

4/21/25 : (under 500 words)

Fifty Years After the War: Reminiscence and Perspectives on Viet Nam and the United States

Summer 2025 - OLLI at UC Berkeley

Instructor : Vu-Duc Vuong

Preliminary understandings:

Most people enrolled in this course are retirees, still curious, and the majority with background in the professions or connected to education;

This course is conducted more like a seminar for participants to gain or to form a perspective of the events between the United States and Viet Nam; some may have experienced directly certain events;

This course marks the 50th anniversary of the end of the war between our two countries;

There is no textbook or required reading materials but I'll make available, for people who wish to receive them, a few timelines and selected articles, mainly to facilitate class discussion;

This outline is broad and ambitious – so it's understandable that not all topics will be covered adequately.

Week 1: Viet Nam is a Country

Timeline of relevant events:

Out of Africa & Human drive to migrate

Early evidence of settlement in Viet Nam & Southeast Asia

Viet peoples and Han peoples

Chinese colonialization and struggles to assert independence

Arrival of Europeans and adoption of modern life

The 200 Years War : 1789 -- 1979

Defeating another Chinese invasion, the French colonialism and the American Cold War

The Exodus & Resettlement : 1975 -- 2025

Resettlement of Vietnamese refugees by the U.S.

Integration into the American society: one more ethnic group

Development in Viet-Nam

Euphoria of victory and steadfast belief in Communism

Economic tragedies and half-hearted embrace of Capitalism

Freedom & civil liberties diminishing

Hunger & poverty reduced

Week 2: The War from an American Perspective

Generational & Cultural changes

(Civil Rights Movement -- pill -- scientific progress

Age of activism & global linkage

Pivot on race & immigration : 3rd Revolution?

The Cold War & McCarthy terror campaign

In Southeast Asia : Stemming the Red Tide (Domino Theory)

But ignoring preceding struggles for independence

Week 3: The War from the Vietnamese Experience: legacy of mistrust

Brief review of Viet Nam (19th & 20th Centuries)

Continuing Civil War – effects of nationalism/factionalism/mistrust

Anti-colonial struggle throughout history

(United against invaders – Internecine in-house)

The Viet Diaspora in the U.S.: Mixed Results

Missed opportunities for peace and prosperity

(1920 – 1945 – 1954 – 1963? – 1975 – 1986 – WTO -

Week 4 : Legacy of & Perspectives from the War in Viet Nam

For Vietnamese : Winning side missed opportunity to rebuild
 Mistrust & Retributions & Nepotism & Wasted Talents
 From Planned Economy to Capitalist Socialism
 Increasingly autocratic society
 Rays of hope in the diaspora

For Americans : Bruised Ego but Lessons & Opportunities Missed
 Economic Consolidation & Cultural Competition
 Diversity & Equality & Counter-action

For the World China Rises – USSR Falls – Europe Recedes –
 India Consolidates – Authoritarianism Spreads -
 Hyper-capitalism
 Military-industrial complex
 Age of Oligarchy returns

What will we tell our grandchildren about the next 50 years...

THE END