

Course: HIST 3995 America's Asian Wars

Term: Fall 2014

Credits: 3

Instructor: Brad Simpson

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Office Hours: Tues 11-1pm or by appt.

Course Description and Objectives

This course will explore America's wars and interventions in Asia in the twentieth century and twenty-first centuries, focusing on five conflicts: the Spanish American War and conquest of the Philippines (1898-1903), the Pacific War (1941-1945), the Korean War (1945-1953), the Vietnam War (1945-1975), and the US war in Afghanistan (2001-2013). We will explore the reasons for the long-term US engagement with Asia, the immediate sources of each conflict, as well as their impact and legacy, both domestically and internationally.

Class sessions will consist of lectures and class discussion, supplemented by various visual materials. Because the lectures will build upon the assigned readings, students are advised to complete assignments before each class. The professors and teaching assistant will be happy to help with any questions you might have regarding the course.

Students are asked not to disrupt the class by arriving late or leaving the room during the lecture. Cell phones and pagers should be turned off during the class period.

What Does the Course Promise You?

This class will consider some of the most controversial questions of U.S. and Asian history. We will explore how historians make claims about the past, what constitutes evidence, and how historians make arguments. You should emerge from the course with a better understanding of some of the major developments of modern Asian history, events that have shaped all of our lives. You should emerge also with an enhanced ability to analyze arguments and to make tentative judgments about other people's judgments. Ideally, the course will help you become a more critically intelligent, creative, and curious person, capable of making rational decisions based on extensive and accurate information.

If you are concerned about how well you think, you should also be concerned with your ability to write, and so we will spend a good bit of time writing in this class. Learning to write more effectively and logically is learning to think in the same manner. Concepts and thoughts exist in words. If you do not learn to communicate in words, you cannot formulate fully developed thoughts and will, instead, live by the vague impressions and emotions that often substitute for ideas.

Readings and such

You will want to purchase the following books for this course:

Paul Kramer, *Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines*

Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War*

Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars*

Michael Hunt, *Arc of Empire, America's Wars in Asia from the Philippines to Vietnam*

Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Little America: The War Within the War for Afghanistan*

Any other readings and documents will be available on blackboard and can be accessed by going to the "Course Documents" section and clicking on each week's readings.

Learning Opportunities

Students will have an opportunity to work on a weekly basis with colleagues to discuss documents and readings online and in class. Students will learn from working collaboratively to explore important central questions using recent scholarship and evidence, understanding and evaluating arguments they hear in class, constructing arguments, drawing conclusions, defending those conclusions, and receiving feedback on their thinking.

Evaluation In order to achieve the promises of this course you will

- write two exams and several short argumentative papers
- prepare short written reflections for and participate actively in class discussions

This will break down along approximately these lines:

Short papers: 15%

Participation and weekly reflections: 25%

Midterm: 30%

Final: 30%