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## Warrior-Scholars at Yale: The Process of Seeking Yale Credit for a Naval Science Course

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### Abstract:

The goal of this project was to create a course that meets Yale's rigorous academic standards while simultaneously fulfilling the Navy's requirements for its Leadership and Management class. The purpose was to alleviate some of the immense burden that Yale's Naval ROTC students bear when it comes to balancing a Yale academic course load with those of the NROTC program. This paper will discuss briefly the history of Yale's Naval ROTC program because of its relevance to getting this course approved, as well as the process for course approval and methods for designing the syllabus. It will end with some lessons learned and suggestions for moving ahead.

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## **Project Overview**

The goal of this project was to create a course that meets Yale's rigorous academic standards while simultaneously fulfilling the Navy's requirements for its *Leadership and Management* class. The purpose was to alleviate some of the immense burden that Yale's Naval ROTC students bear when it comes to balancing a Yale academic course load with those of the NROTC program. This paper will discuss briefly the history of Yale's Naval ROTC program because of its relevance to getting this course approved, as well as the process for course approval and methods for designing the syllabus. It will end with some lessons learned and suggestions for moving ahead.

### **The History of the Yale Naval Reserve Officers' Training Corps**

Yale Naval ROTC began in 1926 along with five other units to become the first establishments of the program.<sup>1</sup> NROTC was created to enlarge the reserve forces in case the United States should go to war. Originally, few people who participated in the program during times of peace were required to do any active duty service. Yale would graduate thousands of men to serve in World War I and II, many of whom entered through the ROTC programs.

While Yale hosted both the original Army and Naval ROTC programs, the issue of academic credit for courses always plagued the relationship between the administration and the Departments of the Army and Navy. For Army ROTC, despite taking 16 hours of work over four years, Yale would only count seven of those hours toward degree completion and only

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<sup>1</sup> This portion of my essay has been adapted from research for my history senior essay, "A History of Yale and ROTC: The Military in the Realm of Academia."

after the student completed all four years of the program.<sup>2</sup> However, after World War II, President Charles Seymour decided to give more credit for the Army and Naval ROTC programs, setting a precedent that would last until 1969.

An additional issue that frequently came up between the Yale administration and the Department of Defense was how a particular person was chosen for duty at Yale. If ROTC was to receive credit for its courses, Yale wanted to have a say in who came to serve in the ROTC post. While the Departments of the Army and Navy always sent a letter asking for formal approval from Yale about the newly assigned officer being stationed at Yale, there was never a time when the incoming officer was rejected. Moreover, those officers received full faculty status as either the Professor of Military Science or of Naval Science, in addition to being residential college fellows. This would later become an issue when in the late 1960s when the faculty would decide that military officers did not deserve any faculty status since they often lacked advanced degrees and did not belong to academia as a profession.

In an attempt to rectify this problem before it happened, President Charles Seymour commissioned the Committee on Military and Naval Affairs to come up with proposals for the betterment of the ROTC programs in 1949. He also created a Faculty Advisory Committee that was tasked with reviewing all of the ROTC curriculum. Both committees determined that the ROTC curriculum needed work, but rather than offer the solution of de-crediting all of the courses, the Committee suggested that the ROTC instructors be paired with members of the

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<sup>2</sup> Yale College Course of Study 1916-1917, p. 22, The Student Army Training Corps, Yale University, Records, RU 88, Series I, Box 2, Folder 7.

faculty to both improve the quality of their teaching and to help develop a curriculum that met Yale standards.<sup>3</sup>

Over the course of the 1950s and most of the 1960s, the fact that ROTC received academic credit bothered few people. The programs were extremely popular, mostly because of the Selective Service Act. However, the recommendations of the Committee on Military and Naval Affairs remained a major part of the conversation in the administration. Another faculty committee met again to discuss ROTC and made more practical suggestions. They offered that rather than the ROTC programs teaching their own separate courses on international affairs and history, a member of the Yale faculty could teach one course that fulfilled the requirements for the ROTC programs.<sup>4</sup> This never came to fruition, but it would start a dialogue suggesting that the full academic credit status of ROTC was not merited. The *Yale Daily News* argued that ROTC should be reduced to extracurricular activity status in 1952.<sup>5</sup>

Despite these few whisperings, no substantial reforms or changes came to the ROTC programs. In November 1968, the Course of Study Committee sent a letter to Yale president, Kingman Brewster, detailing the reasons they felt ROTC should not receive academic credit. The letter lists the following criticisms: military appointment of staff members assigned to ROTC units without Yale ever rejecting a candidate; no oversight or approval from the Course of Study Committee regarding course content; admission of neighboring university students to ROTC

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<sup>3</sup> Preliminary Report of the Committee on Military and Naval Affairs, May, Yale University Council, May 6, 1949, Charles Seymour, Charles Seymour, President of Yale University, Records, RU 23, Series I, Box 164, Folder 1390.

<sup>4</sup> Report to A. Whitney Griswold from Thomas Mendenhall, Alfred Whitney Griswold, President of Yale University, Records, RU 22, Series I. Subject/Correspondence File, 1950-1963, Box 191, Folder 1728.

<sup>5</sup> "ROTC Reform," *Yale Daily News* (New Haven, CT), November 18, 1952.

programs thereby lowering the quality of course instruction; courses that are vocationally oriented; and the restricted freedom of ROTC students to act and live freely as liberal arts college students due to military standards of appearance and association.<sup>6</sup> The first two criticisms, those regarding appointment of staff members and lack of Course of Study approval, revealed themselves as the primary source of trouble for the Naval ROTC program at Yale.

The Course of Study Committee's concerns manifested themselves on January 30, 1969 when the Yale College faculty voted to reduce ROTC to extracurricular status, eliminate visiting faculty status for all ROTC instructors, and remove credit from all ROTC academic courses.<sup>7</sup> The Yale Corporation would later confirm this decision by the faculty. With that decided, the Department of the Navy would choose not to renew its contract with Yale, citing specifically the loss of academic credit. The last members of the program would graduate in 1972. It is odd that the Navy chose to leave Yale's campus since it would later have to concede on the issue of academic credit at most of the other institutions that it resided. Moreover, Yale's hesitations surrounding the academic status of the program had been well known throughout the entirety of the program.

In the fall of 2011, President Obama and the Department of Defense repealed the controversial policy known as Don't Ask, Don't Tell, which had forbidden homosexuals who serve in the military from being openly gay. After the repeal, President Richard Levin of Yale contacted Navy Secretary Ray Mabus to inquire about the possibility of having Naval ROTC

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<sup>6</sup> The Yale College Faculty voted no Thursday to approve the following resolution, The Reserve Officers Training Corps, Yale University, Records, RU 599, Accession 1971-A-005, Box 3, Folder 17.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

return to Yale. With that, contracts were signed, and the program came back after a forty-year hiatus in the fall of 2012. Both Yale and the Navy anticipated that the program would be small, but they wanted Yale to serve as a catalyst for the return of ROTC to other Ivy League campuses. To their surprise, the program now currently enrolls forty-six Yale students across all four class years, and that is only in Navy. The Air Force ROTC program also returned and has around twenty Yale students, in addition to students from a handful of neighboring universities.

The current academic schedule of a Yale student in Naval ROTC includes one Naval Science course each semester, a two-hour Naval Laboratory, and an hour-long physical training session per week. This is expected in addition to a full Yale course load and alongside the many extracurricular activity opportunities that exist at Yale. Moreover, the Naval Science courses and physical training take place at 7:30am, a time most Yale students could not imagine getting up at to attend a class. These Naval Science courses, required for a student to graduate NROTC and receiving no academic credit, must appear on a student's transcript. Thus, even though there is no academic credit, those classes still appear for any viewer of the transcript to see. This rigorous academic load is of course doable, as the program is about to graduate its first full class of NROTC students. However, the burden certainly affects GPAs, which impacts not just future prospects for graduate school and other jobs, but also standing across the nation in the NROTC program, which is used to determine what job you are selected for in the Navy.

Of the eight Naval Science courses required, two currently receive Yale credit, "Military History of the West Since 1600" taught by History Department professor, Paul Kennedy and "Ethics in War and Peace" co-taught by Professor Scott Shapiro of Yale Law School and CAPT Vernon Kemper, Commanding Officer of NROTC. While it is certain that not all of the NROTC

courses deserve Yale credit, certainly at least “Leadership and Management,” the one that I chose to re-design for this project, can exist in Yale’s curriculum. At Cornell University, NROTC students receive credit for a military history course and navigation, which is taught in the environmental engineering department. It may also be possible for naval engineering to receive credit should a faculty member take on the project of designing the curriculum to meet Yale and Navy standards, of which the Navy’s standards are extremely flexible.

The Commanding Officer of Naval ROTC technically holds the title, Professor of Naval Science, as an adjunct professor, who does not hold all of the rights given to faculty members. He also currently is a fellow at Morse College. The other officer staff at Yale hold no formal titles. Yale has no oversight on who comes to Yale’s NROTC unit from the Navy. Although, the Navy tries to uphold high standards for those coming to NROTC units in general.

This brief background contextualized the processes and challenges I faced throughout this project.

### **Syllabus Development**

To create a syllabus that reflects both the Navy and Yale’s standards, I first started with an examination of the current NAVY211 course entitled, “Leadership and Management,” which can be seen in “Attachment 1.” The original course draws from the Navy’s 400+ pages curriculum guide for the course that is given to all NROTC unit instructors. The course relies heavily on the use of a leadership and management textbooks for its foundations with a few staples in naval literature, such as *Saltwater Leadership: A Primer on Leadership for Junior Sea-Service Officer*. While the course currently serves its purpose, which is to solely fulfill the

objectives listed in the Navy's Officer Professional Core Competencies Manual, the course has much flexibility in how and what is taught.

The Professional Core Competencies outline the Navy's learning objectives for each class year and usually embody general principles. For example, one of the competencies for the leadership and management course reads: "Apply leadership skills to achieve objectives."<sup>8</sup> This core competency includes some sub-goals, but in general leave room for interpretation and implementation. This proved extremely helpful in the development of a new syllabus because it gave me the ability to be flexible and more focused on Yale standards, rather than on Navy objectives.

Originally, my methodology began with books on college teaching best practices. I quickly realized that not only would I not be teaching, but also those were not the sources I would be needing to fill syllabus. I quickly shifted my focus to creating an outline for what the course would look like. I decided to use a multidisciplinary approach to leadership, incorporating disciplines from across the liberal arts. The new course, entitled "Comparative Leadership," uses history, political science, psychology, and classical literature to approach the topic of leadership. In my view, this was the best way to create a well-rounded course that included many of the same themes as the original, while also taking a liberal arts approach that would be acceptable to Yale.

To account for the fact that the Naval Officer teaching the course is not an expert in any of these fields, I contacted Yale faculty members and experts in the field to see if they would be

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<sup>8</sup> United States Naval Academy Naval Service Training Command, "Officer Professional Core Competencies Manual," August 2015, 5.

interested in guest lecturing in several of the courses. I was able to find three professors that were interested with the possibility for others should the course be approved. Those professors were Charles Hill (classical literature), political science (Steven Smith), and psychology (David Caruso). Each agreed to teach two guest lectures using materials from their field to teach about leadership. The rest of the course would be taught by the active duty Naval Officer using texts and materials that I included in the syllabus.

Finding my own material for the syllabus proved difficult at first since I personally lack any experience developing curriculum or teaching the topic of leadership. However, I was able to find syllabi from other institutions similar to Yale that provided credible reading material and topics to add to the syllabus. Moreover, each instructor I met with to discuss teaching the guest lectures made further recommendations about relevant sources and topics with which they were familiar.

In addition to using Yale faculty and other elite institutions' syllabi, I reviewed Yale's guidelines for reading and writing page maximums. The syllabus meets all of the requirements and averages for a humanities or social sciences course and includes 100 to 175 pages of reading a week, a total of 20 pages of writing, and two group projects. The complete syllabus can be found in the attachment titled "Comparative Leadership-NAVY212."

I developed the course with the intent of it both fulfilling all of these requirements and also being appealing to all Yale students, NROTC or otherwise. While Yale often preaches that its students are all future leaders, it does not offer any opportunity for students to explore the implications of leadership or to consider the skills that the liberal arts can teach that are relevant to leadership. Moreover, the course would provide an opportunity for Yale students to

learn directly from a Naval Officer with years of experience as a leader in the world's most elite military. Overall, "Comparative Leadership" helps fill the gap in curriculum that Yale students are seeking and does so in a way that definitely is agreeable to Yale.

### **Course Approval Process**

In order for a course to be approved at Yale, several conditions must first be met. Many are a given if proposed by a Yale department, but such was not the case for this course since it must be listed under the Naval Science department and includes a non-faculty member as the instructor. The course also must ultimately be submitted and approved by Yale's Course of Study Committee.

Each step of this process proved difficult and ultimately resulted in the course not being put up for approval. I approached the political science department about housing the course and initially received positive feedback from the Director of Undergraduate Studies about it meeting departmental standards. He said that he would sign off on it so long as the head of the department did the same. Unfortunately, after speaking with the head of the department, it was determined that the course did not contain enough political science to be housed permanently under its department. The DUS said that it may have been considered as a one term course, but that it would not be possible for a permanent course in the political science department. Because of the extremely narrow focus that each department holds at Yale, I could not think of any other place that the course could be cross-listed under.

The disapproval of the political science department happened after talking with an administrator, who is both a member of the Course of Study Committee and the ROTC liaison. The administrator said that a course such as leadership did not necessarily belong in the Yale

curriculum and implied that a Naval Officer was not fit to teach a course permanently housed under a Yale department. He suggested perhaps having the course taught as a residential college seminar, but the approval process for those rests solely with students from the residential colleges, who choose which courses they want their college to host. In addition, the administrator was reluctant to the idea of pushing the Naval Science course through quickly. He said that it was a nice proposal, but that there was no need to rush since it would likely be disapproved by the Course of Study Committee.

The last hurdle came unexpectedly from the NROTC staff, who also saw little urgency for getting the course passed. The instructor hesitated about the work that teaching the course to Yale standards would require citing his other work responsibilities. I found this astonishing since Yale's active duty staff includes six active-duty officers and one enlisted Marine. This begs the question of whether Yale's NROTC staff are serious about their commitment to serving Yale's students. However, I believe that this could have been easily overcome should the course have been passed.

At an ROTC Advisory Committee meeting, the course was discussed with the administrator, the NROTC staff, and the AFROTC staff. The plan seemed tentatively to find a Yale faculty member who would teach all of the course. The problems with that are many in my opinion, but I will enumerate the primary two. Firstly, it limits interaction of NROTC and AFROTC students with the officer staff that are being paid to teach and develop them as future military officers. Second, the course's success and continuation then relies entirely on the one faculty member agreeing to continue teaching the course. Ultimately, as some sort of

consolation, those involved told me that I had done great work and said they were sure that something akin to what I have developed would manifest itself in years to come.

### **Lessons Learned**

Throughout this process, I have learned three lessons. First, interdisciplinary curriculum does not and cannot exist at Yale. Second, that bureaucracy is slow, mostly unchangeably, and difficult to overcome. Third, that there is opportunity for much more work to be done to improve the status of NROTC at Yale.

The inability for me to find a department in which I could house this newly designed course serves as simple enough proof that Yale does not support interdisciplinary learning. If I were to do this project over again, I would choose to focus on only one of the many disciplines that I incorporated to make it more likely for the course to be adopted by a department. This necessity to focus narrowly is honestly a shame and a loss to the course material, which I believe wholeheartedly is best taught in a multi-disciplinary context. Yale should consider the losses it is suffering to its curriculum from the liberal arts becoming ever more specialized and specific. Students are leaving with less and less general knowledge, which makes them less adaptable and less developed as scholars.

The Yale administration and its bureaucracy exist in full force and put up barriers only for specific groups, such as ROTC. If any other department had proposed this course and the Course of Study Committee did not have knowledge that it was designed by a student or for the fulfillment of NROTC requirements, I am confident that it would have easily passed. Several classes in my Yale career have required much less work than the syllabus I created, lacked any oversight from the administration, and were extremely easy. If those courses can exist at Yale, I

can see no viable reason that the course I created cannot. Moreover, Yale extends faculty status to many who do not hold advanced degrees because of their professional expertise. The military, and ROTC instructors in particular, should be no different.

Lastly, much work is obviously left to be done. While NROTC is still new at Yale, both the NROTC program and the Yale administration should be actively engaging and working toward institutionalization of the program into Yale's structure and bureaucracy. NROTC should be provided similar benefits to those of an athletic team. It is an arm of Yale that far exceeds that of a simple extracurricular activity. Yale should work to carve out processes and structures that support ROTC and its goals to better its curriculum or make adjustments to improve the quality of life for NROTC students. These processes would be flexible for the rate of turnover that exists in the NROTC staff and would outlast any particular staff member's own initiative.

Overall, I do not regret taking on this project. I learned a lot about the processes and institutions at Yale that make improving NROTC difficult. I plan to continue working as an advocate for the NROTC program as an alumna and as a board member for the Yale Veterans Association. I firmly believe in the importance of maintaining a well-supported NROTC unit at Yale and in the benefit that the program brings to Yale's campus and to the Naval Officer Corps. Yale should continue to uplift and support students who wish to serve in the United States Navy and welcome the opportunities that the NROTC brings for bridging the civil-military divide, as well as continuing the tradition of a civilian-educated and run military.

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