**HUMANITIES CORE**

**Professor Linda Vo**

**WEEK 6a: Warfare, Memory & Cambodia**

**WEEK 6b: The Afterlives of Empire**

**Spring 2019**

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FROM LECTURES AND ASSIGNMENTS**

1. According to *Don’t Think I’ve Forgotten: Cambodia’s Lost Rock and Roll*, what cultural influences shaped Cambodian popular music before April 1975? How was music from other countries introduced to musicians and singers and how did they infuse it with their own cultural traditions?
2. Analyze how popular music reflected the cultural, political, and economic transformations of Cambodia during a period of modernization. What major historical moments shaped the music that was created, especially rock and roll?
3. What political role did musicians and singers play in Cambodian society pre-1975 and why is the recovery or revitalization of this music relevant in the contemporary period? Why were artists especially targeted during the Cambodian genocide and how did some manage to survive? Why were Western forms of music especially targeted in the period after the “Vietnam War” ended?
4. How did the “Vietnam War” impact neighboring countries, especially Cambodia that tried to remain politically neutral? How did the war destabilize Cambodia and what justification was given during the Cold War era for foreign intervention?
5. What is meant by Cambodia being “collateral damage” of the “Vietnam War”? According to Khatharya Um, what are the misperceptions that persist or the consequences of calling this the “Vietnam War”?
6. Analyze some of the conditions that provided the Khmer Rouge with the opportunity to rise to power? What led to Cambodians supporting their rise to power and welcoming them initially when they entered Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975?
7. What were the objectives of the Khmer Rouge in creating Democratic Kampuchea and how did they attempt to reach these goals? Critically address the ideologies of an “agrarian utopia” and a classless society without kin loyalties. What role did ordinary individuals as well as children have in building this new “Year Zero” society and purging the “enemies of the state”?
8. Is it possible to hold individuals accountable for crimes against humanity, human rights atrocities, and genocide in Cambodia? How is this complicated by foreign intervention and a civil war? What factors make it challenging to bring members of the Khmer Rouge or perpetrators who claim they were just following orders to trial for their actions and to bring justice to the deceased and the survivors?
9. What are the ethical dilemmas involved in displaying or exhibiting the photographic images (“mug shots”) from the Cambodian genocide, such as the use of these images for artistic purposes or commercial profit (commodification)? How might these issues affect the creation of digital archives that document the Democratic Kampuchea period?
10. What factors affected the perception and reception to the Cambodian refugees in America? What policies were implemented to help in their resettlement process and how were some of them counterproductive to their adjustment?
11. Why do some Cambodians argue that remembrance and memorialization of war and the unimaginable atrocities that followed is important, while others justify it is better to forget the past and look forward? Consider issues related to individual and collective healing and reconciliation processes.
12. Discuss how the survivors of war and displacement may be impacted by post-traumatic stress disorder and intergenerational trauma and how does it affects families and communities, particularly Cambodian Americans?
13. What deportation policies affect Cambodian Americans in the contemporary period? What legal, political, and moral arguments are presented regarding why deportation is justifiable or why it is unjust?
14. Explain the unfinished business of war in Cambodia and Vietnam. What are the lingering effects of warfare on the environment for decades after a war or proxy war has ended? What is involved in the ecological clean up of a country? What health implications exist for veterans and civilians?
15. Examine the controversy over Maya Lin’s design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. What were some of the gender, racial, ideological, and artistic components of these disagreements regarding the aesthetics of this national monument?
16. Expressions such as, “the Philippines was America’s first Vietnam” and “another Vietnam,” are currently employed in discussions of contemporary global conflicts. However, what does this mean when we do not understand or remember the impact of U.S. expansionism in the Pacific or how empire, war, and displacement are interconnected?
17. Consider the artwork (murals, paintings, photo tapestries or collages, leaf prints, memorials, etc) introduced in lectures week 4, 5, and 6. Examine how the artists use these various genres to express the impact or legacies of empire, war, displacement, and its aftermath. How do these works of art convey cultural and political commentary?
18. Rudyard Kipling’s poem, “The White Man’s Burden,” includes a line, “The savage wars of peace.” How can this line be viewed as justifying or legitimizing, as well as critiquing, U.S. empire in the Pacific and its afterlife, especially in Southeast Asia.