

Summer in Vietnam Core Course Syllabus

Name of Course: The Making of Modern Vietnam

Credit: One Pitzer Course Credit

Instructor/Facilitator:

Professor Cong Ho Dinh *et al.*,

Brief Program Description Through intensive Vietnamese language courses, a seminar on key topics in Vietnamese (taught in English by local experts), internships, and family stays, students will explore this dynamic country while furthering their Vietnamese language skills and gaining an understanding of the life and culture of Vietnam. A study trip to Hanoi and Halong Bay will provide a comparative perspective in [former] North Vietnam.

Hue (Huế), a UNESCO World Heritage site, is a city in central Vietnam that was the seat of the Nguyen Dynasty emperors and the national capital from 1802-1945. Located just south of the North Vietnamese border (DMZ) during the US-Vietnam War, the Hue region was a key area in the conflict and underwent significant damage. In recent years, many of its extraordinary historical monuments, including its Imperial (“Forbidden”) City have been extensively restored. Situated on the Perfume River and a few miles from the East Sea, its surrounding mountainous hinterlands are home to a large number of minority communities close to the Laotian border.

Course Description: This core course provides an overview of history, culture and society in Vietnam. The course includes lectures by local faculty, site visits, and reading and writing assignments that allow students to explore a variety of topics in Hue, including but not limited to the legacy of colonialism, war and conflict in Vietnam, health care, minority communities, political structures, gender issues, and environmental issues. As part of their core course, all students will participate in an internship of six to eight hours per week for four weeks with a local non-profit organization.

Student Learning Outcomes

Holistic Cultural Immersion/Intercultural Learning Outcomes (that we want on all our programs)

- Participate fully in the host culture and community while engaged in an ongoing process of culture learning that informs your interactions with members of the host culture.
- Develop the capacity to explore and learn about a new community and acquire local knowledge employing such methods as participant observation, active listening, structured interviewing, field note writing, and structured reflection.

- Integrate your personal experience and acquisition of local knowledge and perspectives with readings and lectures to more deeply understand core course topics and ideas.
- Demonstrate the ability to observe host culture behavior without interpreting or judging based on one's own culture and ultimately, the capacity to recognize and understand the relationship between host culture values and behavior.
- Demonstrate an ability to analyze issues from multiple perspectives within the host culture (check the tendency to make overgeneralizations about the culture based on one person's or one group's perspective.)
- Demonstrate an understanding of the privileges and prerogatives that one has because of one's skin color, nationality, education, job position, social class, gender, language, etc.

Outcomes associated with the specific location and program theme:

- Demonstrate the ability to analyze various aspects of your personal experience, observations and relationships in the context of a basic understanding of the history, politics, culture, religion and current issues (e.g. education, healthcare) of Vietnam.
- Demonstrate an awareness of key events and issues in Vietnam's recent history (primarily from the 20th century to the present day).
- Demonstrate understanding of current social, political and economic realities in contemporary Vietnam.
- Identify and reflect upon global and national processes, institutions, ideologies that affect and shape the quality of life in your host community.
- Through intersectional lenses (race, gender, class, religion, etc.) participants will articulate the situation of women and human rights in Vietnam generally and Hue specifically.

Service Learning Outcomes

- Engage in social work or community service in ways that respect local community members, their culture and their local knowledge.
- Demonstrate significant reflection and learning from a community service experience by integrating the particulars of that experience within broader issues and processes.

Grading Criteria

- 45%** Field book Assignments: There will be three assignments, each worth 15% of your total grade. One assignment may require an oral presentation instead of a written paper. The [final] internship assignment will require both a paper and a short oral presentation to the group.
- 10%** Punctual attendance at and full participation in all classes, meetings and program activities leading to a contribution to the learning of others (in the group) in the spirit of cooperative learning.
- 15%** An on-going commitment to culture learning that informs you interactions with staff, faculty, host families, community members and fellow students (i.e, culturally appropriate interactions that respect local values and beliefs, including local and national laws and program guidelines for health and safety
- 15%** Participation within your homestays: This includes, but is not limited to, your efforts to integrate into the life of your host family and play your part as a significant member of the family, respect for host family rules and cultural norms, and integration of learning from your host family experience into discussion sessions and writing assignments.
- 15%** Full Participation in your Internship: Punctual attendance, enthusiastic and culturally appropriate participation, relationship building.

The **final** grade for the course will be based on the following scale:

92 +	= A
90 to 91	= A-
88 to 89	= B+
82 to 87	= B
80 to 81	= B-
78 to 79	= C+
72 to 77	= C

Program Components:

Guest Speakers: Guest speakers are scheduled throughout the summer, both at Hue University, and study trip locations. Speakers expose students to a range of topics and perspectives regarding some of the main historical, social, cultural, and political issues fundamental to Vietnam's history and modern identity. Speakers may include community members, university professors, government officials, and guests from the private sector and non-governmental organizations. Students are expected to do the assigned preparation or reading (when appropriate) for a given

topic, take good notes that can serve as references for writing assignments, and engage the speaker and one another with questions and insights.

Study Trips: These study tours (several half day trips and one longer extended trip to Hanoi and Halong Bay) allow students to complement classroom learning with direct observation and experience in the field. Students visit important cultural, historic and religious sites in and around Hue and Hanoi, as well as a number of NGOs.

Readings: In conjunction with lectures and field trips, a selection of required readings will focus and expand upon issues raised in the classroom. Readings include articles and essays by both foreign and Vietnamese scholars and expose students to contemporary scholarship and debate on a diverse set of issues. A list of required readings is included below.

Discussion Sessions: As part of the core course, there will be a series of discussion sessions during which students explore issues raised in lectures and readings and their own experience. As a part of each session, students will have an opportunity to share how their overall program experience is going (highlights and concerns/issues), especially in reference to their internship and homestay experience. One goal of the discussion session will be to find connections between personal experience and the readings and lectures, and more fully explore local perspectives on issues that are important to the student.

Fieldbook: In the course of the program, students are assigned a series of papers which together comprise the fieldbook. The fieldbook asks students to integrate the theoretical and experiential components of the program through a series of structured writing assignments that are designed to facilitate cultural immersion and integration of personal experience with more traditional forms of learning. The assignments, in general, ask students to make non-judgmental observations of the host culture, cautiously interpret events, topics and issues from both personal (US) and host culture perspectives, and integrate observations, conversations and interviews (especially with host family members and internship colleagues) with readings and lectures to arrive at an integrated understanding of important local and national issues.

Family Stays: Living with host families in Hue helps provide necessary context for issues raised in lectures and readings and is one of the foundations of students' educational experience. Accordingly, student participation in the life and culture of their host family, and their ability to integrate this into writing assignments and discussion sessions, is a factor in the grade for the core course.

Service Learning Internships: This component of the program allows students to deepen their understanding of an issue of interest (e.g. education, health), and the role their internship organization plays in addressing that issue in a particular local context. In the course of the internship, students will have an opportunity to deepen their understanding of the organization's goals and objectives, gain insights into how it is organized and funded, reflect on how it fits into a bigger regional or national picture, and confront the key challenges it faces. Students will also

have an opportunity to learn something about the professionals in the organization (develop a meaningful relationship with at least one) and, hopefully, interact with the recipients of the services the organization. Internship options include assisting with local non-profits, helping to teach ESL and/or US culture at a local school.

Required Reading:

Bill Hayton, *Rising Dragon*, Additional readings may be assigned.

Schedule for the Course: Weekly Topics or Theme, Readings, Guest Speakers and Assignments

Week 1.

Seminar: *Family, Village, Nation and Religion*

Study Trip(s): Visit Thanh Toan – rural village life in Vietnam

Week 2.

- Seminar: *Hue Citadel 's Architecture*
- *Pitzer core-course seminar*
- Seminar: *Modern history of Vietnam*
- Study Trip(s): Hue City Tour (Thien Mu Pagoda - Hue Ancient Citadel - Royal Court Music show at Duyet Thi Duong Opera house - Tu Duc Tomb - Khai Dinh Tomb)

Week 3.

- Seminar: *Environment and Climate Change*
- Study Trip(s): Bach Ma National Park

- *Assignment Due: Fieldbook Entry #1: Life History Analysis*

Week 4. Extended Study trip:

- Hanoi and Halong Bay; Various guest lectures and discussion sessions to be held during study trip

Week 5.

- Seminar: *Political System and Structure*
- *Pitzer core-course seminar* Assignment due: Oral Presentation of Field book #2: *Critical Incident Analysis*
- Seminar: *Health care in Vietnam*
- Study Trip: Rural study trip to mountainous minority region

Week 6

- Seminar: *Same Sex Marriage and Gender Equality*
- Final Seminar/Discussion: Internship presentations; Unpacking the program experience; Reentry.

- Final dinner or event for students, staff, faculty, host families, community partners, friends of program.
- Final paper due

Summer Study in Vietnam Field Book Entries:

Fieldbook Entry #1:

Life History Analysis

The Life History Analysis is essentially an oral history of someone's life that is discussed in relation to major concepts covered in the core course readings and lectures. We encourage you to pick a person with whom you have developed a meaningful relationship and would like to get to know on an even deeper level.

When you are talking to the person who is giving the life history, have ideas and concepts from the core course lectures and readings in mind but **do not to ask** “leading” **questions in an interview format**. Rather, ask non-leading questions such as: "Tell me about your life" or "Tell me about your childhood...your family...your days at school...changes in your city, your home village, the birth of your children, your marriage, your major illnesses, etc.

Try to understand not only the major events of the person's life, but also how the events conform to, or contrast with, cultural/historic themes and important issues you have learned about throughout the semester.

In other words, do not merely narrate the major events in the person's life; rather, explicitly *integrate* those events with concepts from the lectures and readings you have been exposed to this semester. Your analysis should be no fewer than five to six pages long.

You may want to focus on particular issues/themes such as gender roles, education, health, parent-child roles, or economic life.

Life history should be 4 pages (double-spaced)

Field book Entry #2:

Critical Encounters: Cross-Cultural Perspectives

When you have submitted to looking about you discreetly and to observing with as little prejudice as possible, then you are in the proper state of mind to walk about... and learn from what you see.

-- Philip Glazebrook, Journey to Kars

The Art of Observing

Learning to observe without judging seems simple on the surface but it may be one of the most difficult skills for the culture learner to acquire. It composes a key strategy for developing cross-cultural competence.

- Learn to observe and describe without judging or interpreting.
- Attribute meaning to behavior you observe very cautiously, and when you do...
- Make sure you do so from the host culture perspective, not your own. This will take time and early on it may mean asking lots of questions of program staff and your host family as well as letting go of understanding the meaning of all that you observe.

The pre-departure culture learning workshop discussed the distinction between an observation or pure description (e.g. “the corners of his mouth were turned downward”) and a judgment or interpretation (“he was displeased with what I said). However, in an unfamiliar culture, such as Vietnam, it is often deeply difficult to separate the two. Our unconscious assumptions from our own culture can make us think we are merely describing facts when we are actually drawing incorrect, culture-distorted inferences. This is especially true in situations which involve intense emotions: e.g. hurt or anger at a seemingly rude action or statement, embarrassment and confusion about having apparently upset someone without having intended to do so.

To improve the *accuracy* and the *usefulness* of our inferences about emotional situations, and to practice the art of frame shifting from our own cultural perspective to that of the host culture, it can be helpful to first write out an objective (inference-free) description of our own and other people’s behavior, and then only later to try to figure out what was really going on. The observable facts (“she would not make much eye contact with me”) are often consistent with more than one possible interpretation or inference (she was lying vs. she was embarrassed, vs. in her culture sustained eye contact with someone who is older is rude.)

Step 1. Recognize and Choose A Critical Incident or Issue. Choose an emotional event or issue from your social experiences in Vietnam. This would ideally be a cross-cultural experience or encounter that was especially important or challenging for you and that would lend itself to exploration from the perspectives of both your own culture and that of Vietnamese culture. You may wish to consider a single incident, or explore your on-going efforts to come to terms with a particularly challenging issue or aspect of the culture or society. You might write about your

adjustments to life in a new family, your language learning experience, confrontations with class, ethnic or gender differences, or a particularly provocative conversation or encounter.

Step 2: Write out an objective description of the event or issue, i.e. the exact sequence of *observable* behaviors and *verbatim* words. Write it using the “third person” for all participants including yourself (as if you were an observer even of your own behavior).

Step 3: Describe your initial reactions. Express your feelings, thoughts, initial interpretations and inferences. Convey the intensity and complexity of the encounter from your own perspective.

Step 4: Explore from the host culture perspective. Peel back the layers of the onion. Refer back to the Culture Learning Workbook and reflect on whether any of the major cultural concepts we covered in that workshop were at play (e.g. individualist vs collectivist, monochronic vs polychronic, etc.). Talk with a number of Vietnamese to see how they perceive the incident or issue.

Step 5: Further Reflection and Analysis. Step back and reflect on the incident or issue once more. Discuss the differences between your immediate, automatic inferences and interpretations and the inferences and understandings that you formulated after deeper reflection and consideration of the Vietnamese perspective. Consider how much of your experience may be traced to broader American or Vietnamese cultural trends and perspectives, and how much of your experience is rooted in your particular personal and social background or that of the Vietnamese involved. Has this exercise helped you to reinterpret or change your perception of the incident or issue? As a result of this focused reflection have you critically examined your own behavior, or grown to better understand and accept the behavior of members of the host culture? Finally, reflect on your attempt to reconcile the differing cross-cultural perspectives of the encounter. What kinds of difficulties do you face in trying to write about this encounter from all points of view and in explaining them honestly and objectively?

Fieldbook Entry #3:

Analyzing your internship experience ***

Please prepare a double-spaced typed paper of five pages (1 inch margins, Garamond 12 or similar) that describes your internship experience. Your work should be thoughtfully done, well organized, and polished.

Please submit your final paper to the study abroad office. This paper will serve as the basis for your oral presentation.

The general guidelines for the final paper are as follows.

Abstract

Information about your internship organization

1. Description of internship site. History of organization
2. Information on funding or sponsoring agencies
3. Goals and objectives of organization
4. Size of internship site – participating population/clients, staff, etc.
5. Your assessment of the successes and barriers to success in the organization's functioning and achievement of its goals.

Student's Role at internship

***** Students who wish to submit an alternative final paper, whether a political, social or ethnographic study *etc.*, must first discuss their topic and gain approval.**