

# Moral Development: The West Point Way

Lt Col Michael E. Turner, Maj Chad W. DeBos & Lt Col (Ret) Francis C. Licameli

## Abstract

What moral education strategies is the United States Military Academy (USMA or West Point) utilizing to help prepare its members for the ethical challenges they will encounter? A detailed search of the literature turned up little information on this topic. This article briefly discusses some of the findings from studies that have been completed in the area of moral education at the college level. Then it turns to the United States Military Academy's Cadet Leader Development System (CLDS) that resonates through formal programs as well as a host of activities and experiences. USMA is offered as a model institution for moral education at the undergraduate college level.

## Introduction

Over the past decade, the American society has been inundated with political and business scandals, reports of abuse by the military, steroid use in professional sports, and problems with academic cheating. Increasing numbers of these stories, that

grab the headlines of every major newspaper, involve young people making decisions that undermine the moral principles that the United States proudly professes to emulate. Adolescents today, more so than ever before, must be properly prepared to face tough, possibly life-threatening and career ending moral dilemmas. Young military officers that have

Lieutenant Colonel Michael E. Turner, PhD, is the Professor of Leader Development at the William E. Simon Center for the Professional Military Ethic at the United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y. He is the principle advisor to the Director on programs and activities related to cadet moral and character development. He helped develop and directs MX400: Officership, West Point's capstone experience for all graduating cadets. He also serves as the officer in charge of the National Conference on Ethics in America that is hosted by West Point and is attended by over 70 colleges and universities. He can be reached via e-mail at michael.turner@us.army.mil.

Major Chad W. DeBos is the Education Officer at the William E. Simon Center for the Professional Military Ethic at the United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y. He is responsible for developing the Professional Military Ethic Education (PME2) curriculum for the U.S. Corps of Cadets. Major DeBos is a former Infantryman, now Military Intelligence Officer, and is a veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom II. He can be reached via e-mail at chad.debos@us.army.mil.

LTC (USAR Ret.) Francis C. Licameli is the Assistant Course Director for MX400-Officership, the Superintendent's Capstone Course at the U.S. Military Academy. He works at the Simon Center for the Professional Military Ethic and with the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership. He also directs staff rides and other events that support the Academy's focus on Officership. His military experience includes both Active Duty and National Guard service, including a combat tour and other short deployments. He previously taught at NYC Army ROTC at Fordham University.

been sent, by their country, to fight guerilla wars and rebuild countries are facing moral dilemmas, every day, where the decisions they make could cost their soldiers' lives, their country's integrity, or the loss of a promising military career. Considering what this country has asked of these junior officers and soldiers, the nation owes it to them to ensure they have received an education that will help them make the right decisions when faced with a moral dilemma. Colleges and universities have accepted some of this responsibility and are now charged with not only the academic education but also the moral and ethical education of our young men and women.

This paper focuses on the United States Military Academy (USMA or West Point) and the moral education it provides to future military leaders. First in this paper, I will discuss findings of some of the significant research that has been completed in the area of moral education at the college level. These studies identified some of the different techniques, activities, programs or environmental characteristics associated with a higher learning institution and moral development. Then, I will take an extensive look at the United States Military Academy's moral-ethical education program. My intent is to highlight the significant characteristics of the United States Military Academy's moral education programs and to offer it as a possible model for other higher learning institutions.

## Review of the Literature

The goal of any moral education program is to develop students to make ethical decisions and display ethical behavior. Sanger and Osguthorpe (2005) suggest an initial framework for the practice of moral education consisting of four areas: methods of instruction, curricular materials,

programmatic ends, and moral content. Methods of instruction refer to how teachers, faculty, and administrators manage moral education. Curricular material addresses the material used in instruction. Programmatic ends serve to identify the goal(s) of the program. For example, the ends may be to foster a culturally accommodating environment or have students develop a certain type of character. Finally, moral content speaks to what that academic institution believes to be morally right, caring, and virtuous. These beliefs are sometimes represented in terms of rules, principles or different institution programs (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2005). These areas are not all encompassing and should simply serve as a basic framework for a higher learning institute to use, a point that Sanger and Osguthorpe readily reveal. Numerous research studies have been conducted to determine the effect different variables have on the moral education of undergraduate students. Many of these studies identified variables that fall within one of the four areas listed earlier. As some of these studies are discussed, keep these areas in mind as a possible way to organize the different approaches to moral education.

## The Carnegie Foundation Study

The Carnegie Foundation conducted a three-year study of the practices and effects of moral and civic education at 12 diverse college campuses. All 12 of these institutions, prior to the study, were determined to have a strong commitment to moral education. It was a common belief among these institutions that moral or civic education should be linked to not just the academic environment, but to programs, activities and experiences found throughout the campus. The study identified some important commonalities among these institutions (Beaumont, 2002). One distinct similarity was that the mission statements that guided these

institutions all professed a goal and commitment to educate and develop students both academically and ethically. The following mission statements are cited for the purpose of illustration:

...Notre Dame prides itself on being an environment of teaching and learning which fosters the development in its students of those disciplined habits of mind, body and spirit, which characterize educated, skilled and free human beings. In addition, the University seeks to cultivate in its students not only an appreciation for the great achievements of human beings but also a disciplined sensibility to the poverty, injustice and oppression that burden the lives of so many. The aim is to create a sense of human solidarity and concern for the common good that will bear fruit as learning becomes service to justice. (Mission Statement, Notre Dame)

An outstanding historically black college for women, Spelman promotes academic excellence in the liberal arts, and develops the intellectual, ethical, and leadership potential of its students. Spelman seeks to empower the total person, who appreciates the many cultures of the world and commits to positive social change. (Mission Statement, Spelman College)

These mission statements focus institutions' energy and direct the staff and faculties' collaborative efforts in creating an environment that best supports its requirements.

The Carnegie Foundation study observed that translating ethics lessons into real-life dilemmas proved effective. This integration of the discussion of moral issues occurred in both interdisciplinary general education courses and courses within a large

cross-section of disciplines. An effort to cultivate critical thinking and effective communication was the motivation behind the inclusion of moral discussions within these courses (Beaumont, 2002). Important to this type of learning was the use of situations and predicaments that students might actually encounter and having them struggle through the process to come up with solutions and appropriate actions. Providing ways for moral learning to happen outside the curriculum and dealing with tough situations helped students develop skills in the areas of compromise, moral reasoning, and interpersonal sensitivity.

Another commonality found within these institutions was the amount of resources they spent on educating students on diversity, multiculturalism, and the rights of others. Cultural diversity and equal opportunity instruction is premised on the assumption that sensitivity to cultural, gender, religious, and ethnic differences by design promotes social justice and harmony between people and this is morally educative. Seminars, lectures, ethnic organizations, and diversity programs are just a few assets that colleges used to teach students about others. Moral education and the ability to function effectively in a diverse world are closely linked. Establishing a campus-wide culture that possessed certain shared values was another important aspect of these 12 studied institutions. Some of these values included honesty, integrity, fairness, and strength of character (Beaumont, 2002).

The study also highlights several different approaches used by colleges and universities to further the moral education cause. Some institutes focused their moral and civic education effort around forming connections with and providing services to a particular community that was usually located in close proximity and whose members

were less fortunate than those students on campus. At other colleges, personal virtues and values play the key role in a student's moral education. For example, the Air Force Academy's commitment to personal values is well known, incorporates the campus culture, and has considerable resources behind it. These values are interwoven in all aspects of the campus and academic environment. A number of their programs, that reach all cadets, seek to foster and develop values such as respect for others, spirituality, loyalty, and integrity. Promoting civic action resulting in social change is another approach used by colleges as part of their moral education program. "Notre Dame's Center for Social Concerns is the organizational embodiment of the institution's concern for social change, and serves as a central organizer of and support network for a range of service learning courses and community service programs" (Beaumont, 11). The themes for many of this center's programs are social justice and responsibility.

The Carnegie Foundation study identified factors that influence the creation of an institutional structure and climate that is conducive to the moral education of undergraduates. These factors were the institution's leadership and the campus culture. Strong leadership and support from top-level officers, like the university's president, or prominent faculty members who worked together to develop moral education programs was essential for success. On some campuses, a center was established to integrate and coordinate moral education in collaboration with other members of the staff and faculty. "At Duke University, the establishment of the Kenan Institute for Ethics was an important step in creating an institution-wide commitment to civic education, and also made the University a national leader in this area of education. The

Institute has significantly expanded an infusion of ethics across the curriculum through course development and evaluation, support for service learning, the incorporation of ethical discourse into Duke's First Year Writing Program, and the Kenan Instructorship in Ethics, a fellowship awarded to a graduate student to develop and teach an undergraduate course with substantial ethical focus" (Beaumont, 13).

Campus culture is also addressed in this study and the effect it has on moral education. The learning that occurs in the classes is less effective when the external environment does not support it. The values, virtues, and ethics that institutions are trying to instill in their students needs to be supported by the campus culture. Ineffective learning occurs, for example, when a university teaches social responsibility but allows underage drinking to occur on campus. Creating the right conditions inside the classroom to learn is just as important as creating the right conditions outside the classroom. The strengthening of a student's sense of commitment to the moral education lessons being taught goes beyond the curriculum or programs, relying heavily on the campus culture he or she comes in contact with.

### **Effect of Teaching Formats on Moral Judgment Growth**

Wilton Bunch researched the effect of different ethic course formats on moral judgment growth (2005). The population for his study consisted of 180 students of the Benson Divinity School. About 15% of the students were women. This study's research question was "What format of ethic courses produce the greatest increase in moral growth amongst students at a divinity school?" (Bunch, 2005) This research was important because

past research had shown that students at church-related schools and Bible colleges demonstrated lower levels of moral judgment growth compared to several other type higher learning institutions (McNeel, 1994). The three different formats of instruction were: 1) 32 hours of lectures on the concepts of ethics; 2) 25 hours of lectures covering the same topics and seven hours of small group discussions of cases of moral dilemmas; 3) 30 hours of small group discussion with reading and writing assignments, eliminating lectures. This study had the students complete the Defining Issues Test (DIT) before and after taking ethic courses taught in the three different formats. The DIT is a questionnaire, consisting of six vignettes of moral dilemmas, used to measure moral development. The group mean for the level of moral development found in students that received the 30 hours of small group discussion showed a significant improvement. The other two teaching formats did not have a significant effect. These results were similar to experiences in medical schools (Bunch, 2005). This data suggests that the moral judgment of students enrolled in a higher learning institution can be improved if the ethics classes use small group case discussions. Group discussions afford an opportunity for students to communicate their ideas to others, to dispute others and to have their own ideas challenged.

### **Moral Intervention Studies**

The impact of a moral intervention project with adult undergraduate students was the focus of Cheryl Armon's study (1998). The study consisted of 39 students who served as mentors at an inner-city high school. The mentors worked with students individually and in small groups. The mentors' direct and personal interaction with racism, prejudice, and lack of justice was expected to alter their beliefs about such issues and boost their motivation to

attend to them more actively in the future (Armon, 1998). The mentors discussed their experiences and assigned readings during weekly university seminars and were also encouraged to make journal entries after their high school visits to facilitate reflective thinking.

Mentors completed surveys at the end of each quarter of service. The surveys recorded learning experiences related to prejudice, racism, and social justice issues. The results of the study indicated that the intervention program had a significant impact on the mentors, where they developed new concepts and behaviors related to racism, stereotyping, and inequality. This supports the notion, which is supported by many educators, that for experiences to effect change in attitudes and behavior; they must be personally tied to the individual (Armon, 1998).

Adams and Zhou-McGovern (as cited in King & Mayhew, 2002) studied the effect courses on racism, sexism, homophobia, and disability oppression had on students. These social diversity and social justice courses did provide a significant positive effect on moral judgment. The integrated general education curricula tested by Mustapha and Seybert (as cited in King & Mayhew, 2002), which emphasized decision-making and active learning, also were effective in promoting moral judgment.

### **Moral and Character Development at West Point**

The last section of this paper discusses the system, activities, and programs used at the United States Military Academy (USMA or West Point) that are intended to stimulate moral and character development. Recent reviews of American higher education have suggested that our colleges and universities may be failing in their responsibility to prepare graduates to assume the role of contributing citizen when they ignore questions of character and

values in the undergraduate curriculum. In contrast, few programs in moral education are as thorough as that found at West Point. West Point is about developing military professionals that can fulfill the responsibilities placed upon them by the American people.

### USMA's Mission

What specifically does USMA do in the area of moral education? How does the USMA environment facilitate moral education, which in turn effects moral development? West Point incorporates many of the pedagogy techniques, academic programs and activities, and environmental conditions that have proven effective for moral development (Beaumont, 2002; Bunch, 2005; Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2005). The importance USMA places on character and ethical behavior is clearly evident based merely off of its established mission: "To educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character committed to the values of Duty, Honor, Country and prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the Nation as an officer in the United States Army" (Building Capacity to Lead, 2009).

### The Cadet Leader Development System

The West Point Experience, a four-year process, involves more than just academics. It is a whole-person developmental system with the overarching goal of graduating commissioned officers who are warriors, leaders of character, servants of the Nation, and members of the profession of arms prepared for intellectual, ethical, social, and physical demands across a broad spectrum of challenges. Called the Cadet Leader Development System (CLDS), this system is the framework employed at West Point that is used to develop cadets' competence and character simultaneously. The academic, military, and physical programs at West Point are

the main driving agents behind this development. Throughout a cadet's 47-month experience, these three programs are purposely structured to provide cadets with the foundation for continued growth and development. Through this approach, "*a cadet's identity is transformed from a personal self-interest perspective to one more oriented toward a self-authored standard or code of conduct that provides the basis for informed, responsible, self-directed decision making.*" (Building Capacity to Lead, 2009) There are six specific domains in which cadet development is sought: intellectual, military, physical, social, moral-ethical, and human spirit. All three programs (academic, military, and physical) promote opportunities that spur cadet growth in each domain.

As cadets develop (intellectually, militarily, physically, socially, and spiritually) through successful completion of activities within the academic, military, and physical programs (along with Cadet Activities and Intercollegiate Athletics) -- they will also develop morally and ethically. This is accomplished by imbedding consideration of and adherence to moral principles, Army Values and Professional Ethics within the formal activities throughout the West Point experience. For example, activities that are intended to enhance a cadet's ability to think critically, also address the ability to reason morally. Activities designed to contribute to professional development, include adherence to Army Values. Activities designed to enhance physical development, must demand respect for the principle of fair-play (Toffler & Turner, 2009).

CLDS's developmental methodology is a five-component model. Readiness, the first component, focuses on acquiring the basic skills and understanding needed to be prepared mentally and physically for future experiences. The second

component, developmental experience, capitalizes on USMA's ability to create experiences that produce stress, tension, and disequilibrium. This disequilibrium, based on Piaget's cognitive theory, causes the growth and development of higher cognitive schemas (Boden, 1982). Giving students opportunities to learn to reason and to be of service engages students in "their own formation of character" (Solomon, Watson, & Battistich, 2001). Feedback and support is the third component of the developmental model. This critical component provides cadets an assessment of their performance, conduct, potential and makes them aware of strengths and areas that need improvement. Peers and superiors as well as subordinates provide this assessment. The fourth component, reflection, ensures a cadet gains the most value from an experience. This is accomplished by providing cadets opportunities to think about the experience's purpose, cause, result and effect. This focus on reflective thinking encourages cadets to continually think about what they're doing and how they might improve. Time is the last component. The development of leaders of character takes time. It is well documented that individuals develop at different rates. Activities and programs at USMA add to the development of cadets and are intentionally linked, which allows cadets, over time, to view similar situations from various angles. This produces a deeper understanding of how the military environment works. The end state of the West Point experience is a leader of character who is a commissioned Army leader and personifies the ideals our nation expects of a professional military officer (Building Capacity to Lead, 2009).

## Curriculum

The Academy offers a broad liberal arts education that includes subjects in arts and science, humanities,

social sciences, math, engineering, physical education, and military instruction. This varied education stresses critical thinking and involves exposing a cadet's mind to innovative concepts, inventive thought processes, and novel solutions. Our knowledge of learning reminds us that students of all ages need concrete and real-world representations of topics they are studying if those topics are to be meaningful (Eggen & Kauchak, 2004). A cadet's core curriculum and a completion of a major are enhanced with in-depth experiences. These experiences, which include for example Cadet Basic Training, Cadet Field Training, and Academic Individual Advancement Development (AIAD), integrate classroom education with out of classroom experiences.

## Professional Military Ethic Education (PME2)

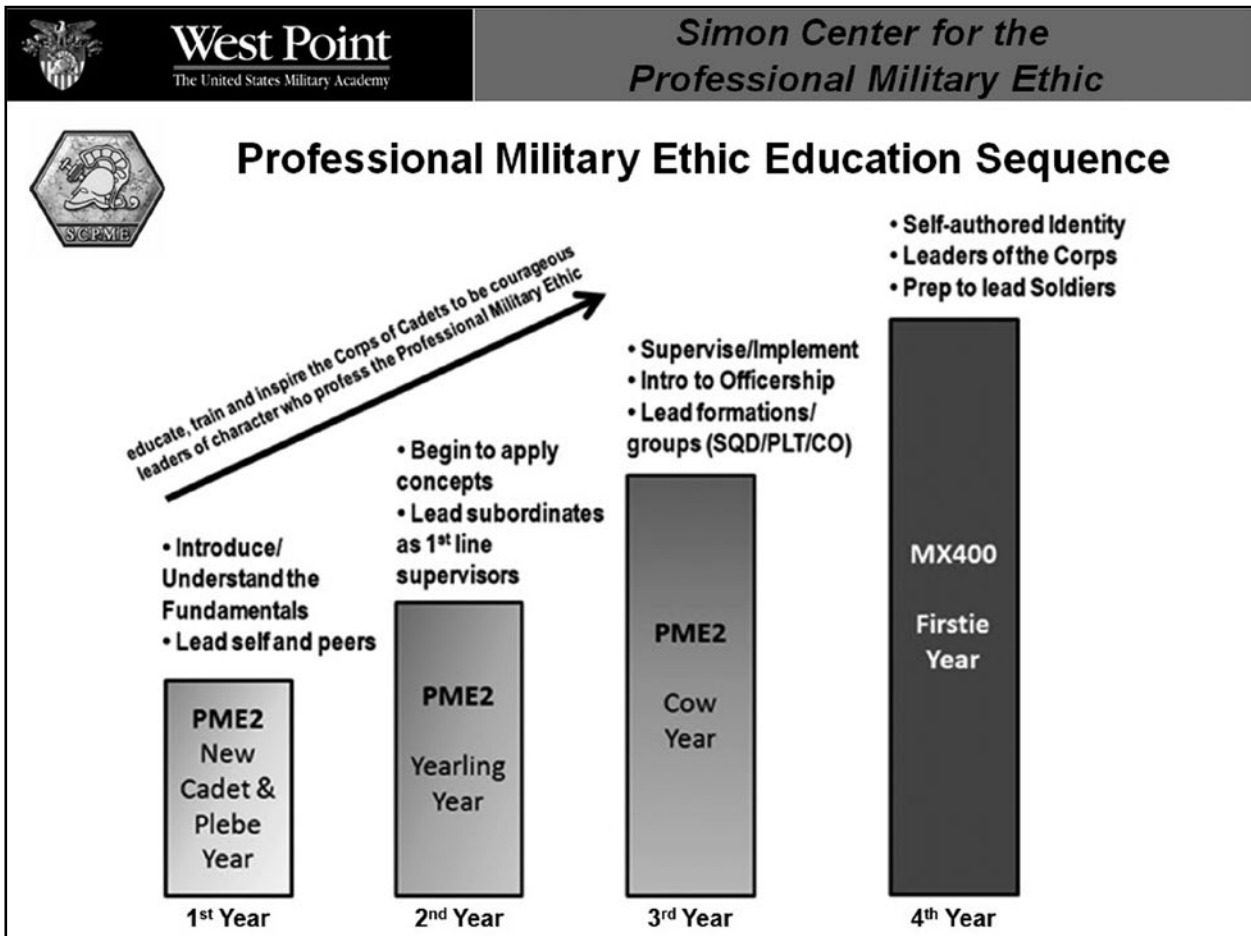
West Point also uses two explicit approaches; Professional Military Ethic Education (PME2) and a capstone academic course called MX400-Officership, to develop leaders of character (see Figure 1). These two programs are managed by West Point's William E. Simon Center for the Professional Military Ethic. The mission of PME2 is to educate, train and inspire the Corps of Cadets to be courageous leaders of character who profess, or own, the Professional Military Ethic. Cadets receive approximately 72-hours of professional military ethic education (including honor and respect education) through a combination of facilitator-led, small group discussions and dynamic guest speakers who support and reinforce the program's goals and objectives. These 72-hours begin soon after New Cadets arrive for Cadet Basic Training (CBT) and end at the conclusion of their junior year. PME2 allows cadets the opportunity to discuss, in small-group settings, many of the moral and ethical dilemmas which new officers may encounter when they join the Profession of Arms. Cadets can then

reflect on and assess their own established values—and then develop, redefine or reaffirm those values accordingly. Although attendance and participation is mandatory, PME2 classes are not graded. Class size varies; however, a typical PME2 class includes a faculty PME2 facilitator, a Cadet PME2 facilitator and approximately 15 Cadets.

Although the Simon Center prepares quality lesson plans with a multitude of references and supporting materials, the success of the PME2 program rests squarely on the shoulders of several hundred dedicated military and civilian volunteers representing numerous departments

and organizations across the Academy. These volunteers serve as the small group leaders who facilitate classroom discussion. Each of the 32 company Tactical Officers (TACs) are responsible to assign military or civilian volunteers to serve as the primary faculty facilitators for each lesson. In addition, each TAC assigns a Cadet facilitator – either a junior or senior -- to serve as the Cadet facilitator for the lesson. This company PME2 facilitating team then attends a preparatory session, usually about one week before the scheduled class, executed by the SCPME Education Officer. The preparatory session is designed to assist volunteers

Figure 1. Professional Military Ethic Education Sequence





as they prepare for their duties as small group facilitators. By attending the session, volunteers will gain a common level of understanding of the lesson's purpose and objectives, be introduced to the references and resources recommended by SCPME and be given the opportunity to exchange ideas and best practices with other PME2 facilitators.

PME2 classes include topics on Army Values and military service, academic integrity, cultural diversity, the ethical decision-making process, and officer conduct. For example, the fourth-class (freshman) year focuses on Army Values and the rules of ethical conduct at West Point. Some typical lesson topics are the Cadet Honor Code, equal opportunity, and sexual harassment. These classes are designed to enhance sensitivity to certain issues, promote an understanding of the rationale for the Army's Values and allow cadets to make a commitment to support the U.S. Constitution and the Honor Code. Cadets are challenged to reflect on their sense of what it means to be a commissioned officer. Cadets also, throughout the school year, receive assessments in terms of their adherence to the expected standards of professional and social conduct within the framework of Army Values (Military Program "Greenbook", 2005). This curriculum also includes mandatory seminars and lectures by guest speakers that talk on these same topics.

### **MX400 Officership**

Just completing its second year as a core academic course, MX400-Officership is the Superintendent's Capstone Course for senior cadets within the United States Military Academy's Cadet Leader Development System (CLDS). It takes over where PME2 left off. The genesis of this course came from the thoughts and ideas of General Frederick Franks, Jr. (Ret.):

*"There remains a need in the cadet curriculum for a common, culminating, integrating and transformational experience, designed to tie the various strands of officership instruction together at the end of the cadet career."*

Its purpose is to provide first class cadets some broad insights into what a prospective officer needs to Be, Know, and Do to be an effective and professional Army leader. The Superintendent's intent for MX400 is:

*West Point's Capstone Course for Officership (MX 400) provides all First Class Cadets a rigorous, interdisciplinary experience to complete initial development of their own personal and professional identity, their self concept of officership, as a leader of character, a warrior, a member of the profession, and a servant to the Nation, before graduation and commissioning from West Point as a second lieutenant in the US Army so they can better fulfill the trust placed in them in commanding and leading US Army Soldiers in combat.*

In essence, it is a culminating course in practical leadership as final preparation for their becoming commissioned officers and leading America's sons and daughters in combat. The course weaves three broad, interrelated themes – battle command, military professionalism, and military leadership—to highlight the four clusters of expert knowledge (military-technical, moral-ethical, human development, political-cultural) that undergird the Army's core competencies and the professional responsibilities of an Army officer (Gray & Turner, 2010). MX400 is structured in four instructional blocks that roughly parallel a professional Army officer's career. The first block, *Officership in Action: Battle Command*, serves as the course's prologue by introducing cadets to the profession as it is actually being practiced in the field. This subcourse

introduces the concept of battle command and the enduring importance of character, competence, and leadership for the military profession. An objective of the block, as affirmed by General Frederick Franks, Jr. (Ret.), is “to make the connection between past and present conflicts and the timeless lessons of *Battle Command*.” To help accomplish this, cadets have the opportunity to hear from and interact with various Battle Command speakers. Speakers have included well-known leaders, such as Fred Downs, author of *The Killing Zone*, who describes his experiences in Vietnam as a young Second Lieutenant; and Nate Self, author of *Two Wars*, who relays his experiences on Roberts Ridge as a Ranger Captain in Afghanistan. The second block, *The Military Profession*, concentrates on the common foundations of military professionalism. The third block, *The Company Grade Officer*, focuses on key foundational areas of expertise required by junior officers. The fourth and final block, *The Career Officer: Field Grade and Beyond*, centers on the increasing scope of responsibilities associated with leading large organizations and the greater demands placed on career officers’ political and cultural expertise as they progress to senior leadership positions.

Readings and classroom discussions throughout all blocks support each lesson’s conceptual foundations. Throughout each block tactical decision exercises, case studies or a leader challenge exercise provide cadets with hands-on opportunities to apply the various concepts developed within the course. For example, the Leader Challenges include “Shoot-Don’t Shoot” and other scenarios that require cadets to critically analyze and make decisions about ambiguous situations with limited information. They must make a quick, yet informed, decision to deal with the situation presented, and then collectively examine and discuss the actual results of the real-world situations.

The course also includes several guest lecturers, particularly Platoon Leaders and Company Commanders, but also more senior officers as well, to broaden cadets’ perspectives on officership, battle command, and leadership in the Army. Some key MX400 events include two iterations of Battle Command Speakers, a video teleconference with leaders on the ground in either Iraq or Afghanistan, a General Douglas MacArthur mock trial, a virtual tactical decision game, a Battle Command Gettysburg Staff Ride, and a Battle Command Conference.



Battle Command Speakers with GEN(R) Franks & COL Clark



Battle Command Gettysburg Staff Ride



Video Teleconference MG Scaparrotti's 82nd Airborne Division team in Afghanistan



GEN Douglas MacArthur Mock Trial

## MX400 Course Objectives

Successful completion of MX400 Officership will enable cadets to:

- a. Anticipate a range of military challenges and respond effectively by applying the warrior ethos, from a leader of character's perspective, using an appropriate moral/ethical framework that is attuned to political-cultural sensitivities and military-technical skills within a complex tactical scenario;
- b. Employ an integrated application of the Profession's four clusters of expert knowledge within hands-on tactical decision exercises and leader challenges;
- c. Analyze the life and career of a notable American Army officer to assess how that leader's life experiences and professional development prepared him or her for a professional military career, and reflect on how you as an officer might develop over the course of your own career;
- d. Execute the fundamental practices of the military professional—the repetitive exercise of discretionary judgment in decision making and performance of actions that fulfill the moral and legal responsibilities of commissioned officers – throughout the course's case studies and practical exercises.

## Faculty

The USMA faculty is made up of high quality Army officers that are proven leaders of character. They serve as outstanding models for the cadets and are devoted to both their academic and moral education. Research has shown that moral judgment can be acquired and changed by exposure to social models and is influenced by the social feedback one receives from these models (Royal & Baker, 2005). The majority of the faculty live at West Point, which allows them to meet cadets where and when required. Most staff and faculty are involved with some form of cadet extracurricular activity; this provides another opportunity for positive role model interaction. In addition, the student to faculty ratio is very low at USMA. Class size is usually around 18 and most classrooms are set up in seminar style to facilitate discussion. USMA also has a well-established Center for Teaching Excellence that helps the faculty develop and improve as academic and moral educators.

## Programs

The USMA sponsorship program is an integral part of the moral education of cadets. Its initial purpose is to provide a surrogate family to new cadets, which eases the traumatic experience of being away from

family and friends. However, this program also links cadets up with someone who is familiar with the Army and can help answer questions. Sponsors, who serve as role models, teach cadets about the real Army and what Army families are like. The power of modeling can be used to promote socially desired behavior (Arnson & O'Leary, 1983). Constructive guidance and mentorship are provided to cadets through this program.

All members of the Corps of Cadets live under the Cadet Honor Code: *"A Cadet will not lie, cheat, steal, or tolerate those who do."* Cadets are charged with maintaining, educating and enforcing this code. The non-toleration clause enables cadets to enforce professional standards of conduct and to police themselves. The autonomy given to the corps of cadets to implement this Honor System is an important concept, integral to the moral education program at USMA. The spirit of the code, which emanates throughout the entire environment of USMA, helps cadets embrace the ethical standards for leadership in the military. The Respect Program at USMA, which is relatively new, includes value instruction that strives to develop in every cadet the conviction that those around us should always be treated fairly and with dignity and respect. Cadets, as well as USMA faculty and staff, assist in the execution of the program by serving as values education instructors facilitating small group discussions. Faculty and staff share their Army experiences during the discussion. The Honor Code and Respect Program provide cadets positive setting in which to strengthen their ethical and moral development.

The Simon Center for the Professional Military Ethic (SCPME), dedicated at West Point in 2000, is made up of a staff that develops, integrates, and assesses programs and activities on the professional military ethic. The SCPME supports the academy's

mission by supervising the administration of the Cadet Honor and Respect System, developing and maintaining the program of instruction on the Professional Military Ethic and the capstone course on Officership, and conducting outreach initiatives. For example, SCPME hosts, annually, the National Conference on Ethics in America. This conference serves to promote awareness, among undergraduate students, of ethical issues in college and professional settings. More than 70 academic institutions from different parts of the country participate in this conference.

Moral-ethical development is innermost to the West Point experience. It is vital to the academic program and imbedded throughout the military and physical programs. Integrating moral education with scholastic learning in a way that enhances both is what USMA strives for. Because of the type of work that cadets will be called to do upon graduation, USMA places a greater emphasis on the importance of moral education than most other institutions. USMA must cultivate within the corps of cadets identification with, and loyalty to, the values and ethical standards of the Army. But just how well is USMA doing at developing leaders of character that seek to discover the truth, can decide what is right, and demonstrate the ability, courage, and commitment to act accordingly? Continued systematic and logical research is needed to answer this question. But as cadets graduate into the new war on terror, the importance of this research is poignantly obvious.

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