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## A Perspective of the College Strategy Curriculum

The U.S. Naval War College

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## A PERSPECTIVE OF THE COLLEGE'S STRATEGY CURRICULUM

The 9 weeks devoted to the Strategy curriculum are designed to enhance the student's ability to think analytically and express himself cogently by allowing him to examine key issues of military history in the give and take of the seminar room. In essence, the Strategy study has been changed in both content and in methodology, and figure 1 illustrates the change in emphasis from a committee to an individual effort.

the basic factual material upon which all subsequent discussion and reading will be based. Three days of individual reading, research, and consultation with faculty members then follow. Having thus become acquainted in some depth with the week's topic, the students then attend a formal lecture presented by a guest speaker.\*\* Chosen to speak in areas of their special expertise, each week's guest lecturer spends 3 days at

	New Curriculum (16 weeks)	1971 Equivalent (17 weeks)
Lecture hours	75	167
Seminar hours	44	69
Required reading pages	10,316	3,980
Written assignments	4/60 pages	1/10 pages (committee effort)
Examinations	2	0
Post-lecture periods	14	18
	50% avg. attendance	15% avg. attendance

**Fig. 1—Comparison of Academic Effort: New vs. 1971 Strategy Curriculum**

Focusing each week on a different question or case study, the students are expected to read approximately 1,000 pages of background material as well as attend a formal lecture presented by a prominent historian. While a great deal of time is required outside the seminar room in individual research and preparation of seminar essays, the success of the program clearly hinges on the exchange of ideas—the give and take that characterizes small group discussions.\*

Each academic week opens with an introductory lecture given by a member of the War College's resident faculty. These lectures are designed to provide

the War College, participating in post-lecture conferences and student seminars as well as meeting with selected student groups over the dinner table in the college's Flag Cabin.

Although historical in its perspective, the Naval War College's Strategy course focuses on questions that are as current today as they were for the ancient

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\*For an insight into the Strategy curriculum topics, supporting readings, and representative essay questions, see appendix I.

\*\*See appendix II for a listing of guest lecturers for the Strategy curriculum.

Greeks. History is studied, not so much as a means to derive certain "principles," but rather as a means to view controversial issues more objectively and dispassionately. The analysis of recurrent themes in history—themes which have defined the strategic parameters within which nations have struggled throughout the ages—has provided the fuel for lively and provoking student exchanges. New insights have been gained in areas such as landpower versus seapower, total war as opposed to limited war, imperialism, civil-military relations, and war as an instrument of policy.

There are no pat answers to the questions raised in these seminars; indeed, one of the first things the student learns is never to accept at face value any assertion which claims to tie persistent problems into neat packages. Special efforts are made to introduce the student to a broad variety of readings, some of which are purposely controversial in nature, in order to further encourage the examination of all points of view. The faculty member's role at the Naval War College is not to lecture or "spoon feed" the student, but rather he must strike a fine balance between stimulating new ideas and fresh approaches on the one hand while keeping student discussions from straying too far afield on the other.

Student essay papers are an important part of the educational process. They sharpen the student's ability for both analysis and sound logical writing, as well as providing a useful instrument for sparking seminar discussions. A number of such essays follow this discussion.

Still another feature of the new curriculum was the institution of examinations. The students were provided with nine examination questions about 1 month before the examination date and were advised that five of these questions would appear on their exam, but that they would be free to select

any two of those five. In addition, they were advised that the final examination would include an additional three questions from which they would select one. Providing the nine questions was intended to help the students focus their study effort. Allowing them a freedom of choice was intended to encourage them to explore areas in which they were particularly interested without fear of being hamstrung on the examinations.

The following represents a sample of some of the questions included in this year's strategy final examination:

- Define the term "imperialism." Has U.S. foreign policy since 1898 been "imperialistic"? If so, in what sense and for what reasons? If not, how else would you describe it?

- Is today's "multipolar" world a 20th century equivalent of the 19th century's "balance of power"? Do you think that multipolarity and balance of power are better or worse guarantors of international peace than bipolarity or single-power hegemony?

- What are the historic roots of antimilitarism in Western (including American) society? Is there an inherent and inescapable antagonism between military professionalism and Western liberal/democratic ideology? On the basis of your studies in this course and of your personal observations, what do you predict will be the status of the military profession in America in the coming decade? Does history offer any guidelines to the military profession in its present and future relations with civilian society in this country?

As a conclusion to the strategy study, the final 4 weeks of the curriculum were allotted for strategy research. The student is unencumbered by a schedule and is free to pursue his choice of research on a strategy topic. The fruit of this effort is a research paper, several of which have been included in this issue.

Superior performance by students at

the Naval War College is recognized at graduation through the identification of Distinguished Graduates and the Strategy course is the first hurdle in achieving this goal. In the past, evaluation was accomplished by rating performance in

seminars and written papers, but in the case of this class, the written examinations will provide an additional tool to make the evaluation process more equitable. Superior students for the recently completed Strategy course are:

Alves, Arcenio, Jr.	Comdr.	USN
Atwood, Henry C., Jr.	Comdr.	USN
Batchelder, Sydney H., Jr.	Lt. Col.	USMC
Braddon, John R.	Lt. Col.	USMC
Caterini, Dino J.	FSO-4	USIS
De Vicq, David C.	Comdr.	USN
Duke, Lee E.	Col.	USA
Gilmore, Roger W.	Comdr.	USN
Goodson, George O., Jr.	Lt. Col.	USMC
Grace, John J.	Col.	USMC
Hagerty, Roger C.	Lt. Col.	USMC
Hartman, Richard S.	Col.	USMC
Higgins, Maria S.	Comdr.	USN
Hilt, George H.	Lt. Col.	USA
Hoffman, Robert B.	Comdr.	USN
Howard, Donald L.	Comdr.	USN
Howay, Jack W.	Comdr.	USN
Korpal, Eugene S.	Lt. Col.	USA
Kreckel, Lyman E.	Comdr.	USN
Love, Edgar J.	Lt. Col.	USMC
Lutz, Joseph C.	Lt. Col.	USA
Marthinson, Detlow M., Jr.	Comdr.	USN
Masson, Richard W.	Lt. Col.	USAF
Mathews, Frederick A.	Lt. Col.	USMC
McClintock, Bain	Col.	USMC
McNall, Phillip E.	Comdr.	USN
Miller, John T.	Lt. Col.	USA
Miller, Ralf M.	Lt. Col.	USAF
Moon, Richard B.	FSO-3	State Dept.
Nordhill, Claude H.	Comdr.	USN
Pease, Charles C.	Lt. Comdr.	USN
Peters, Richard A.	Comdr.	USN
Rutherford, Bruce B.	Lt. Col.	USMC
Schreiner, Charles W., Jr.	Lt. Col.	USMC
Scott, Douglas L.	Comdr.	USN
Sellers, John W.	Comdr.	USN
Shaffer, Raymond A.	Lt. Col.	USMC
Stanton, James M.	Comdr.	USN
Stevens, Robert M.	GS-15	DOD
Thibault, Edward A.	GS-14	CIA
Thompson, George I.	Capt.	USN
Wagner, Julian F.	Lt. Col.	USA
Winchester, Warren H.	Comdr.	USN
Zirps, Christos	Comdr.	USN

**APPENDIX I**

**Listing of Weekly Topics, Readings, and  
 Selected Seminar Essays for Strategy Study**

**I. The Sovereign State and the Balance of Power**

**A. Readings:**

Thucydides. *The Peloponnesian War*. (Books I-VII). Baltimore, 1954.

Dehio, Ludwig. *The Precarious Balance*. New York, 1962.

Holborn, Hajo. *The Political Collapse of Europe*. New York, 1951. (Borzoi Books edition)

**B. Seminar Essays:**

1. Discuss Thucydides on the influence of seapower.

2. Define the concept of "the balance of power" (using historical examples from Thucydides, Dehio, and Holborn).

3. Explain the disappearance of the "balance of power" as a guiding principle in international affairs after 1914.

**II. Theories of Military Strategy**

**A. Readings:**

Leonard, R.A., ed. *A Short Guide to Clausewitz, on War*. New York, 1967.

Mahan, Alfred Thayer. *The Influence of Seapower upon History*. (American Century Series Edition), New York, 1957.

Corbett, Julian S. *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*. London, 1918.

**B. Seminar Essays:**

1. How do Clausewitz, Mahan, and Corbett distinguish strategy from tactics on the one hand and from foreign policy on the other?

2. It is sometimes observed that Mahan's major contribution to naval strategic theory was his conception, "command of the sea." Examine that concept critically, indicating (a) what Mahan meant by it; (b) whether Clausewitz had a parallel concept; and (c) how Corbett refined this concept.

3. Discuss critically to what extent—and to what purpose—the concepts represented by the contemporary terms "limited war," "general war," "deterrence," "escalation," and "guerrilla warfare" (or "insurgency") appear in the works of Clausewitz, Mahan, and Corbett.

**III. Ideological War: the French Revolution and Napoleon**

**A. Readings:**

Brinton, Crane. *A Decade of Revolution, 1789-1799*. New York, 1934.

Markham, Felix. *Napoleon*. New York, 1963.

Marcus, Geoffrey J. *The Age of Nelson*. New York, 1971.

**B. Seminar Essays:**

1. What were the elements of Napoleon's military genius? What debt, if any, did he owe to earlier theorists and practitioners of the military art? What did he do that was new and different?

2. What was the institutional machinery for the formulation and execution of British military policy on land and sea during the period 1793-1815?

3. How did Britain and France wage economic warfare against each other in the years 1793-1815?

#### IV. War as an Instrument of National Policy: Otto von Bismarck

##### A. Readings:

Pflanze, Otto. *Bismarck and the Development of Germany. v. I, The Period of Unification, 1815-1871*. Princeton, 1963.

Howard, Michael. *The Franco-Prussian War*. New York, 1961.

Craig, Gordon A. *The Battle of Koniggratz*. Philadelphia, 1964.

##### B. Seminar Essays:

1. Discuss the concept of limited war as applied by Bismarck in 1864, 1866, and 1870.

2. Discuss the methods by which Bismarck secured popular support for the government.

3. To what extent did Prussia's naval weakness affect Bismarck's foreign policy?

#### V. War as the Collapse of Policy: World War I

##### A. Readings:

Remak, Joachim. *The Origins of World War I, 1871-1914*. New York, 1967.

Schmitt, Bernadotte. *Origins of World War I*. London, 1958.

Tuchman, Barbara. *The Guns of August*. New York, 1962.

##### B. Seminar Essays:

1. Why did Russia, France, and Great Britain, in spite of their traditional animosities, draw together against Germany? Was Germany—as she claimed—a victim of “encirclement” before 1914?

2. Assess the role of imperialism—i.e., the colonial rivalries of the great powers—in the origins of World War I.

3. In the summer of 1914 could Great Britain have prevented general war by making her policy clearer sooner?

#### VI. Policymaking in Wartime: World War II

##### A. Readings:

Morison, Samuel Eliot. *Strategy and Compromise*. Boston, 1958.

Feis, Herbert. *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin: the War They Waged and the Peace They Sought*. Princeton, 1966.

Blumenson, Martin. *Eisenhower*. New York, 1972.

##### B. Seminar Essays:

1. Discuss the wartime development of strategic plans for the defeat of Japan in terms of U.S. interservice rivalries.

2. Discuss the effects of logistical considerations on Allied strategy in World War II.

3. When did the Allied wartime coalition fall apart, and why?

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### VII. Imperialism and War: the American Experience

#### A. Readings:

Williams, William A. *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*. New York, 1972.

Sprout, Harold and Margaret. *The Rise of American Naval Power, 1776-1918*. Princeton, 1943. rev. ed.

Pratt, Julius. *Expansionists of 1898: the Acquisition of Hawaii and the Spanish Islands*. Chicago, 1968.

#### B. Seminar Essays:

1. To what extent was U.S. naval policy in the 19th century responsive to the requirements of U.S. foreign policy?

2. Compare and contrast American and European 19th century imperialism.

3. Did economic forces or strategic consideration play a more important role in shaping America's acquisition of what Williams calls her "informal empire?"

### VIII. Soldiers and Civilians: the U.S. Civil War

#### A. Readings:

Williams, T. Harry. *Lincoln and His Generals*. (Vintage Edition), New York, 1952.

Catton, Bruce. *U.S. Grant and the American Military Tradition*. Boston, 1954.

Ambrose, Stephen. *Halleck: Lincoln's Chief of Staff*. Baton Rouge, 1962.

#### B. Seminar Essays:

1. The development of a "modern command system" in the Union Army.

2. Military theory and military practice: the influence of Jomini on Civil War strategy and tactics.

3. The influence of domestic politics on the conduct of the war by the Union.

### IX. The Military Profession

#### A. Readings:

Vagts, Alfred. *A History of Militarism, Civilian and Military*. New York, 1959.

Morison, Elting E. *Men, Machines and Modern Times*. Cambridge, 1966.

Forester, C.S. *The General*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1968.

Crane, Stephen. *The Red Badge of Courage*. New York, 1949.

#### B. Seminar Essays:

1. How do you account for fluctuations in the popularity of the military profession in the United States?

2. How adaptive has the military been to technological changes?

3. Motivation in combat: the role of military symbolism as illustrated in Forester's *The General* and Crane's *Red Badge of Courage*.

## APPENDIX II

## Guest Lecturers and Lecture Titles

- Bernard Knox, Director, Center for Hellenic Studies, Washington, D.C.—“Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War: Politics and Power”
- Kenneth N. Waltz, University of California at Berkeley—“The Sovereign State and the Balance of Power”
- Norman H. Gibbs, All Souls College, Oxford University—“Clausewitz on the Moral Forces in War”
- Robert Forster, Johns Hopkins University—“Ideological War: the French Revolution and Napoleon”
- David Schoenbaum, University of Iowa—“War as an Instrument of National Policy”
- Laurence LaFore, University of Iowa—“War as the Collapse of Policy: World War I”
- Forrest Pogue, Director, George C. Marshall Research Fund—“Policymaking in Wartime: World War II”
- James Field, Swarthmore College—“Imperialism and War: the American Experience”
- R.F. Weigley, Temple University—“The Civil War in the Evolution of American Strategy”
- Brig. Gen. Robert G. Gard, Jr., USA, Director, Discipline and Drug Policies, Office of Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Department of the Army—“The Military Profession”