SOUTHEAST ASIAN REFUGEES OF THE COLD WAR

History 246, Asian 246, Asian American Stds 246
Semester: Spring 2019
Lectures: TR 9:30-10:45am; Humanities 1101

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Between 1975 and 1995, over two million Southeast Asians fled from the three former French colonies frequently referred to collectively as Indochina: Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Over 1.3 million of these migrants came as refugees to the United States and added four new major ethnic groups to American society: Hmong, Khmer, Lao, and Vietnamese, including among them ethnic Chinese and the children of American military personnel (frequently referred to as "Amerasians"). This course is intended to provide a better understanding of the conditions that led these people, and thousands of others, to flee their homelands in Southeast Asia and eventually take refuge and start new lives in the US, as well as in the other countries that offered them asylum (including Canada, Australia, and France).

The course will be divided into four parts and will emphasize the Cold War conflicts and wars that devastated these three countries and resulted in the flight and resettlement of these refugees, especially between 1975 and 1995. Part 1, Peoples of the Indochina Countries, will introduce the themes of the course and provide basic information on the histories, cultures, and social organizational patterns of the four ethnic groups that are the focus of the course: Hmong, Khmer, Lao, and Vietnamese. Part 2, Colonial Origins of Conflicts in Indochina, will concentrate on the modern history and changing societies of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, with emphasis on the last decades of French colonial rule, the Japanese occupation during the Pacific
War, and the nationalist, revolutionary, and global (Cold War) struggles and upheavals that took place in these three countries, especially from the 1920s through the 1950s. In addition to discussing the larger contexts of the Cold War, this section will emphasize the significant social, economic, political, and geopolitical developments that took place in French Indochina during the first half of the 20th century. Part 3, The "Cold" Wars in Indochina, will survey the violent conflicts of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, with emphasis on the wars in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, the political alignments (international and domestic) that these conflicts created, the traumatic aftermath of US withdrawal and Communist victories, and the post-1975 developments and continuing conflicts that further devastated all three countries. Part 4, Disorderly Departures: Refugees and Migrants, will concentrate on the flight of thousands of people from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos from 1975 to the mid-1990s. It will attempt to describe and analyze the mass exodus of refugees and migrants and the global efforts to facilitate their survival and resettlement. Lectures and readings will concentrate on the reasons for seeking asylum (or continued resistance), the chaos and hardship of the escape, the difficult realities of camp life, and the mechanisms of resettlement in the US. This section will also explore some aspects of the early resettlement experiences of refugees and migrants in US, with particular attention to the period up to the mid-1990s.

The content of the course will be presented through lectures and discussion sections, electronically accessible readings, and film/video documentaries. All the course readings, as indicated, will be made available as an electronic reader through Canvas. All films will be viewed on scheduled evenings (see attached description of film/video series). The films will also be available in the Reserve Reading Room for viewing.

In addition to the exams, students will also be required to read and submit a written report on one memoir, family history or refugee narrative to be selected from the list of choices (see below). These books can be purchased online and copies will also be made available at the Reserve Reading Room, College Library, H.C. White Building.

Grades in this course will be based on the following criteria (see attached sheets for explanations of examinations and the writing project):
1) 60%: three examinations (10%, 25%, 25%):
   * all three are take-home exams (see attached exam schedule & coverage)
   * 1st exam: Feb 7th; 2nd exam: Apr 2; 3rd exam (final) May 2
2) 20%: report on memoir/family history; due: May 2nd OR BEFORE
3) 20%: attendance and participation in discussion section (criteria defined in section)

Learning Goals: by the end of the course, students should be able:
* to demonstrate knowledge of the modern history and the refugee crisis (1975-95) of three Southeast Asian countries: Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos
* to analyze the information presented within a comparative and interdisciplinary framework
* to develop more effective oral and written skills

Note to Students: This course meets as a group for 4 hours per week and carries the expectation that you will spend an average of 2 hours outside of class for every hour in the classroom. As such, please plan to allot an average of 8 hours a week for reading, writing, and preparing for discussions, and/or for studying for exams.
SOUTHEAST ASIAN REFUGEES OF THE COLD WAR

COURSE SYLLABUS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

INTRODUCTION

January 22, 24, and 29

Clarifying Some Terms & Mapping the Road Ahead

Hank Hill bids farewell to the Souphanousaphon family:
"Ya'll come back now: that's Texan for sayonara!"
-- the view from King of the Hill

What Was the Cold War Anyway?


PART 1. PEOPLES OF THE INDOCHINA COUNTRIES

January 31

Viet Nam and Its People: The Vietnamese


February 5

Cambodia and Its People: The Khmer


February 6 (Weds): AN EVENING AT THE MOVIES
Miao Year (required viewing: see film schedule for content)

February 7

Laos and Its People: The Lao and the Hmong


FIRST EXAM (10%): Handed out in lecture on Feb 7th (Thurs); due back in lecture by Feb 12th; coverage: all lectures, readings & film for the Introduction and Part 1: Introduction and Peoples of the Indochina Countries (1/22-2/7).
PART 2. COLONIAL ORIGINS OF CONFLICT IN INDOCHINA

FOCUS ON INDOCHINE: From French Colonialism to Cold War Decolonization (1850s-1950s: French Conquest and Colonial Rule; Nationalism and Communism: Struggles for Liberation; Japanese Occupation; Toward Decolonization and the Start of Cold War Conflicts)

February 12 and 14

VIET NAM


February 13 (Weds): AN EVENING AT THE MOVIES
The Roots of War (required viewing: see film schedule for content)

February 19

CAMBODIA


February 21 and 26

LAOS


PART 3. THE "COLD" WARS IN INDOCHINA

FOCUS ON THE WARS IN VIET NAM, CAMBODIA, AND LAOS
(1950s-1975: Communist-Led Revolutions for Independence; US, USSR, and PRC Involvements; Internal Political Upheavals; and Final Resolutions)

February 28, March 5

Vietnam War -- American War


March 6 (Wed): AN EVENING AT THE MOVIES
America’s Mandarin (required viewing, see film schedule for content)

March 7

Drawn Reluctantly Into War: The Cambodian "Sideshow"


March 12 and 14

The Not So "Secret" War in Laos

REQUIRED READING:  *G. Evans, A Short History of Laos (Crows Nest, NSW, 2002): 98-112; 120-133; 146-150; 165-175.


*A Brief History of the Hmong and the Secret War in Laos (required viewing, see film schedule for content)

March 13 (Weds): AN EVENING AT THE MOVIES
Cambodia and Laos (required viewing, see film schedule for content)

*** SPRING BREAK: March 16 through March 24 ***

March 26, 28, and April 2

Post-War Wars: Continuing Conflict in Indochina, 1975-1990


REVIEW SESSION: April 1st, Monday, 6-8pm: 206 Ingraham Hall

SECOND EXAM (25%): Handed out in lecture on April 2nd (Tues); due back in Canvas by 5:00pm on April 5th (Friday); coverage: all lectures, readings, and films for the Part 2: Colonial Origins of Conflict in Indochina (2/12-2/67); and Part 3: The "Cold" Wars in Indochina (2/28-4/2)
PART 4. DISORDERLY DEPARTURES: REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

April 4 and 9

Managing Refugees: Global Responses to Regional Crisis

REQUIRED READING: *C.J. Bon Tempo, Americans at the Gate (Princeton, 2008), 133-140; 145-166.


April 10 (Weds): AN EVENING AT THE MOVIES
Oh, Saigon (required viewing, see film schedule for content)

April 11 and 16

Disorderly Departures from VIETNAM: From Escape to Camps


April 17 (Weds): AN EVENING AT THE MOVIES
Refugee & Cambodian Doughnut Dreams
(required viewing, see film schedule for content)
April 18 and 23

Disorderly Departures from CAMBODIA: From Escape to Camps


April 24 (Weds): AN EVENING AT THE MOVIES
*Becoming American* (required viewing, see film schedule for content)

April 25 and 30

Disorderly Departures from LAOS: From Escape to Camps


May 1 (Thurs): AN EVENING AT THE MOVIES
*Betrayal* (required viewing, see film schedule for content)
Assessing Early Resettlement in the United States


Changing the Terms: Slowing the Flow in the 1990s


** REPORT ON MEMOIR DUE: May 2rd (Thurs) in Lecture **

MAY 3rd (Fri): REVIEW SESSION (with Pizza)
6:00pm in Room 206 Ingraham Hall
Film Schedule & Descriptions

On eight (8) evenings (all Wednesdays) during the semester (in 1101 Humanities, starting at 6:00pm), films and documentaries relevant to the subject matter of the course will be screened for all the students in the course. These are all films that are available on campus (see below). Viewing these films is a requirement for the course. You may view them on the Wednesday evening events (as scheduled below) or you may view them at a time more convenient for you during the week they are scheduled for viewing. Most of the films are on reserve at the Reserve Reading Room in the College Library, if not, it is indicated below where you can locate the film on campus. Many are available online.

The films will be shown on the following evenings:

**February 6 (Weds): Miao Year (1971, 1991, 2006; 60 minutes)**
Documentary film: on life in a Miao (Hmong) village community in northern Thailand, with film footage of the Hmong homelands during the late French colonial era; deals in part with poppy cultivation and the government’s efforts to eliminate it. Produced by W.R. Geddes, an anthropologist who worked among the Hmong of northern Thailand. (Housed: CMC (Education Library); PrcK-12 Stacks)

Documentary film: the first of 11 episodes in the award-winning PBS documentary series, *Vietnam: A Television History*, this segment deals with the French colonial period, the nationalist movements in Vietnam beginning in the 1920s, the Japanese occupation during the Pacific War, 1941-45, and the First Indochina War, 1946-1954 between France and the Viet Minh, the communist-nationalist forces led by Ho Chi Minh, ending with the Genvova Accords.
Available: Learning Support Services: ID2.006 (Episode 1) & online

Documentary film: the 2nd episode of *Vietnam: A Television History*, focusing on the division of Vietnam (between North and South) and the build up to the Second Indochina War directly involving the Americans. The documentary concentrates on the regime of President Ngo Dinh Diem of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) and analyzes the increasing conflicts in the South, the rise of the National Liberation Front (Viet Cong), and the decision of the US to fully engage in what became the "Vietnam War."
Available: Learning Support Services: ID2.006 (Episode 3) & online

Documentary film: the 8th episode of *Vietnam: A Television History*; this documentary (originally titled: No Neutral Ground) concentrates on the two other "theaters" of warfare in Indochina: Cambodia and Laos. The film traces US involvement in Laos from the early 1960s and in Cambodia in the late 1960s, and outlines the events that led these two countries to be engulfed by the war in Vietnam.
Available: Learning Support Services: ID2.006 (Episode 9) & online
April 10 (Weds): *Oh, Saigon* (2007; 60 minutes)
Documentary film: the complex story of the family of Doan Hoang, airlifted out of Saigon on the last day of the Vietnam War in April 1975, leaving behind her half sister who later escapes as a "boat person." The film deals with their lives in Louisville, Kentucky and centers on Doan's desire to bring her family back to Vietnam. On two return trips, the deep wounds in the family are revealed and each member of the family, including those left behind, begin to come to terms with their disruptive past. The film is written, directed (with John Battsek), and produced by Doan Hoang, and was funded by, among others, the Sundance Institute.
Available: College Library Reserves: DS559.5/O328/2007

April 17 (Weds):

*Refugee* (2003; 60 minutes)
Documentary film: Mike Siv, a young Cambodian American from San Francisco, and two of his friends return to Cambodia to locate and get to know members of their families left behind in the 1970s. Video taping their journey, the three Americans encounter the disruptive pasts that transformed the lives of their parents and grandparents. Directed by Spencer Nakasako (NAATA production).
Available: College Library Reserves: E184/A75/N35/2005

*Cambodian Doughnut Dreams* (1990; 20 minutes)
Documentary film: focuses on three Cambodian Americans who, 10 years after escaping from the Khmer Rouge genocide, own and operate doughnut shops in southern California (mostly in Long Beach) where some 80% of the local donut business is in the Cambodian hands. The film describes their lives and recounts the stories of their suffering and escape to Thailand and migration to the US. A film by Charles Davis.
Available: College Library Reserves: E184/K45/C36/2005

April 24 (Weds): *Becoming American* (2005, c.1982; 60 minutes)
Documentary film: traces the story of one Hmong family from the refugee camp in Thailand to the initial difficulties and culture shock of resettlement in the Seattle area. Directed by Ken Levine and Iris Film and Video, and WNET/13 Seattle, and produced by New Day Films.
Available: College Library Reserves: E184/H55/B43/2005

May 1 (Weds): *The Betrayal* (*Nerakhoon*) (2008; 60 minutes)
Documentary film: a 23-year chronicle of the journey of a Lao family from Laos to the U.S.; the story is narrated by Thavisouk Phrasavath, the co-director of the film, and focuses on his personal experiences and those of his immediate family. Directed by Ellen Kuras. Official selection Sundance Film Festival.
Available: College Library Reserves: E184/L25/B48/2008
SOUTHEAST ASIAN REFUGEES OF THE COLD WAR
EXAMINATIONS FOR THE COURSE

Three Unit Exams

Three unit exams will be given in this course, all essay exams. All three will be take-home exams. The exams will be given at the end of Part 1 (February 7th, counting 10%), at the end of Parts 2 & 3 (April 3rd, counting 25%), and at the end of Part 4 (May 2nd, as the final exam, counting 25%). Each exam should be treated as a short research paper based on the lectures, information from discussion sections, readings, and the required films. References to these should be cited as necessary in your exam papers. Additional information will be provided in discussion sections regarding the format for these examinations. In summary, the exams are as follows.

FIRST EXAM (10%): Handed out in lecture on Feb 7th (Thurs); due back in lecture on Feb 12th (Tues); coverage: all lectures, information of discussion sections, readings & film for the Introduction and Part 1: Peoples of the Indochina Countries (1/22-2/7).

SECOND EXAM (25%): Handed out in lecture on April 2nd (Tues); due back in Canvas by 5:00pm on April 5th (Friday); coverage: all lectures, information from discussion sections, readings, and films for the Part 2: Colonial Origins of Conflict in Indochina (2/12-2/67); and Part 3: The "Cold" Wars in Indochina (2/28-4/2)

THIRD (FINAL) EXAM (25%): Take home exam (final) distributed in lecture on May 2nd (Thurs) and due back in Canvas by 5:00pm on May 9 (Thurs, or before); the question(s) will pertain to all the lectures, discussion sections, readings, and films from the Introduction and Parts 1, 2, 3, & 4), with emphasis on Part 4: Disorderly Departures: Refugees and Migrants (4/4-5/2).
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REPORT ON Memoir Reading

This report is 20% of your grade. From the list of books below, each student will select ONE memoir or family history. You are encouraged to read this book early in the course to prepare yourself to better understand the impact of the events discussed in the course on the lives of these people. Do not try to write this paper until you are more familiar with the subject matter. When you are, you can read it again, this time preparing yourself to write. You will write a 5-page paper (see format below) on the memoir you have selected, emphasizing how the story relates to the subject matter of the course, particularly how the individuals responded to the various developments outlined in the four units treated in the course. Equally important, you should observe how the stories present different interpretations. When the memoir has omitted critical events and/or relationships that you would have expected to be covered, you should point this out in your essay. In this sense, you will be interrogating the memoir based on your understanding and knowledge of the events as covered in the lectures, discussions, assigned readings, & required films. The assignment is intended for you to compare the memoir (as a personal story) to the historical narrative that has been presented in the class, both in terms of where the memoir corresponds to that narrative and where it does not. If you wish you may speculate on why information was included or excluded. Your report, therefore, should take into account the ethnic background of the author as this is discussed, the situation before resettlement in the US (the individual’s or family’s life in their country of origin before the 1960s), their involvement in the conflicts and wars (1960s and 1980s), their flight from the country, their camp experiences, and the processes that led to their resettlement in the US. You may also comment on aspects of early resettlement in the U.S. This report will be due in lecture on May 2nd (OR BEFORE).

LIST OF BOOKS FOR Memoir Report

All the books below can be purchased online; copies will also be made available at the Reserve Reading Room, College Library, H.C. White Building. Select and read ONE of these books for your report.


More details on this assignment will be given in your discussion sections.

Project Specifications:

Format: Computer Printed; 12-Pt Font; 1" Margins
Length: 5 double-spaced pages
Deadline: May 2nd (in lecture) OR BEFORE