

**ENGL 397 – Imagined Việt Nam**  
Fall 2022, Hendrix College

Dr. Alex Vernon  
MWF 11:00-12:00; TTh 2:30-3:30; by appt.  
[alex-vernon.squarespace.com/course-descriptions](http://alex-vernon.squarespace.com/course-descriptions)

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**"Vietnam Vietnam Vietnam we've all been there"**  
**—Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (1977)**



*Dấu ấn Huế X* (Hue Traces X, lacquer, 2012), Võ Xuân Huy

1	Wed, 24 Aug	Course Introduction	
2	Fri, 26 Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Viet Thanh Nguyen, “Remembering War, Dreaming Peace: On Cosmopolitanism, Compassion, and Literature” (in Teams)</li> <li>➤ spend about 15 minutes looking up summary/info on Nguyễn Du’s <i>The Tale of Kiều</i>. More than one website please. Be prepared to report.</li> <li>➤ In class: Viet Thanh Nguyen, “Close the Curtain on ‘Miss Saigon’”</li> </ul>	
3	Mon, 29 Aug	<i>The Third Wife</i> [film link provided]	
4	Wed, 31 Aug	<i>The Eaves of Heaven</i> , chpts 1-11 (to p.79)	GROUP 1
5	Fri, 02 Sep	<i>The Eaves of Heaven</i> , chpts 11-22 (to p.163)	GROUP 2
	Mon, 5 Sep	Labor Day	
7	Wed, 7 Sep	<i>The Eaves of Heaven</i> , chpts 23-30 (to p.240)	GROUP 3
8	Fri, 9 Sep	<i>The Eaves of Heaven</i> , to end (p.297)	GROUP 4
9	Mon, 12 Sep	<i>The Book of Salt</i> , chpts. 1-8 (pp.1-84)	GROUP 2
10	Wed, 14 Sep	<i>The Book of Salt</i> , chpts. 9-16 (pp.85-175)	GROUPS 3 & 4
11	Fri, 16 Sep	<i>The Book of Salt</i> , chpts. 17-24 (pp.176-261)	GROUP 1
12	Mon, 19 Sep	<i>Dumb Luck</i> , chpts.1-10 (pp.33-111)	GROUPS 3 & 4
13	Wed, 21 Sep	<i>Dumb Luck</i> , chpts.11-20 (pp.112-189)	GROUPS 1 & 2
14	Fri, 23 Sep	<i>The Lover</i> (pp.3-55)	GROUPS 1 & 2
15	Mon, 26 Sep	<i>The Lover</i> (pp.56-end)	GROUPS 3 & 4
16	Wed, 28 Sep	writing day	
17	Fri, 30 Sep	Draft workshop	
18	Mon, 3 Oct	writing day/optional conferences	
19	Wed, 5 Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Due: Essay #1</li> <li>➤ In class: <i>Ghost Tape #10</i></li> </ul>	
20	Fri, 7 Oct	<i>The Quiet American</i> , Part One (to p.68)	GROUP 3
21	Mon, 10 Oct	<i>The Quiet American</i> , Part Two (pp. 71-134)	GROUPS 4 & 1
22	Wed, 12 Oct	<i>The Quiet American</i> , Parts Three and Four (pp.137-189)	GROUP 2
	Fri, 14 Oct	Fall Break	

23	Mon, 17 Oct	<i>In the Lake of the Woods</i> , chpts 1-10 (pp.1-76)	GROUP 4
24	Wed, 19 Oct	<i>In the Lake of the Woods</i> , chpts 11-16 (pp.77-146)	GROUP 1
25	Fri, 21 Oct	no class. Watch <i>The War and Peace of Tim O'Brien</i> [film link provided]	
26	Mon, 24 Oct	<i>In the Lake of the Woods</i> , chpts. 17-22 (pp.147-229)	GROUP 2
27	Wed, 26 Oct	<i>In the Lake of the Woods</i> , chpts. 23-31 (pp.230-303)	GROUP 3
28	Fri, 28 Oct	<i>The Sorrow of War</i> (pp.3-76) GROUP 1	
29	Mon, 31 Oct	<i>The Sorrow of War</i> (pp.76-156)	GROUPS 2 & 3
30	Wed, 2 Nov	<i>The Sorrow of War</i> (pp.156-233)	GROUP 4
31	Fri, 4 Nov	writing day	
32	Mon, 7 Nov	Essay #2 draft workshop	
33	Wed, 9 Nov	In class: Viet Thanh Nguyen on <i>Da 5 Bloods</i>	
34	Fri, 11 Nov	Veterans' Day/Remembrance Day: No class ➤ Essay #2 due on Teams at 2:00 ➤ Consider using this period for <i>Wild Mustard</i> groupwork	
35	Mon, 14 Nov	<i>Vertical Ray of the Sun</i> [film link provided]. Take notes as you watch.	
36	Wed, 16 Nov	<i>Wild Mustard</i> (two groups; two stories TBD)	
37	Fri, 18 Nov	<i>Wild Mustard</i> (two groups; two stories TBD)	
38	Mon, 21 Nov	➤ Charles Waugh, "Refuge to Refuse: Seeking Balance in the Vietnamese Environmental Imagination" (in Teams) ➤ Virtual Visit with Charles Waugh, co-editor/translator of <i>Wild Mustard</i>	
	Wed, 23 Nov	Thanksgiving Break	
	Fri, 25 Nov	Thanksgiving Break	
39	Mon, 28 Nov	<i>Children of the Mist</i> [film link provided]. Take notes as you watch.	
40	Tue, 30 Nov	No class/writing day	
41	Fri, 2 Dec	Due: "Essay" #3	
	Mon, 5 Dec	Reading Day	
	Tues, 13 Dec @11:30 a.m.	➤ Due: Optional Essay #3	

Group 1 – Ben, Tyler, Ellery, Kylon

Group 2 – Joe, Rally, Collin

Group 3 – Hunter, Ian, Shane, Ryan

Group 4 – Chiara, Bobby, Sam, Zach

## Course Description

Look at the course epigraph again....“Vietnam Vietnam Vietnam we’ve all been there” ... What the heck does that mean?

The purposes of this course are: (1) to develop an appreciation and understanding of how Vietnam has been imagined in literature and film by a diversity of writers within the context of Vietnamese history; (2) to practice close interpretation of narrative texts; (3) to foster your creative critical capacity; (4) to improve your abilities to write literary essays.

Most of the texts we study were created over the past 100 years, though we dip back into the nineteenth century. We certainly address topics such as narrative technique and literary inheritance. And while this is a course in literary history, much of our discussion will be about what literature is about—namely, the human condition, across the full spectrum of its beauty and ugliness: violence, gender & sexuality, race, politics, class, religion, etc. religious belief and disbelief, etc. Treat these subjects with due sensitivity and each other with due respect. I am committed to being mindful that we come together in our studies with different backgrounds, different experiences of the world, different sensibilities and sensitivities. If anything occurs that strikes you as inconsiderate, please do not hesitate to bring it to my attention.

In order to gain as much from this course as possible, you must actively engage the course content. While some lectures by the professor will certainly occur, student interaction—with the stories, with classmates, with the instructor, with your own imaginations and critical eye—will constitute the primary course activity. Outside of class discussion, you will engage the texts through response papers, three short(ish) essays, and a group-led story discussion.

## Texts

- ✎ Andrew Pham, *The Eaves of Heaven* (2008)
- ✎ Monique Truong, *The Book of Salt* (2003)
- ✎ Vu Trong Phung, *Dumb Luck* (1936)
- ✎ Marguerite Duras, *The Lover* (1985)
- ✎ Graham Greene, *The Quiet American* (1955)
- ✎ Bao Ninh, *The Sorrow of War* (1991)
- ✎ Tim O’Brien, *In the Lake of the Woods* (1994)
- ✎ Charles Waugh et al., ed., *Wild Mustard: New Voices from Vietnam* (2017)
- ✎ essays to be provided
- ✎ Films: *The Third Wife* (2019); *The War and Peace of Tim O’Brien* (2018); *Ghost Tape #10; Vertical Ray of the Sun* (2000); *Children of the Mist* (2022)

## Requirements and Point Opportunities (100-total points)

- ✎ *Class Engagement* (10 pts): You assess your own preparedness and engagement at midterm and end of term.
- ✎ *Reading Responses* (21-29 pts): One short two-page double-spaced wondering for each book-length work. Focus on an aspect of the text that you find compelling, curious, strange, fascinating, or otherwise potentially fruitful for further consideration. Don't make an argument or reach a conclusion. Rather, speculate, hypothesize, wonder. **Get beyond plot.** Why might it be revealing or significant? What connections do you see with other texts? A response could begin by focusing on a particular piece of language or passage; as the semester develops, you are encouraged to be cumulative such that new entries situate the current text in conversation with others.  
  
You have an assigned date for your response paper for the seven texts. Each is worth 3 points. You can do an additional one for each text on a different day, up to four over the semester, for 2 points each.  
  
Place your response in the Teams folder for that text two hours before class that day. These are not formal essays and will not be graded as such. Don't waste space with introductory throat-clearing blather. Dive in. Graded on completion
- ✎ *Essay #1 & #2* (20 pts each): Assignments introduced in class. You are welcome to bring knowledge from other sources or courses to bear. 7-8 pages, MLA style (see below).
- ✎ *"Essay" #3* (10 pts): This short, creative assignment at the end of the term uses the final film to reflect back on the entire essay. Graded on completion of all the assigned elements plus prose clarity. Most receive full points.
- ✎ *Groupwork* (10 pts): Your group chooses one of several assigned stories from the *Wild Mustard* anthology for the class to read; your group leads that 20-minute discussion.
- ✎ *Optional Final Revision* (5 pts): On the day schedule for the final exam, submit a revised Essay #1 or #2, or transform "Essay" #3 into a proper essay; or neither.
- ✎ *Course Evaluation* (3 pts): This optional task is an important reflection opportunity.

SAMPLE GRADES	no extras max pts	all extras max pts	85% on graded tasks two extra responses course eval	85% on graded tasks no extras
Class Engagement	10	10	8.5	8.5
Reading Responses	21	29	25	21
Essay #1 and #2	40	40	34	34
"Essay" #3	10	10	10	10
Groupwork	10	10	8.5	8.5
Optional Final		5		
Course Eval		3	3	
Final	91	107	89	82

## **Other Policies**

- ✎ The syllabus is subject to revision as the course progresses.
- ✎ Email will be used to contact the entire class for communicating changes to the syllabus and other matters. Check your Hendrix account daily.
- ✎ Drinks are permitted in class, but no food. No hats except for religious or medical reasons.
- ✎ **Academic accommodations:** It is the policy of Hendrix College to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law. Students should contact Julie Brown in the [Office of Academic Success](#) (505.2954; brownj@hendrix.edu) to begin the accommodation process. Any student seeking accommodation in relation to a recognized disability should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course.
- ✎ **Health accommodations:** Your health and well-being are our priority. If your physical and/or mental health status will impact attendance or assignments, please communicate with me as soon as possible. If you need to implement academic accommodations, contact Julie Brown in the office of Academic Success (brownj@hendrix.edu). To maintain optimal health, please utilize campus resources like Hendrix [Medical Clinic](#) or [Counseling Services](#) (450.1448).
- ✎ **Academic Integrity:** Hendrix College is committed to high standards of honesty and fairness in academic pursuits. Such standards are central to the process of intellectual inquiry, the development of character, and the preservation of the integrity of the community. Please familiarize yourself with the [Academic Integrity policy](#) in the Hendrix Catalog. Frequently, failure to document and attribute secondary sources adequately is not a deliberate attempt to pass another's ideas and words off as one's own, but rather a misunderstanding of how to give that other person sufficient credit properly. Please consult with me on any documentation question so we can avoid problems.
- ✎ The **Writing Center** is a community of peers ready to assist you with your writing projects, in all genres and fields, and at any stage of development. We work with you in one-on-one meetings that you can book in advance or request during our office hours. In-person appointments will follow all pertinent COVID safety protocols. Virtual appointments are available for medical reasons or by special arrangement. To book appointments, and for more information, visit our [website](#) or contact pruneda@hendrix.edu. We look forward to working with you!
- ✎ **Late essays:** Everyone gets one three-day extension on one essay, no questions asked (but please only use if truly needed, when life happens situations). For other late essays, you will lose 5 points on a 100-point scale for every day it is late. The clock begins ticking when class starts the day the essay is due.