

# Enhancing Learning using Multimedia in Professional Military Education

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## Abstract

In 2013, the Army's senior leadership published the *Army Leadership Development Strategy (ALDS)*, which placed renewed "emphasis on developing Army leaders to meet the security challenges of tomorrow." The *ALDS* outlined a comprehensive approach to implement the strategy outlining an "ends, ways, means" methodology. Within the *ALDS*, the Army Leadership Requirements Model identifies attributes and competencies expected of all Army leaders as the "ends" piece of the methodology.

This article describes the development and evolution of an elective course on organizational leadership conducted at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College titled Organizational Leadership Case Studies, which uses the Army Leadership Requirements Model as its foundation. Intended to create an innovative learning environment between faculty and students, the course uses a multimedia methodology to enhance the learning of midgrade military officers. Using popular military films as leadership case studies, it requires the officers to analyze and evaluate the leadership attributes and competencies of organizational level leaders that influenced their decision making in combat. Students then deduce implications that relate to their future roles as more senior organizational leaders and commanders engaged in unified land operations. As part of the evolution of the elective, a critical reflection process is described that further enriches this multimedia approach.

For the past decade, the Department of Command and Leadership at the United States Army Command and General Staff College has offered an advanced application course (elective) to the students attending the Command and General Staff Officer Course (CGSOC) that uses military-themed films

as a method to analyze and study organizational leadership. The official title of the course is A724: Organizational Leadership Case Studies, but unofficially it is known as the “Movies for Majors” course. The students who have completed the course have found it both demanding and challenging. In course after-action reviews, it is common to hear from several students that it was the “capstone” leadership course for their entire year at CGSOC.<sup>1</sup> According to both student and instructor survey comments and after-action reviews, the course has proven to be very successful in achieving its stated learning objectives and has also become one of the most popular electives offered at CGSOC during the academic year.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this article is to describe the development and evolution of Organizational Leadership Case Studies and its use of a multimedia methodology to create an innovative learning environment and enhance the learning of midgrade military officers attending the CGSOC.

The elective builds on the two leadership blocks the students receive earlier in the academic year: L100, Developing Organizations and Leaders, and L200, The Art of Command. The intent of all three blocks is to assist in the student’s professional development and prepare them for the organizational leadership challenges they will face in their future. CGSOC students, consisting primarily of junior field-grade officers (majors) and senior company-grade officers (captains) from the five services along with several interagency civilians, spend the first eight months of CGSOC analyzing and discussing a myriad of organizational leadership topics. The two blocks focus on preparing leaders to meet the challenges of the complex, ambiguous, and uncertain world of organizational leadership. Topics include using power and influence to gain commitment in large organizations, leading change, developing an effective climate and managing a culture that solves problems and improves the organization, developing learning organizations, developing ethical organizations, and extending influence through negotiations, to name just a few.

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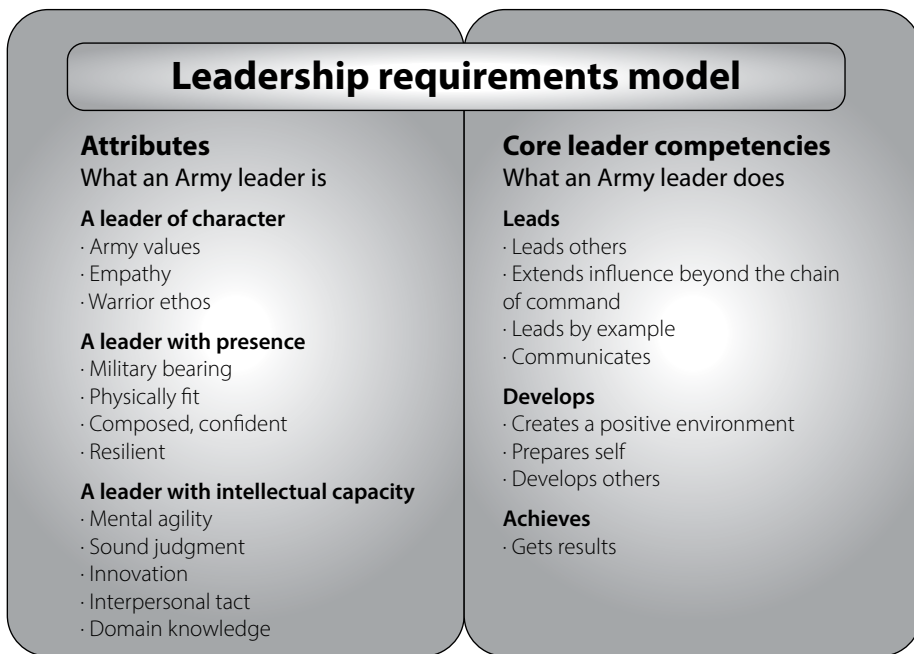
The students who enroll in the Organizational Leadership Case Studies elective use military films focusing specifically on organizational leaders preparing their units for combat or on their actions and decisions in combat. The case studies and the subsequent focused discussions in class reinforce and enhance their understanding of the many themes and topics analyzed in L100 and L200. The course also increases student self-awareness by assisting them in their ability to interpret the events in the case studies and increase personal understanding as to who they are as military leaders. In the last ten years, educators around the globe have begun to recognize the power that films have as teaching and learning tools within adult education.<sup>3</sup> Numerous articles advocate the effectiveness of using movies to increase student learning in disciplines as diverse as history, English, ethics, medicine, and multicultural studies.<sup>4</sup>

## **The Development and Evolution of A724: Organizational Leadership Case Studies**

Organizational Leadership Case Studies evolved out of another elective that was created in 2000 titled A715: Leadership in Battle. The purpose of the course was to have students “evaluate the competencies and attributes that foster behaviors of organizational-level commanders that weighed heavily on the outcomes of selected battles with the intent of deducing implications that relate to your [the students’] future roles as an organizational-level leader in combat.”<sup>5</sup> In 2003–2004, the demand for the course was so high, with over six hundred students signing up for the elective, twelve of the twenty leadership instructors within the department had to teach at least two and usually three iterations of the course.<sup>6</sup>

The instructor paired students together on the first day of the course. Students selected a military operation as a case study to research and analyze. Each pair of officers would have between one and four weeks (depending on order of presentation) to develop a thirty-minute briefing focused on the organizational leaders actions that influenced the outcome of the operation, either positively or negatively. The case studies consisted primarily of twentieth-century battles. Examples included “Meuse-Argonne, 1918,” “Tarawa, 1943,” “Arnhem, 1944,” “Dien Bien Phu, 1954,” and “TET, 1968.”<sup>7</sup>

To prepare students to be active learners for each case study, the instructor assigned two articles or chapters, providing the historical perspective of the battle. The readings offered depth and breadth that could not be covered in a short briefing and gave the students multiple perspectives to enable them to actively participate in the discussion following the presentation. Upon completion of the briefing, the instructor and the two student briefers would facilitate a more-detailed discussion as to how the organizational leader’s competencies and attributes led to behaviors that influenced the outcome of the battle. The discussion would



(Figure from FM 6-22, *Army Leadership*, October 2006, 2-4)

**Figure 1. The Army's Leadership Requirements Model**

use the U.S. Army's Leadership Requirement Model (LRM) as a start point (see figure 1). The LRM is the foundational cornerstone of the Army's leadership doctrine and was introduced in Field Manual 6-22, *Army Leadership*, in 2006.<sup>8</sup> The model's purpose was to identify specifically "what a leader is and what a leader does" using the attributes of character, presence, and intellectual capacity, along with eight core leader competencies and their supporting behaviors to convey expectations for all Army leaders.<sup>9</sup> One of the primary intents of A715: Leadership in Battle was to assist in the improvement and development of the leader attributes and competencies as identified in the Army LRM.

Upon completion of the large group discussion, the instructor would break the group into smaller groups of four students each. The instructor would provide each group different leadership questions. The questions were aimed at achieving both depth and breadth of the students' understanding of the case study. Examples include, "How did Col. David M. Shoup, commander of the 2d Marine Regiment, demonstrate mental agility during the initial beach assault against Betio Island?" ("Tarawa, 1943" case study), and "What core leader competencies did Lt. Col. John Frost, commander of the 2d Battalion, Parachute Regiment, demonstrate during his unit's attempt to capture Arnhem Bridge?" ("Arnhem, 1944" case study).<sup>10</sup>

Each student group then briefed the other small groups, generating further debate and discussion. During the last twenty minutes of the class, the instructor would transition to the “so what?” of the lesson by asking several questions such as, “How will you use what you have learned from this case study in your future duty assignments?” or “As an organizational leader, you are responsible for the development of your followers and to prepare them to lead and conduct combat operations in the future. With this in mind, what can you do to develop them from what we examined today?”<sup>11</sup>

To synthesize the information, the students wrote a two-page précis, identifying three attributes or competencies displayed by the organizational leaders analyzed from the case study. More importantly, they had to address how the knowledge they gained from their analysis would be applicable in the future. The students had to submit the précis within forty-eight hours after completing the lesson. This allowed them time to reflect, not only on their perspective but also their peer’s perspectives and points of view shared during the large- and small-group discussions in class. Initially, during the first two weeks of the course, students identified that writing the précis was the “toughest” requirements they had to contend with during their entire year at the CGSOC. For the majority of students, their perspective on the value of the written précis changed by the time of the course after-action review. When asked by their instructors if the requirement for a précis should be dropped, almost unanimously they insisted that it remain part of the curriculum, arguing that they found value in being able to take the time to reflect on what they had discussed and learned and then presenting their thoughts in writing as part of their meaning making.<sup>12</sup>

## **The Evolution of A715: Leadership in Battle into A724: Organizational Leadership Case Studies**

The Leadership in Battle elective continued to evolve.<sup>13</sup> Realizing the value of a leadership course that analyzed military organizational leaders and their actions in a combat environment, the A715 course author drafted a proposal for a new course and provided it to the director of the Department of Command and Leadership and the deputy director of the Command and General Staff School. Both were interested in the concept for a new elective but were concerned about the methodology, especially because of the increased emphasis on improving both speaking and writing skills in each course. The A715 course author would not show a two-hour movie in a two-hour class without any instruction or discussion taking place, so he presented a methodology that would embrace a multimedia approach.

The senior leadership of CGSOC approved the concept for the new elective. The first course was taught in the spring of 2008 and was made up of twelve lessons presented over a five-week period with sixteen students in each iteration. A

**Step 1: Assumption analysis**

It involves thinking in such a manner that it challenges our beliefs, values, cultural practices, and social structures in order to assess their impact on our daily proceedings. Assumptions are our way of seeing reality and serve to aid us in describing the order of relationships.

**Step 2: Contextual awareness**

Realizing that our assumptions are socially and personally created in a specific historical and cultural context.

**Step 3: Imaginative speculation**

Imagining alternative ways of thinking about phenomena in order to provide an opportunity to challenge our prevailing ways of knowing and acting.

**Step 4: Reflective skepticism**

Questioning of universal truth claims or unexamined patterns of interaction through the prior three activities—assumption analysis, contextual awareness, and imaginative speculation. It is the ability to think about a subject so that the available evidence from that subject's field is suspended or temporarily rejected in order to establish the truth or viability of a proposition or action.

(Figure by authors)

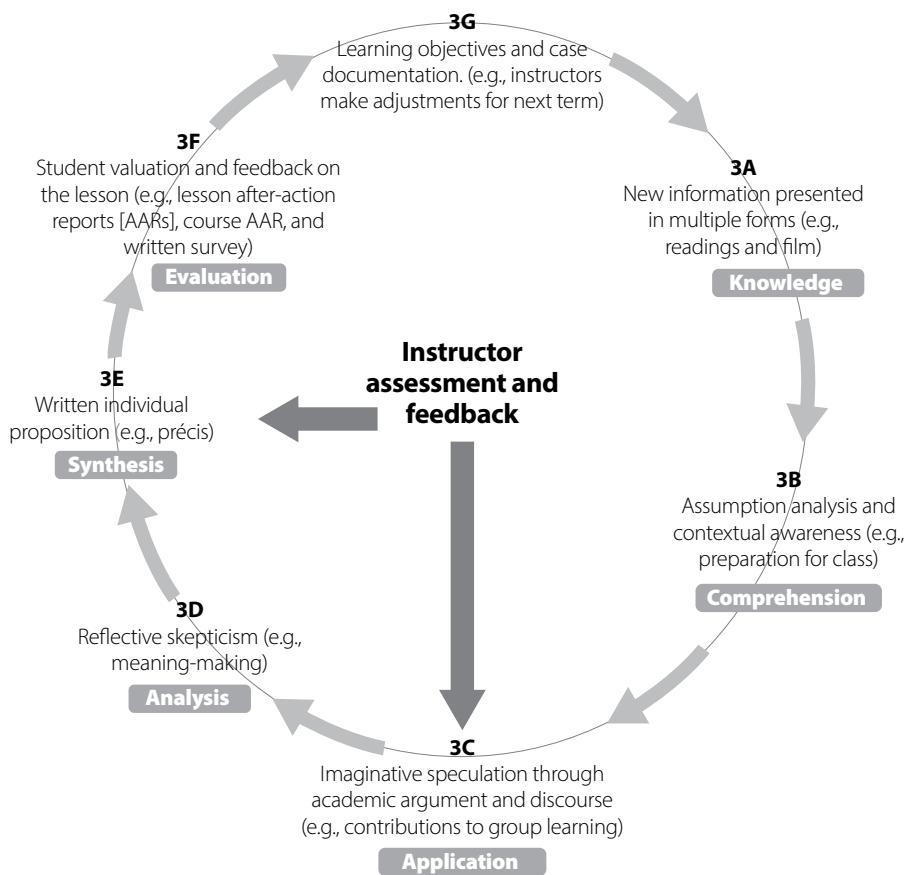
## Figure 2. Four Essential Steps in Critical Reflection

new process for teaching the course continued to evolve into what is now known as the critical reflection process.

## The Critical Reflection Learning Process for Organizational Leadership Case Studies

From 2008 through the spring of 2017, the Organizational Leadership Case Studies course has evolved the use of multimedia to ensure that it continues to create an innovative learning environment and enhance student learning. It incorporates several of the adult learning theories developed by Benjamin S. Bloom and Stephen D. Brookfield.<sup>14</sup> The success of students at achieving the course's learning objectives is based upon a critical reflection process developed by Scott Porter, a CGSOC faculty member who has also taught A724 for nearly a decade. This critical reflection process is a key factor in the student's ability to attain all of Bloom's cognitive learning levels (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) for each lesson.<sup>15</sup>

These learning objectives, along with recommendations from student feedback, drive the course author's choice for the most suitable military case studies. Material for each case is presented in multiple-media method; typically through scholarly readings, a full-feature historically correct film, PowerPoint presentations, use of white boards, and



(Figure by Scott A. Porter; concepts first presented by Stephen D. Brookfield)

**Figure 3. A Critical Reflection Learning Process for Case Method Instruction (Bloom's taxonomy noted in gray boxes)**

briefings. As identified by the Committee on Developments in the Science of Learning, led by John D. Bransford, Ann L. Brown, and Rodney R. Cocking, the use of technology to support learning and create new curricula that brings “real-world problems into the classrooms for students to explore and solve” is a primary goal of the course. Furthermore, each of these multimedia methods complement one another by presenting a more dynamic case that appeals to multiple learning styles.<sup>16</sup>

Students attain the Bloom's cognitive learning level of “knowledge” by completing and remembering the assigned readings and watching the film. Because no film can be 100 percent accurate, the readings not only provide the historical facts but also greatly enhance the student's depth of knowledge on the case. Listed in the course's advance

sheet are the learning objectives, leadership themes and topics, and questions to focus on in preparing for each lesson (see figure 3, step 3A, page 62). This focus enables students to prioritize and later recall specific information from the case.

Because CGSOC students already have between eight and twelve years of military experience when they arrive at the start of the course, they can better internalize the case's various leader's actions and decisions. In other words, these CGSOC students, who are field-grade military officers, use their critical reflection skills to leverage past experiences to better examine each case. The course authors of A724 wanted to utilize what the students had learned about critical thinking throughout the entire course and include it within the learning process. Educator and teacher Stephen D. Brookfield identified four essential steps in critical reflection: *assumption analysis*, *context awareness*, *imaginative speculation*, and *reflective skepticism* (see figure 2, page 61).<sup>17</sup> These steps can be aligned to Bloom's cognitive learning levels, especially within the framing, analysis, and discussion of a case (see figure 3, page 62).

Assumption analysis and contextual awareness occurs for the student during his or her preparation for class, and is the first step in critical reflection. (These steps are closely aligned and combined into a single step in figure 3 [on page 62] and in this discussion.) It takes the student from the knowledge level to the comprehension level of cognitive learning (see figure 3, step 3B, page 62). This is because the student understands the information from the case readings and film, and combines this understanding with the student's past experiences. With this combination, students begin to think in such a manner as to have a deeper understanding of the material. This is when they also begin to practice metacognition, or "thinking about thinking," to intentionally question, challenge, and ultimately analyze their own personal and past organizational beliefs, values, and practices. These assumptions are the first step to help understand, in an analytical way, why leaders within the case made certain decisions.

The first and second steps Brookfield states are inevitably connected at the hip, especially when using case method instruction. Besides assumption analysis, students must also understand the case based upon contextual awareness.<sup>18</sup> As noted previously, one's own experiences are valuable but realizing also that one's assumptions must be placed within the broader historical and cultural context of the case. Understanding the context of the case, especially how it is different from the present-day environment, enables students to interpret the case and acquire a better awareness to develop their point of view on a leader's actions (see figure 3, step 3B, page 62). However, the reflection has thus far only been a cognitive process within the individual student. An individual's reflection needs to be verbally shared in interaction with others. Although the other students have been provided with the same information about the case, their experiences and points of view usually are markedly different.

Adult learners within the CGSOC are responsible for their own personal and intellectual growth as well as that of their peers. This includes sharing their own experiences and points of view in an open forum that encourages academic freedom to express



one's thoughts without fear of attribution. This type of classroom environment lays the foundation for Brookfield's third step in critical reflection, imaginative speculation. This occurs in class when a person considers another's alternate way of thinking or point of view alongside their own or the organization's prevalent ways of thinking. In this course, imaginative speculation is conducted through one's reflective thoughts and applied through academic argument and discourse (see figure 3, step 3C, page 62). This is Bloom's cognitive learning level of "application," whereby students use their knowledge and points of view to argue possible solutions to the case's dilemmas and other problems. Through the instructor's facilitating skills to frame the case and stay within the learning objective's limits, students argue their points while also practicing their active learning skills to comprehend other's arguments. When divergent points of view are expressed, students rigorously challenge each other's reasoning and assertions. This application of imaginative speculation provides students the opportunity to improve their active-listening skills, use critical thinking to consider alternate ways of thinking, and practice using their moral courage to assertively verbalize and debate their own and others' perspectives. In Bloom's "application," students practice active-listening and critical-thinking skills to participate in an academic argument and, at times, a healthy discourse. In this way, students learn from the perceptions and informed opinions of others.

At this point in the reflection development, a certain "meaning making" occurs whereby the students move from one experience into the next with a deeper understanding of relationships and the connections to other experiences and ideas.<sup>19</sup> Because meaning making occurs after interaction with others, Brookfield's last step of reflection, reflective skepticism, is where the student reaches Bloom's "analysis" level of cognitive learning by breaking the material down into component parts to determine structures and relationships. This occurs after class, and thus it is important to note that this occurs after assumption analysis, contextual awareness, and especially imaginative speculation, whereby others' ways of thinking are examined (see figure 3, step 3D, page 62).

Turning critical reflection into action, the course authors require students to reach the synthesis level of cognitive learning by integrating these structures and relationships from analysis into a new whole (see figure 3, step 3E, page 62). This is done in the form of students writing an individual proposition or précis for a specific case. The précis for this course is a one-page, single-spaced paper that encapsulates the results of the entire critical reflective process. There are two parts to the process. First, students must concisely assert their suppositions on the competencies and attributes of the case study's key leader(s). Second, and more importantly, students must internalize how this case will be useful to them in the future. This last part is written in the first person as the expectation is that the student will also practice being a forward thinker—that is, how meaning making can be part of lifelong learning in both concept and application in future decisions. Typically, the last reflective part of the student's précis is based upon the major attributes and competences listed in the first part of the paper concerning a key leader in the case study. Instructors provide detailed written (and verbal feedback as

**Table. A724: Organizational Leadership Case Studies, AY 17**

Movie title	Topic(s)	Time frame
The Crossing	The American Revolution	December 1776
Glory	U.S. Civil War	1861–1865
Zulu Dawn	Anglo-Zulu War	1879
Rough Riders	Spanish-American War, 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry in Cuba	1898
Breaker Morant	Anglo-Boer War	1899–1902
The Lost Battalion	First World War, Meuse-Argonne Campaign	1918
Paths of Glory	French Army, First World War	1916–1917
Lawrence of Arabia	British Army in Palestine	1917–1918
The Court-Martial of Billy Mitchell	Inter-War period	1919–1925
Midway	Second World War, U.S. Navy in the Pacific	June 1942
The Bridge on the River Kwai	Second World War, Pacific theater	1942–1943
The Devil’s Brigade	Second World War, Special Forces in Italy	1943–1944
The Enemy Below	Second World War, U-Boat Campaign	1943–1944
A Bridge Too Far	Allied Airborne Operations, European Theater	1944
MacArthur	Second World War and Korea	1942–1951
Patton	Second World War, Africa and European Theater	1942–1945
Merrill’s Marauders	U.S. Special Operating Forces in Burma	1944–1945
IKE: Countdown to D-Day	Second World War, Normandy Invasion	1944
Valkyrie	German attempt to assassinate Hitler, Second World War	July 1944
The Battle of Algiers	Algerian War of Independence	1954–1962
Lost Command	French Army in Indo-China and Algeria	1954–1962
A Bright Shining Lie	American Advisors in Vietnam	1962–1972
K-19	The Cold War, Soviet submarine operations	1957–1962
We Were Soldiers	U.S. Army in Viet Nam	1965
Bloody Sunday	British Army in Northern Ireland	1972

(Table by authors)

well) to the students on their paper before the next class meeting. In this way, students can use the instructor's feedback to improve on subsequent précis.

At this point of the academic year, the students are knowledgeable enough to judge each lesson using the learning objectives and standards as criteria. Likewise, the students reach the highest level of cognitive learning, evaluation, in this course, evaluating each case against the course standards. Multiple instructors teach the course, so each instructor provides the data in a prescribed format to the course author who then consolidates the data for an instructor after-action review prior to submitting the results and recommendations to the director of the Department of Command and Leadership. This course has proven that by analyzing the attributes and competencies of military organizational leaders from the past, learning from others experience can be accomplished through the use of the critical reflection process.

From the start of the course in 2008 to the present, twenty-five case studies have been developed for the instructors to choose from and then apply the above described methodology to achieve the course learning objectives (see table, page 65).

## The Way Ahead

As successful as the course has become for both students and faculty, Organizational Leadership Case Studies will continue to evolve as new techniques in the use of multimedia are reviewed, experimented with, and incorporated into the course. The course has been effective in enhancing the learning of military officers attending CG-SOC through the use of an effective multimedia-based methodology. Feedback from both instructors and students supports this assertion.<sup>20</sup> Faculty and students believe that this multimedia approach can be used as part of the leader-development process inherent in every military unit and not just the classroom.<sup>21</sup>

The purpose of this article was to describe the development and evolution of an elective course that uses a multimedia methodology to enhance the learning of midgrade military officers attending the U.S. Army CGSOC. Building upon the two leadership courses the students receive earlier in the academic year—L100, Developing Organizations and Leaders, and L200, The Art of Command—the elective integrates military films as case studies to effectively analyze and study organizational leadership. The students achieve the stated learning objectives through the use of a critical reflection learning process nested with case method instruction. The students who completed the course found it challenged them with rigorous academic requirements, refuting any previous concept they may have had that the elective was nothing more than “Movies for Majors.” The last ten years has shown that the Organizational Leadership Case Studies course can and does assist in the student's professional development and will assist in preparing them for the challenges they will face in the future as more senior organizational-level leaders and commanders. ❧

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## Notes

1. "Student after-action review and course survey comments," A724: Organizational Leadership Case Studies, academic year (AY) 17 course archives, Department of Command and Leadership (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff School [CGSS]).
2. "Student after-action review and course survey comments," A724: Organizational Leadership Case Studies, AY08–AY17 course archives, Department of Command and Leadership (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army CGSS).
3. Pablo Gonzalez Blasco et al., "Using Movie Clips to Foster Learners Reflection: Improving Education in the Effective Domain," *Family Medicine* 38, no. 2 (February 2006): 94–96; Zalika Klemenc-Ketis and Janko Kersnik, "Using Movies to Teach Professionalism to Medical Students," *BMS Medical Education* 11 (2011): 60; Peter Gallagher, Nick Wilson, and Richard Jaine, "The Efficient Use of Movies in a Crowded Curriculum," *The Clinical Teacher* 11 (2014): 88–93; Syed Hani Abidi, Sarosh Madhani, Aamna Pasha, and Syed Ali, "Use of Cinematic Films as a Teaching/Learning Tool for Adult Education," *The Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education* 29, no. 1 (2017): 25–30; Harriet Swain, "Film Can Have a Leading Role in Education," *The Guardian*, 19 November 2013, accessed 14 September 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2013/nov/19/film-education-learning-tool-inclusion>.
4. Ibid.
5. "A715: Leadership in Battle course description," *Advanced Applications Program Method of Instruction Guidebook* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army CGSS, 2008), 77.
6. "A715: Leadership in Battle enrollment numbers," AY04 course archives, Leadership Instruction Division (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army CGSS). The CGSOC class for AY04 was 1,475 students.
7. A715: Leadership in Battle enrollment numbers.
8. Field Manual 6-22, *Army Leadership* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office, October 2006), 2–4.
9. Ibid.
10. "Instructor teaching notes, 'Tarawa' case study and 'Arnhem' case study," A715: Leadership in Battle 2003–2004 course archives, Leadership Instruction Division (Fort Leavenworth, KS, U.S. Army CGSS).
11. "Advance Sheet, A715: Leadership in Battle," Appendix B, Leadership Instruction Division (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army CGSS, 2005), 7.
12. "Student after-action review and course survey comments," A715: Leadership in Battle, AY03–AY06 course archives, Leadership Instruction Division (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army CGSS).
13. *Advanced Applications Program Method of Instruction Guidebook* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army CGSS, 2004–2006).
14. Benjamin S. Bloom, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives Book 1: Cognitive Domain*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Addison Wesley, 1984); Stephen D. Brookfield, "Developing Critically Reflective Practitioners: A Rationale for Training Educators of Adults," *Training Educators of Adults: The Theory and Practice of Graduate Adult Education* (New York: Routledge, 1988).
15. Bloom, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*, 62–201.

16. John D. Bransford, Ann L. Brown, and Rodney R. Cocking, eds., *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience and School* (Washington, DC: Naval Academy Press, 2000), 206–13.

17. Brookfield, "Developing Critically Reflective Practitioners," 317–38.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid. For an excellent description of meaning-making as a process, see Carey W. Walker and Matthew J. Bonnot, "A Better Approach to Developing Leaders," *Military Review* online exclusive, 29 April 2016, accessed 14 September 2017, <http://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/Online-Exclusive/2016-Online-Exclusive-Articles/A-Better-Approach-to-Developing-Leaders/>.

20. "Faculty After-Action Review," A724 Organizational Leadership Case Studies, 1 June 2016; see also David G. Cotter, "Leader Development at the Organizational Level," *Infantry* 104, no. 1 (October 2014-March 2015): 47–49, accessed 15 September 2017, <http://www.benning.army.mil/infantry/magazine/issues/2014/Oct-Mar/pdfs/Cotter.pdf>.

21. Ibid.