



FROM INDOCHINA TO VIETNAM

COURSE FORMAT

Anticipate approximately 5 hours of work per week for 9 weeks. The format for the first 8 weeks is to read, view, and listen to the assignments, take a short quiz, and then participate in a group discussion. The group discussion should be a constructive back-and-forth exchange of ideas and views, increasing understanding of the topic through a sharing of ideas and posing of questions. Except for the quiz, grading is entirely subjective. At the conclusion of week 8, the knowledge gained and familiarity with the course content will help you write a 1,200 – 1,500 word assessment paper during week 9.

COURSE INTRODUCTION

This course strives to familiarize the learner with the French and American conflicts from a strategic, operational, and tactical perspective, first, to retain Indochina as a French colony, and second, to provide South Vietnam with an opportunity at self-governance after partition. The course will examine French strategy and its execution, and then U.S. strategy and its execution, offering the learner the opportunity to explore the flaws in both approaches and to develop an understanding of the very long war.

COURSE OVERVIEW

From Indochina to Vietnam and its eight lessons follow a natural historical progression and are designed to introduce the student to Vietnam, the nature of the conflict that the French fought, partition of the country following the French withdrawal, and the U.S. attempt to protect South Vietnam. The course has the following lessons and a final assessment:

Lesson 1, French Return and the Viet-Minh Victories of 1950, covers the return of the French to Indochina to reclaim their colony from the departing Japanese, negotiations with the Viet-Minh to reoccupy the north, and the reaction of the Viet-Minh with military victories over the French.

Lesson 2, Viet-Minh Defeats of 1951 and Back to Guerrilla Warfare, covers Giap's General Counteroffensive, his three defeats in this phase of his revolutionary war, and his reversion to guerrilla warfare to recover.

Lesson 3, Dien Bien Phu: Preparing for the Kill and the Siege (1954), addresses the misguided strategy of the French to locate a force in a remote valley at the far limit of air support and the impossibility of ground support to lure Giap and the Viet-Minh into a set-piece battle.

Lesson 4, The War Nobody Wanted, covers the development of the faulty and mixed thinking on Vietnam and how the United States found itself defending an indefensible and unpopular government in South Vietnam with a strategy for defeat.

Lesson 5, The Tet Offensive (1968), covers the preparation by the North to attack the South in an attempt to win a military victory by occupying key towns and several cities during the holy holiday of Tete.

Lesson 6, Nixon's War (1969), covers how Nixon sought to end the strategy of attrition, begin reducing U.S. troop strength in Vietnam, and end the war through a diplomatic solution.

Lesson 7, The Cambodian Raids (1970) and Lam Son 719 (1971), covers the Cambodian Raid of May 1970 in which the North Vietnamese relinquished vast amounts of supplies and munitions and fled. Also covers the Lam Son 719 raid that essentially failed.

Lesson 8, Whole Hog (1972) and Defeat (1975), covers the 1972 Easter Offensive and U.S. reaction to it that ended the U.S. presence in Vietnam, and Giap's final offensive that reduced the South Vietnamese military and finally delivered the long-sought victory to the North.

ASSESSMENTS

Learners will be evaluated through three types of assessment activities:

- 20 percent for multiple choice quizzes
- 40 percent for discussion contribution
- 40 percent for the essay final assessment.

A mastery score of 80 percent for the entire course is required to pass.

FACULTY BIO

Dr. Jack Cann is a Research Fellow at Marine Corps University, a former member of the research staff at the Institute for Defense Analysis, a former Scholar-in-Residence at the University of Virginia, and a retired professor at the Marine Corps University. His doctorate in War Studies was earned at King's College London in 1996, and subsequently he published eight books on counterinsurgency and numerous articles on small wars over the years. Before all of that, he spent 30 years in the Navy and retired as a captain, having flown in two patrol squadrons and served in a variety of aviation assignments, including command. During his last two years in service, he spent time in Pakistan helping to oversee the several Afghan refugee programs.