



## SEAP Outreach Launches Two New Educational Films on Vietnam for use in High School and Community College Classrooms

by Brenna Fitzgerald, communications and outreach coordinator

SEAP Outreach is pleased to offer two short documentary films available to watch on [SEAP's eCommons archive](https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/47542) (<https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/47542>) on Vietnam and Vietnamese culture with accompanying curriculum guides. These engaging films are intended for use in middle school, high school, and undergraduate classrooms. Students who view the videos will benefit by learning about diverse communities and cultures in Vietnam. They will look at Vietnam and the controversies around US/Vietnam relations from multiple perspectives and synthesize conflicting views, broaden their understanding of Vietnam, and reflect critically on their own assumptions about Vietnam. This project was jointly funded by a National Resource Center grant awarded to SEAP from the US Department of Education and a Cornell Engaged Opportunity Grant awarded to SEAP Outreach.

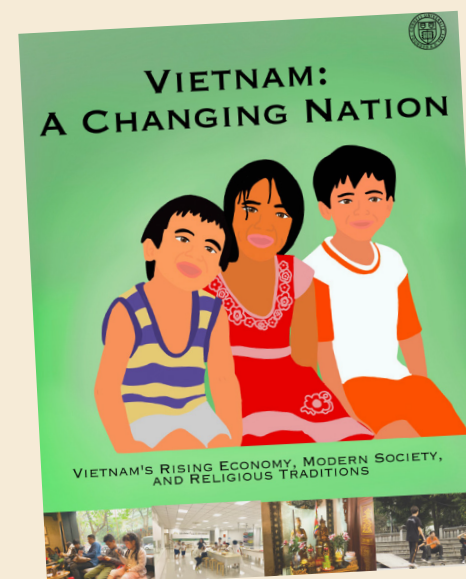
### Vietnam: A Changing Nation

This film explores Vietnam's rising economy, modern society, and religious traditions.

Note from the filmmaker, Brenna:

*Vietnam is a young country with over half the population under age 25. There's a youthful vitality pulsing through the air, especially in big urban centers like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon). Youth fill the coffee shops, taking photos of frothy lattes on their phones and giggling at YouTube videos. I saw them skateboarding and scooting around with friends on motorbikes. Young Vietnamese study hard, going to places like the famous Temple of Literature in Hanoi to pray for good grades, passing exams, entrance to a college abroad. For youth, international education is a gateway into their dreams of wealth and good fortune. Curious students from elementary age to college were eager to engage with me, an English-speaking foreigner. They wanted to practice conversing in English, ask questions about the United States, and make global friendships and connections. They are driven, constantly creating and innovating, making change, working in every sector of society, propelling the rising economy. Vietnam is a country of creative entrepreneurs. The streets are alive with vendors selling fruits and to-go snacks and drivers ready to take you on a rickshaw ride for a small fee. Stores line city sidewalks decked with innumerable things for sale: bags, shoes, watches, clothing, shiny trinkets, coffees and teas, cell phone cases, handicrafts proudly displaying the label "made in Vietnam." Vietnam moves to the hustle of capitalism, motorbikes whizz by stacked with anything and everything from food deliveries to refrigerators. Though the pace is fast, people take time for leisure—playing board games in the streets, stopping for coffee, sipping beer in little plastic chairs on the sidewalk, watching the world race by. And like the balance between movement and stillness, there's a balance between new and old. Fancy hotels are being constructed next to old houses and ancient temples. Everywhere in Vietnam, the young and*

*vibrant meets the old and established. In every home and shop, people make daily offerings of incense, fruits, and candles to ancestors, paying respect to their history and origins.*



### Vietnam's Food Systems

This film explores Vietnam's historical cuisine, agricultural landscape, and climate challenges.

Note from the filmmaker, Brenna:

*Before traveling to Vietnam, I knew about pho, the country's infamous noodle soup. Each savory dish consists of rice noodles, herbs like basil and star anise, and thin-cut slices of beef held in a delicate golden broth. I knew about banh mi baguettes, a cultural fusion from when the French occupied Vietnam. Before my trip, a Vietnamese friend had drawn up a list of foods for me to try while in country: various noodle soups and rice dishes, spicy fish dishes and those with beef. He also urged me to try all the fruits like papaya and durian and the famous egg coffee of Hanoi. To my friend, sampling the foods and traversing the markets at any time of day—from dawn to midnight—was an integral part of experiencing Vietnam. This did not surprise me*

*given that most Vietnamese events I had attended at Cornell before my trip centered around food and that Vietnam's biggest exports are rice and coffee. The central role food plays in a culture cannot be underestimated. Food is not only necessary for survival, but also at the center of celebration and pleasure. It connects people and resources, regions and countries, farmers and restaurant owners. Food is a complex web. I spent much of my time in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) hunting, gathering, and eating. My daily itinerary was often bookended by food, by what market I would visit that morning and what kind of dish I wanted for dinner. I knew that in following the path from plantation to market to restaurant many stories worth capturing would unfold. Food wove through the lives of everyone I met: farmers close to the earth, knee-deep in wet rice paddies and those reaching up to the sky picking fruits; entrepreneurs at the market piling cinnamon sticks, dried shrimp, and mangos into perfect pyramids for a colorful and enticing display; delivery drivers carrying pounds of rice in boxes that teetered precariously on the backs of motorbikes; street vendors selling pineapple and papaya carved into spears; café owners enticing pedestrians with menus of dark espresso and light frothy lattes; and friends sharing drinks or steamy dishes in restaurants, laughing together.*

