American propaganda or historical videos, like PBS, have pushed people to be too ashamed or embarrassed to learn more about the Vietnam War?" I think being so ashamed in the first place would make it hard to learn about what really happened. I can say from first-hand experience that I actually find myself embarrassed due to the fact that I honestly had no idea what the Vietnam War was; what it was for, why it happened, and why no one else knows exactly what happened.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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Re: "cloud of perplexity and shame"

by [Alysia Knapp](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 10:08 PM

I also did not know much about the Vietnam War before taking this class. It seems like a lot of people aren't educated about why it happened, but they do know to be ashamed of it. I just wonder if any propaganda has trained us to view

the Vietnam War in this manner. It is interesting to think about!

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

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Story of battle in village not an isolated event according to PBS

by [Paul Geu](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 9:33 AM

The majority of episode four of Vietnam: A Television history was the telling, on both sides, a battle at a small village in Vietnam. After a 36 hour long fight, the marines were finally able to get inside the village and clear the village of Vietcong troops.

However, because the battle was so hard and many American lives were lost, the soldiers took their frustrations out on the villagers themselves resulting in many possibly many innocent deaths (27:30 minutes into Episode 4, PBS). One soldier stated that while he and his friends did not participate in killing the villagers as portrayed in the video, he did not really cared what happened to them in the least (PBS, episode 4)

The villagers that did survive mentioned how the soldier did not care that they were innocent including one lady mentioning that the soldiers threw in a grenade into the home even though they were unarmed and she even said hello to the soldier (33:30 minutes into episode 4, PBS). At the conclusion of the section of the video one of the marines that was there mentioned that is was standard procedure to burn the village and did the people out of the holes and to scatter their livestock, but after three days he could not account for other marines but said they did it because they thought it needed to be done and in his opinion what happened there was war (37:30 minutes into episode 4, PBS).

In the AIM video, historian Cragg mentioned that the PBS series portrays soldiers as drug addicted, racial bigoted soldiers who killed their officers (AIM, historian Cragg). I felt that the telling of this battle, the PBS series implied heavily that the US soldiers were exactly how Cragg mentioned the series portrayed US soldiers, especially the racial bigotry aspect. While the massacres such as this one and especially the one at Mai Lai are completely inexcusable, they were more isolated than what is seemed in the PBS documentary. Most troops, did their duty to the best of their ability and did not participate in events such as the one shown in episode 4.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Losers are Pirates

by [Kate Adkisson](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 12:20 PM

In James Banerian's book *Losers are Pirates*, Mr. Banerian expresses his (and others) discontent towards the PBS program *Vietnam: A Television History* and its inaccuracies. James sets out to identify and correct mistakes made by the series, but also takes up an issue with other elements from the 13 part series. Banerian argues that the program was "previously biased" (*Losers Are Pirates*, p.i), as it was made by a "decidedly anti-war and anti-military production staff" (*L.A.P*, p.ii). He takes issue with the portrayal of Vietnam veterans, the South Vietnamese people, and Ho Chi Minh, asserting that the images presented were distorted by PBS and that people who supported the war were given little airtime to tell their sides. These grievances are laid out in the preface, followed by a responsibility given to the reader to "decide if the information being presented here is honest and worthwhile to their view of the war" (*L.A.P*, p. vii).

I disagree and agree with some aspects of Mr. Banerian's grievances. I agree that any source is biased and leans a certain way, whether that be hard left, hard right, or slightly off center. Such is a fact of life, humans are opinionated creatures and find it hard to not interject our feelings and rationalities and worldviews. I disagree with, however, that the production staff was anti-war and anti-military. This is a big reach on account of Mr. Banerian, in my view. The PBS documentary was not a smear campaign of the U.S government or its efforts. The documentary was an effort to educate the American people on a war they had little knowledge or understanding of. Presenting accurate history that sheds a bad light on the U.S isn't anti-war, it's just there. The history exists, and presenting it alone casts a bad light without even needing a narration.

Another issue I have with one of Mr. Banerian's claims is that he asserts pro-war individuals were given "very little attention in the program, while critics are portrayed so generously that one can almost see haloes shimmering over their heads" (*L.A.P*, p. ii). While the PBS offers viewpoints from many people, Vietnamese, American, and even French, I wanted to pour over the first episode of the series, the one that prompted and shocked James Banerian so bad into writing this very book, and see just who was providing commentary that got him so upset.

In Episode 1:

1. Premier Pham Van Dong
2. Duong Van Khanh
3. Hoang Quoc Viet
4. Dr. Tran Duy Hung

5. Archimedes Patti, O.S.S officer
6. Abbot Low Moffat, State Department
7. Major Philip Malins
8. General Vo Nguyen Giap, Commander of the Viet Minh Forces
9. General Jean-Julien Fonde
10. Henri Martin, French Navy Mechanic
11. Nguyen Thi Dinh, guerilla fighter
12. Douglas MacArthur II, State Department Counselor
13. Dean Rusk, State Department
14. Colonel Bui Tin
15. Captain Jean Pouget
16. Captain Cao Xuan Nghia
17. U. Alexis Johnson, State Department

Of these 17 people (I may have missed one or two but I hope I got everyone who was interviewed and their name displayed listed), 8 were Vietnamese, 5 were American (and in government positions such as in the State Department), 3 were French (and in military positions), and there was 1 British general. Since this episode had really nothing to do with the American war in Vietnam and more to do with the history of Vietnamese struggle against the French, it would make sense for there to be Vietnamese/ North Vietnamese individuals getting more airtime. Banerian whines, "Perhaps most unsettling was the experience of watching Communist Vietnamese leaders and cadres appearing on the screen along with propaganda movies being used as "historical data" without any question or debate as to their veracity". Well, if you're talking about the history of Communist Vietnam and French Colonialism, wouldn't it make sense to let them tell their story? And, I also don't believe PBS used the propaganda films to promote an idea, more to just illustrate the history and what people were seeing and experiencing at that time. In my opinion, Mr. Banerian got upset that a television series went against his narrative, and had to express his patriotism and commitment to America by writing this book. However, I have not read all of the book or watched all of the PBS series, so that's just my feeling for the time being right now.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) [Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**The blind**by [Casandra Fountain](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 3:19 PM

I came into this class knowing nothing about the Vietnam War. It was something high school glossed over or never reached. The Vietnam veterans are, for the most part, the most current war generation with a few WWII veterans left. I feel not knowing about this specific war does a great disservice to the men who fought in it. It was our longest and only war we've come to lose. With all this being said, I have gained knowledge from the PBS series. But without knowing anything about the war I am in the second group Banerian explains in his book of simply not being in a position to judge the overall balance and accuracy of the series. (p.5) All I can do is take each source for what it is and make my best judgement on the information or lack thereof. AIM brought many things to my attention that I can't ignore of the information PBS just glossed over or never even informed it's watchers about, ie POW treatment and mass murders committed by Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh. Like someone said in the thread, this is a lack of good journalism or biased journalism, which in my eyes is unfair in an educational film series. The short book, Losers are Pirates, was a very good source. Though he was slightly biased in some regard, the author credited the PBS series for not being completely incorrect in some of their fact; he laid a solid foundation for his preface and presently his reader with balanced information.

Sum of ratings:2 (1) [Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**AIM have more truthful interpretation of the fact**by [Haonan Bai](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 8:08 PM

After a careful analysis, compared to the NYT article and The Real Story-part 2, I pretty sure that AIM and Losers are Pirates have the more realistic explanation of the facts. Due to the NYT article, the PBS series minimizes the brutal treatment of American prisoners of war (NYT June 1985), but John McCain, one of the most notable soldiers that were imprisoned there were US senator, said he received unfair treatment at the Hanoi Hilton prison in Vietnam (AIM Part 2, 3:03). Not only he had those treatments, all prisoners here also received ill-treatment and beatings. PBS did not mention these inhumane treatments of the prisoners. John McCain said that PBS intends to beautify the issue of captives and he does not like their description of American prisoners (AIM Part 2, 3:06). In addition to the inhuman treatment of prisoners, the Vietnamese government also used extensive methods of torture to extract military intelligence from

U.S. soldiers.

In fact, how can we really understand and believe history? There is no doubt that learning the history from the people who had the experienced about this event. So, John McCain is the one who really knows what happened in that time at Hanoi Hilton. Because he was from there.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

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The use of textbooks

by [Kishahn Fellows](#) - Sunday, April 29, 2018, 10:31 PM

The use of our text books can be extremely helpful in getting a fuller and more accurate idea of what happened, especially when used along with the documentary's. The opposing points of view force you to question the information you are viewing, and inspires you to seek out more of it. Textbooks generally have more accurate information, as they tend to be more unbiased depending on the textbook and you avoid the possibility of intentionally false information commonly found in online sources these days. Another benefit being that all the information is collected into one space, so you don't have to spend as much time hunting down what you're after.

Sum of ratings: 1 (1)

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