

journal of transnational american studies

Obama Institute for
Transnational American
Studies, University of Mainz;
Stanford University; UC
Santa Barbara; UC Davis

Call for Contributions to JTAS Special Forum

THINKING WITH AND BEYOND “VIETNAM”:

Lessons 50 Years After the United States’ Wars in Southeast Asia

This Special Forum aims to destabilize and reestablish what it means to think with and beyond “Vietnam” by bringing Critical Refugee Studies and Transnational American Studies into deeper conversation. By “Vietnam” we are signaling, first and foremost, the War and its many afterlives at this moment of fifty-year anniversary commemoration. 2025 marks the semicentennial of what has been varying referred to as either the “Fall of Saigon” by those in the United States and former South Vietnam or by its official name, “Day of the Liberation of the South and National Reunification,” by the present-day Socialist Republic of Vietnam. That these names chosen to refer to the “end” of the conflict that stood in as proxy for the twentieth century struggle between the “First” and “Third” Worlds over the fate of global racial colonial capitalism diverge suggests—as this Special Forum asserts—how these material contradictions remain in actuality unresolved and enduringly relevant into the twenty-first century. By creating a site for transnational approaches to this war and its many afterlives, this Special Forum will feature scholarship that recognizes the multifold and enduring consequences of war across the board while at the same time elaborating upon some of the infinite number of Southeast Asian/American perspectives that make the Vietnam War relevant to contemporary political concerns.

Foundational to the provocations of this Special Forum are two broad assumptions. First, “Vietnam” signals both the War and much more—it is also an era; a culture and a counterculture; and a diverse community of people. As a reference to the War, “Vietnam” bleeds through and around boundaries of nation, particularly as the war waged in Vietnam also conscripted a number of nearby states, territories, peoples, and postcolonial realities into its imperial machinery. As a “people,” “Vietnam” represents a contingent geopolitical-historical formation whose subjects across time have shared kinship, intimacy, and intergenerational bonds spanning imperial-state demarcations. Second, while transnational in method, this Special Forum does not disdain or reject aspects of scholarship rooted in Critical Refugee Studies or Critical Ethnic Studies, particularly those that over the past fifty years have been frequently distorted, usurped, or silenced. We intend to center “Indigenous,” “minority,” and “refugee” discourses in this Special Forum even as we make an effort to disavow the state apparatuses that define and construct these categories precisely for the purposes of surveillance, exclusion, and extraction. How both Critical Refugee Studies and Critical Ethnic Studies’s theoretical and political contributions might speak (back) to Transnational American Studies is an additional provocation that drives this Special Forum.

We invite article-length contributions on the following thematic areas:

- Transnational legacies of the Vietnam War and Secret War
- Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos as sites of inquiry into global racial colonial capitalism
- Southeast Asia as part of the geography of US militarism and carcerality
- Critical Refugee Studies and diasporic perspectives on the wars and their many afterlives
- Movement-building and antiwar activism in the past and present
- Revolutionary struggle and the complex legacy of its articulation via attendant nationalisms

- Entangled histories and comparative perspectives on the wars in Southeast Asia
- Cultural and countercultural legacies and lessons from the Vietnam Era
- Hmong, Lao, and Cambodian perspectives and interventions into dominant discourses and politics surrounding the wars in Southeast Asia
- Decolonization and land-based perspectives on solidarities from Southeast Asia, its diaspora, and beyond
- Boundaries and borders as they are troubled by “Southeast Asia” as a geographic formation

Please send a **500-word abstract** and a CV to Prof. Karín Aguilar-San Juan, American Studies (sanjuan@macalester.edu) and Prof. Christina Hughes, Sociology (chughes3@macalester.edu) **by Nov. 1, 2024.**

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