In the 21st century the American way of fighting has become synonymous with counterinsurgency. The "War on Terror" has lacked many fixtures of conventional warfare, from a formal declaration and popular involvement to clear and shared notions of who are our enemies and what constitutes victory. While this predicament may seem novel, its original outline is most clearly discerned in what Americans call the "The Vietnam War" and what Vietnamese consider "The American War." "Vietnam: The American War" explores that conflict—one of America's longest and most tumultuous—in order to interrogate the confusions, contradictions, and asymmetries of modern American warfare. By examining the conflict's origins and impact on both America and Vietnam, it will ask students to consider why we fought, what we accomplished or lost, and whether a liberal democracy can justify waging war against an ideology in a land not its own.

This is an eclectic survey of the war from 1930 to 1975, although we will occasionally venture outside that window. The course's intent is to make you familiar with both the basic contours of the conflict as well as the myriad ways of approaching it. If you enjoy political or diplomatic history, then you have something to look forward to. If you enjoy social or cultural or transnational or any other kind of history, then you have something to look
forward to. If you enjoy being challenged with new or difficult perspectives, then you have something to look forward to.

Class will consist of lectures on Mondays and Wednesdays, and a discussion section on Fridays.

Reading:

The following books have been ordered at the UR Bookstore. They are also on 2-hour reserve in Rush Rhees Library. Many are available at a substantial discount online. If you choose to purchase the Herring or Kennan online, please consult with us to make sure you purchase the correct edition. Additional readings will be found under the Reserves section on Blackboard, and most films can be found under the Streaming Video section. However, F.T.A. and Rambo will have to be viewed on DVD, available on reserve at the Art and Music Library in Rush Rhees. Alternatively, either can be rented and streamed on Amazon Instant at low cost.

Required Texts:
Appy, Christian. Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam
Bilton, Michael, and Kevin Sim. Four Hours in My Lai
Herring, George. The Pentagon Papers
Kennan, George. American Diplomacy
Young, Marilyn. The Vietnam Wars: 1945-1990

E-Reserves:
Allen, Michael J. Until the Last Man Comes Home: POWs, MIAs, and the Unending Vietnam War
Elliot, David. The Vietnamese War: Revolution and Social Change in the Mekong Delta 1930-1975, Volume I.
Herr, Michael. Dispatches.
Pham, Andrew X. Catfish and Mandala: A Two-Wheeled Voyage Through the Landscape and Memory of Vietnam.
Films:

American Graffiti (1973)
Hearts and Minds (1974)
F.T.A. (1972)
Rambo: First Blood Part II (1985)
Vietnam a Television History, Episode 1 (1983)
Vietnam a Television History, Episode 4 (1983)

Course Requirements:

Reading assignments of approximately 100 pages are to be completed each week. Some weeks this will be supplemented by other materials, such as films or music. All readings must be completed by discussion section, held each Friday, on the week in which they are assigned. Both attendance and participation in discussion section is mandatory. Unexcused absences will be counted against a student's grade. In addition, students must submit (via email) a question based on the week's reading by 11:59PM Thursday, and should expect their questions to be discussed the following day in section. Each student will be responsible for two analytical papers, 6-8 pages in length, on topics we will assign, and a 3-5 page review of the film Hearts and Minds. Refer to the reading schedule for due dates. Students will also take an in-class Midterm Examination on February 26, and a comprehensive Final Examination at the end of the course. Final grades will be determined by the rubric below:

Class Participation and Weekly Questions --- 15%
Analytical Papers --- 15% each
Midterm Examination --- 15%
Review Paper --- 10%
Final Examination --- 30%

Academic Honesty:

Students should fully familiarize themselves with the University of Rochester's Academic Honesty Policy: [http://www.rochester.edu/College/honesty/index.html](http://www.rochester.edu/College/honesty/index.html). We will enforce a zero tolerance policy on cheating and plagiarism. Students found giving or receiving unauthorized aid on an exam, or who commit plagiarism on writing assignments will fail the course - no questions asked. Ignorance of the rules is not an excuse. Those unclear on what constitutes plagiarism and what requires citation should contact the instructors - they are more than happy to help - or consult the materials accompanying this syllabus.
Students with Disabilities:

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL, 1-154 Dewey Hall, 585-275-9049) offers a variety of disability services for undergraduates and graduate students in Arts, Sciences & Engineering. These services aim to provide an inclusive experience and equal access to academic content and program requirements. They can help you to request needed accommodations for your success in this class. You can learn more at: http://www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/undergraduate/disability. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us as well.

Topics and Assignments

13 January -- Introduction
15 January - Vietnam - History to 1945
Assignment: Hearts and Minds [Film/Blackboard]

20 January – Everyday Life in Vietnam
22 January – Discussion
Assignment: Elliot (3-64); Tang (1-24)

25 January – Imperialism to WWII
27 January – The Cold War
29 January – Discussion
Assignment: Kennan (1-109)

1 February – French War in Vietnam
3 February – Diem Regime
5 February – Discussion
Assignment: Young, p. 1-88; Vietnam a Television History, Episode 1 [Film/Blackboard]

8 February – Origins of Vietnamese Communism
10 February – Fall of Diem
12 February – Discussion
Assignment: Young, p. 89-104; Tang (25-116)
15 February — American Entry
17 February — Everyday Life in America
19 February — Discussion
Assignment: Young 105-149; Pentagon Papers (5-11, 16-17, 23-41, 51-59, 66-68, 75-82); American Graffiti [Film/Blackboard]

22 February — Johnson’s War (1963-64)
24 February — Law and The War
26 February — MIDTERM EXAM
Assignment: Pentagon Papers (86-93, 97-106); The Law of Land Warfare (3-40, 98-112) [Blackboard]

29 February — McNamara’s War (1965-67)
2 March — Tet Offensive
4 March — Discussion
Assignment: FIRST ANALYTICAL PAPER DUE
Young (150 - 231); Pentagon Papers (109-118, 129-131, 137-140, 148-153, 182-185, 194-204)

14 March — The Media War
16 March — My Lai Massacre
18 March — Discussion
Assignment: Bilton (1-24, 47-141); Vietnam a Television History, Episode 4 [Film/Blackboard]

21 March — The Antiwar Movement: Origins and Development
23 March — Race, Gender, Class
25 March — Discussion
Assignment: Working Class War (86-116, 206-49, 298-321); Stur (215-41) [Blackboard]

28 March — The Draft
30 March — The War at Home: Politics and the Suppression of Dissent
1 April — Discussion
Assignment: Working Class War (11-44); Bilton (315-378); Alice's Restaurant [Song/Blackboard]
4 April – Weapons of War
6 April – Nixon’s War (1969-72)
8 April – Discussion
Assignment: Young (232 - 280); Tang (156-175); Herr (65-79) [Blackboard]

11 April - GI Antiwar Movement
13 April – Laos and Cambodia
15 April – Discussion
Assignment: SECOND ANALYTICAL PAPER DUE
American Reckoning (183-217) [Blackboard]; Nguyen (153-93) [Blackboard]; F.T.A. [Film/Reserve]

18 April – American Exit (1973-75)
20 April – Aftermath in Vietnam
22 April – Discussion
Assignment: Young (281-329); Tang (199-233, 258-289)

25 April – Aftermath in America
27 April – Myth and Memory
Assignment: REVIEW ESSAY DUE
Allen (291-305) [Blackboard]; Pham (62-70, 143-161, 197-212, 323-331) [Blackboard]; Rambo: First Blood Part II [Film/Reserve]