



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

DIVISION OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously-funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the current guidelines, which reflect the most recent information and instructions, at <https://www.neh.gov/grants/education/dialogues-the-experience-war>

Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Education Programs staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: Hard Journeys Home: A Book Group for Justice-Involved Veterans

Institution: Maine Humanities Council

Project Director: Beth Elizabeth Sinclair and Jan Bindas-Tenney

Grant Program: Dialogues on the Experience of War

INTELLECTUAL RATIONALE AND OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM

*They were sitting hushed in silence, listening
To the great harper as he sang the tale
Of the hard journeys home that Pallas Athena
Ordnained for the Greeks on their way back from Troy.
Odyssey, 1.342-45*

Hard Journeys Home is a multi-session facilitated reading and discussion program for justice-involved Maine Veterans. The program is designed for Veterans who are either incarcerated or participants in an adjudicated diversionary program through the Maine Co-Occurring Disorders and Veterans Court (Veterans Court). The project considers the impacts of deployment on justice-involved Veterans, their families, their communities, civilians living in war zones, and society at large. For justice-involved Veterans who are “serving time” long after their time in the service has ended, the program provides perspectives on the ripple effects of war, including opening space to consider incarceration in this context. Through the reading and discussion of a diverse collection of ancient and contemporary humanities texts, the project will:

1. Provide a Veteran-centered setting and context for justice-involved Veterans to connect with one another, build relationships, and share their experiences.
2. Allow participants to give voice to and reflect upon issues of particular interest or concern.
3. Engage with materials that encourage participants to make connections between their own experience and the experiences of others across time and culture.

It is important for Veterans to reflect together on their service, and shared experience of humanities texts can provide a highly effective context for this reflection. Maine Veterans have told us that the Maine Humanities Council’s Veterans Book Groups provide a rare opportunity for Veterans to meet and reflect together. Our groups offer an opportunity for more focused reflection than incidental or purely social interactions can provide. Coming together to read and discuss

literature is healing, but it isn't clinical. It's social; but it isn't *merely* social. For the Veterans of Maine, this program is a unique and important opportunity to connect deeply with fellow Veterans.

For justice-involved Veterans, the need is amplified. Social isolation is a major concern for Maine's Veterans, generally. Our partners who work regularly with justice-involved Veterans have told us that involvement with the justice system, and particularly incarceration, greatly *increases* the problems associated with social isolation. For many Veterans, homecoming is an experience of alienation and disorientation. People and places that were once familiar become foreign.

Incarceration and justice system involvement represent a secondary rupture of social and familial bonds, deepening isolation, loneliness and disorientation. Humanities programming in these settings and with these participants is among the most important work we can be doing.

The program syllabus explores the experiences of war from multiple perspectives across time through stories, poems, and essays, as well as consideration of war memorials. We include readings representing viewpoints of diverse cultures, race and ethnicity, and gender, seeking the benefits for participants that are to be gained by listening carefully to voices and perspectives that have been underrepresented, requiring participants to stretch their empathy and imagination beyond the literal walls of their current context. The syllabus also includes materials from the perspective of military family members, American civilians, and civilians living in war zones. The program incorporates readings on a common theme from multiple perspectives in each session.

We use both ancient and contemporary resources in each session. In part, this is meant to emphasize that many themes and stories are universal – they connect Veterans across time and culture. The contemporary sources on the syllabus are varied, making use of multiple genres and providing a diversity of viewpoints. Although most of the contemporary materials relate either to the Vietnam War or the contemporary conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, we also include materials relating to World War II and World War I, as well as conflicts in Somalia and South Africa. This

multiplicity of perspectives will encourage discussions that can include – but also see beyond – individualized experiences and points of view.

The ancient texts on the syllabus are Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. We know from experience that it takes additional effort and preparatory work for participants to get rooted and oriented in ancient texts. By focusing on the Homeric epics, we will be able to provide the necessary background and context that will allow participants to dig in and go deeper into the text.

Our syllabus has an outward trajectory. It begins with the interior experiences of war with several firsthand accounts. Then we move to the Veteran’s attempt to articulate the experiences of war to another person and the problems associated with telling that story. We then move on to consider deployment from the family perspective, with several accounts from spouses across the eras. We continue “outward” to consider the experience of civilians living through war. In the last session, we zoom out even further to consider the impact of war on society as a whole, including public remembrances and issues around welcoming Veterans home. Throughout, the thematic elements that run through the discussion sessions are: Service & Patriotism, Loyalty & Brotherhood, Harm & Forgiveness, Empathy & Imagination. These themes will permeate the discussions in each session.

Good questions are the key to good discussion, and the best questions are those without easy answers. Often these questions have multiple compelling – sometimes even competing or contradictory – answers. For each session listed on the syllabus, we offer a brief list of guiding questions about the texts. For instance, we ask, “What is at the root of the tension between Odysseus and Penelope?” The answer can be ambiguous, and it opens opportunity to explore the nature of trust between spouses, especially after absence, as well as issues of interpersonal trust more generally. Guiding questions help participants feel comfortable in the face of challenging or unfamiliar readings. They focus participants’ attention and give participants an idea of where the discussion might go before the group begins. We include additional examples of guiding questions in the attached schedule and syllabus for the discussion program.

The Maine Humanities Council began working with Maine Veterans in 2014, following an invitation by NEH to develop and pilot a multi-session facilitated reading and discussion program for Veterans. That pilot program was well received by Maine's Veteran community, and the Council subsequently submitted a successful proposal through the Dialogues on the Experience of War program within the Standing Together initiative. That project, the Council's *Veterans Book Group* program, was completed in 2017. Designed for non-incarcerated Veterans, it included a small experimental element designed to test whether the program could be effective in corrections settings. As part of that experiment, we developed and delivered the program for justice-involved Veterans in partnership with the Kennebec County Sheriff's Office and the Maine Judicial Branch. Programs were presented in the Veterans block at the Kennebec County Correctional Facility and in conjunction with the Maine Co-Occurring Disorders and Veterans Court. Evaluation responses from participants, partner organizations, and program facilitators were overwhelmingly positive, and the current proposal represents a substantial step to build on our experience from the experimental pilot and move toward offering the program on a fully statewide scale.

Over the 24 months of the grant period, the Maine Humanities Council will run 10 Veterans Book Group programs for justice-involved Veterans: Vet Court sites in Augusta (1 program per year) and Portland (1 program in year 2). It will be offered both years at the Kennebec County Jail (1 program per year) and the Maine State Prison (1 program per year). In the second year of the project we intend to offer programs at the Somerset County Jail (1 program), the Aroostook County Jail (1 program), and Mountain View Correctional Facility (1 program). Upon successful completion of the grant period, we expect to continue offering programming with these partners. All host institutions have committed to offering the program in partnership with the Council.

This work will be supported by Maine Humanities Council staff, which developed and implemented the Council's previous Veterans Book Group programming. Program Officer Jan Bindas-Tenney works year-round on the Council's Veteran programming, building and maintaining

relationships with partner organizations and supporting facilitators in their work. We will work closely with leadership staff at each of our partner organizations, including correctional institutions, the Maine State judiciary, and Veteran-serving organizations. We have also recruited a Project Advisory Board, which will convene prior to the start of the program, as well as at the midpoint and after its completion.

DESIGN, CONTENT, AND IMPLEMENTATION

A. PREPARATORY PROGRAM FOR NEH DISCUSSION LEADERS

The Maine Humanities Council will present a one-day preparatory program for NEH Discussion Leaders, held in a central location to allow participation of program leaders from around the state. The daylong training is designed to include scholars who will be trained as NEH Discussion Leaders, as well as Veteran co-facilitators and host site liaisons for each site. We have learned that Veterans groups work best when the scholar and the Veteran co-facilitator work together as a team in planning and implementing the program. Because of the unique circumstances of offering a program for justice-involved Veterans, it will also be essential to include participation of liaison staff from each host site. The preparatory program will be a valuable opportunity for the leadership team for each program site to begin working together and to experience a shared day of orientation and training. Moreover, for partner organizations unaccustomed to hosting humanities-based programs, participation in the preparatory program will provide important insights into what the program will look like and the thinking behind it. A primary goal of the preparatory program will be to build a strong cohort of program leaders who can support each other throughout the duration of the project.

In addition to the leaders for the initial program sites, we will include potential leaders for future sites. Since the preparatory program will bring together a unique collection of content expertise and deep facilitation training experience, we feel that it is important to leverage this opportunity to allow as many potential leaders as possible to receive the benefit of the training.

The preparatory program will be divided into these segments:

Orientation to the Book Groups (Project Director Elizabeth Sinclair) –This orientation session will describe how the program works including its goals, logistical roles, and what Veterans have said about the program. The session will include information from the MHC’s Veteran Book Group Handbook, which will be distributed to all participants, and other support materials. (To view the Handbook, visit <http://mainehumanities.org/dialogues-on-the-experience-of-war/>.)

A Taste of the Experience (Dr. Greg Fahy and James Orr, Veteran Mentors of Maine) – The best way to understand the program is to experience it. Dr. Fahy and Mr. Orr have co-facilitated pilot Veterans Book Group programs for Veterans at the Kennebec County Correctional Facility and for Maine’s first Veterans Court. They will co-facilitate a discussion of Phil Klay’s essay, “After War: a Failure of Imagination,” followed by reflection on the process.

Facilitating Text-Based Discussions (Dr. Fahy) – Dr. Fahy has skillfully facilitated many inquiry-based humanities programs for the Council. He will lead a session on facilitating a text-based discussion for a public humanities program. The session will include recommendations and best practices for leading successful groups. Topics will include the role of the facilitator, setting ground rules, creating a safe environment for discussion, approaches to dealing with challenging situations, and the artful balance of keeping discussions focused and open to where the group wants to go.

Introduction to Military Culture (Dr. Cliff Trott, Team Leader, Portland Vet Center) – The session will include pertinent information on military history, terminology, and organizational structure, the perceived gap between civilians and Veterans, as well as special considerations and best practices for working with Veterans. This session will be directed primarily at civilian NEH Discussion Leaders and will have the added benefit of providing an opportunity for Veteran co-facilitators to share their expertise.

The Culture of the Criminal Justice System (Warden Randall Liberty, Maine State Prison with assistance from Maine Pre-Trial) – The session will orient NEH Discussion Leaders and Veteran co-facilitators to the criminal justice setting, its parameters, safety measures and guidelines. This session will focus on the particular context and needs of participants who are justice system involved.

Close Reading of Texts (Dr. Jeannine Uzzi, and Robert Farnsworth) – This final session will provide training and modeling of how to do close reading of both ancient and contemporary texts. Dr. Uzzi will offer advice and instruction on how to lead groups in close reading of Homer, and Mr. Farnsworth will provide an introduction to close reading of poetry, with a special emphasis on how to do this with groups who are unaccustomed to reading poetry.

NEH Discussion Leaders will be encouraged to explore the MHC’s Veterans Book Group Study Guide, as well as read the following scholar-recommended resources: Greg Nagy’s *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Poetry*, pp. 1-42 (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Paul Fussell’s *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford University Press, 1977) and G.J. Meyer’s *A World Undone: The Story of the Great War, 1914 to 1918* (Random House Publishing Group, 2006); Jonathan Shay’s *Achilles in Vietnam* and *Odysseus in America*; Bernard Knox’s introductory essay in Fagle’s *Iliad* (Penguin, 1998); Sheila Murnaghan’s introductory essay in Lombardo’s *Odyssey* (Hackett, 2000).

NEH Discussion Leader recruitment will follow the Maine Humanities Council’s long-established successful recruiting practices. Maine is a very small state, with a close-knit academic community. Experience has taught us that the most effective way to identify and recruit qualified new scholars for public humanities programs is through personal relationships within the state’s college and university community. Project Director Sinclair will meet with each potential NEH Discussion Leader to assess whether she or he would be a good match both for the program and the particular group. They will discuss the scholar’s background, interests, and experience facilitating

public humanities programs. This highly detailed, hands-on approach to recruitment of NEH Discussion Leaders will ensure a qualified and energetic group of scholars to lead the program.

B. DISCUSSION GROUPS FOR MILITARY VETERANS

Discussion Group Participants and Structure

Over the course of the grant period, the Maine Humanities Council will offer 10 separate programs for justice-involved Maine Veterans. These will be divided among three different types of program settings: three programs in partnership with Maine's Veterans Court, an adjudicated diversionary program for Veterans, whose mission is to reduce the risk of recidivism, enhance public safety, and improve the quality of life for defendants and their families through early, continuous, and intensive judicially supervised integrated treatment and other appropriate rehabilitation services. Second, four programs in county jails in Kennebec, Aroostook, and Somerset Counties. Typically, Veterans incarcerated in county jails are either being held prior to trial or are serving sentences of less than a year. Third, three programs at state prison facilities. Incarcerated Veterans in Maine's prisons have been convicted and are serving sentences of longer than one year.

The different settings for the program bring different challenges and constraints. Achieving continuity of participation can be difficult for jail programs, where inmates move in and out of the population fairly rapidly. Veterans Court participants have many demands on their time, including meetings with the judge, mandated addiction counseling, and so on. Security concerns and disciplinary actions can disrupt scheduling and participation in prison-based programs. These kinds of considerations require us to exercise a greater than usual level of flexibility with the program. Although our baseline syllabus calls for six 90-minute meetings, we will work closely with our site partners for each program to adjust the program for maximum effectiveness based on setting.

Of course, it is impossible for the Council to control how many Veterans will be available for participation at each site. For each program site, we have discussed the need to have enough

participants to sustain meaningful discussion, and each site has indicated that their population is sufficient for running a successful program.

Each group will be co-led by a trained NEH Discussion Leader and a Veteran co-facilitator who is familiar with local needs and considerations. Our experience has taught us that having a Veteran in a primary leadership role within the group helps to keep the group on-track and Veteran-focused. This role is key: 91% of Veterans participating in MHC Veteran programs felt it important to have a Veteran involved in planning and offering the groups, and scholars have agreed. The Veteran co-facilitator works closely with the NEH Discussion Leader to help select discussion topics and provides feedback on the texts. Moreover, the Veteran co-facilitator can help group members be more at ease in the unfamiliar context of a humanities-based discussion group and can lend credibility to the NEH Discussion Leader – a point that is especially important when the scholar is a civilian. In addition, the Veteran can provide informal support in the event that a text proves to be difficult for participants, something Veterans and VA staff have told us is vitally important.

Humanities Readings and Resources

The syllabus attends to concerns that a Veterans' book group must address. Based on our experience we are realistic about the amount of reading that can reasonably be accomplished and have avoided full epic poems and novels. Instead, the syllabus includes excerpts from epic poems, poetry, short stories, and essays. In addition to this mix of genres, we include a variety of perspectives, from that of the mythic hero Achilles in the heat of battle (*Iliad*) to that of a young woman on a convoy in Iraq in the 2000s ("Convoy Day"). The ancient texts address the Trojan War, which might be described as mythological. The modern portion of the syllabus offers a variety of Veterans' voices from wars with which the participants are likely to have firsthand experience.

By placing modern and ancient texts in dialogue, we hope to foreground the common thread of storytelling about the human experience of war. The syllabus includes texts that address our key

themes but which are rich and variable enough to allow individual facilitators and participants to focus on issues that arise organically within a particular group.

In session one, the NEH Discussion Leader introduces and provides background to Homer, the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*. The session begins with a discussion of the appeal of the Homeric epics across time and space, and background on the Trojan War. In this session, participants also conduct a close reading and discussion of three contemporary poems: “Lost in Translation”, “Katayusha Rockets”, and “From Personal Effects”. The three poems follow the overall trajectory of the reading list: the direct experiences of war, the difficulty of coming home, and the larger impact on all of us. As with all poems included in the reading list, participants will read these poems aloud several times to slow down and open the poems for discussion. Participants will be encouraged to consider many possible interpretations for each poem.

In session two, participants read four first-hand accounts from service members about the experiences of war, all working in distinct occupations and serving in different eras: Patroclus and Achilles in the *Iliad* Books 9 and 16, a woman nurse serving in World War I in “The Interval”, infantrymen in Vietnam in “The Things They Carried”, and a woman on a security detail in Iraq in “Convoy Day”. In this session, participants explore the themes of service and patriotism, loyalty and brotherhood. Book 9 of Homer’s *Iliad* finds Achilles’ brothers-in-arms begging him to come back to battle and offering him three separate arguments as to why warriors should and do fight. Achilles’ ultimately succumbs to the argument that he should follow an honorable heroic code. This Book invites discussion on the imperative to serve, heroism, and patriotism. Book 16 explores the intimate relationship between Achilles and Patroclus and more generally the intense emotional connection between warriors. “The Things They Carried” takes a look at the theme of brotherhood in the modern context of the Vietnam War, inviting dialogue about the bonds formed in the course of service as evidenced in the texts and in the real life experiences of the Veterans in the group. In “Convoy Day”

and “The Interval” participants find opportunity consider the reality of service: both the high-tension action and the tedium of a combat zone in the in-between moments.

In session three, participants read three selections about Veterans attempting to articulate the experiences of war. Book 8 of Homer’s *Odyssey* is something of a fantasy homecoming for Odysseus. Instead of landing on Ithaca, he lands on the island of Phaeacia, among people who do not know war. Many Veterans imagine a homecoming for themselves that does not come to fruition when they actually come home, inviting participants to consider the imagined homecoming and the actual homecoming in the text and in their lived experiences, touching on the themes of empathy and imagination as well as service and patriotism. In Book 9, Odysseus becomes the bard and regales the Phaeacians with tales of his travels and troubles. Book 9 finds direct commonality with “How to Tell a True War Story” as well as “Memorial Day Pow-Wow” as both of these modern texts delve into the problem of speaking about war and combat for Veterans. Participants discuss the role of storytelling in the Veteran experience, why Veterans choose to tell or not tell their stories. Finally the session considers the role of ceremony in Veteran efforts to articulate their stories and what, if any, ceremonies exist in our society to facilitate Veteran homecoming, touching on the themes of service and patriotism.

In session four, participants read three accounts across the eras on the impact of deployment on families. Participants read about Odysseus’ homecoming to his wife Penelope in Books 13 and 19 of the *Odyssey*, a contemporary short story from the perspective of an Iraq War Veteran’s wife in “Tips for a Smooth Transition”, and the experience of loss and absence of a spouse whose service member husband does not return home in the poem “The Long Deployment”. In Book 13, Odysseus finally arrives in Ithaca and does not recognize his ancestral home. This speaks to the experience of many Veterans: they do not recognize home and home does not recognize them. Odysseus employs various deceptions and disguises to investigate home before revealing himself to his family. In Book 19, Penelope does not acknowledge or appear to recognize Odysseus. Alongside the modern text

“Tips for a Smooth Transition,” Veteran participants consider the impact of service on intimate partners. Participants discuss how family members and service members build trust and what actions undermine that trust, how they test and deceive one another, addressing the themes of harm and forgiveness. Finally considering the poem “The Long Deployment,” participants discuss loss and absence in the context of service.

In session five, participants read accounts by civilians who lived through conflict and the impact on their lives via the *Iliad* Books 22 and 24, the story of a German family living through World War II in “The People’s War: A German Family’s Story”, a Somali family fleeing Mogadishu in “How We Left Mogadishu”, a refugee family in South Africa in “The Ultimate Safari”, and an American living thousands of miles from the war zone in the poem “We Lived Happily During the War”. These texts create space around the themes of harm and forgiveness as well as empathy and imagination. The *Iliad* Book 22 finds Achilles killing and beginning to mutilate Hector’s body. In Book 24 Achilles makes an about-face, expressing compassion for his enemy and returns Hector’s body to Priam. Participants consider Achilles through the themes of harm and forgiveness. “The People’s War: A German Family’s Story,” “How We Left Mogadishu,” and “The Ultimate Safari” all look at combat from the perspective of civilians living through and attempting to flee conflict. These texts ask Veteran participants to imagine the difference between the experiences of civilians and combatants. The combatant experience is noticeably absent from the modern texts, inviting participants to consider what these same stories might look like from the soldier’s perspective. The final poem, “We Lived Happily During the War” considers civilians back home and their disconnection from the theater of combat.

In session six, participants consider the ripple effects of war by reading accounts from service members and civilians about the aftermath of war and the problem of memorializing war. The session includes three Wilfred Owen poems written about World War I “Ducle et Decorum Est,” “Arms and the Boy,” and “Disabled.” These are paired with a contemporary prose poem,

“Monument”, which is in the voice of an architect tasked with memorializing the war. The session also includes photographs of war memorials as well as two contemporary essays about the gulf of misunderstanding that often exists between Veterans and civilians: “After War, a Failure of Imagination” and “I Miss Iraq. I Miss My Gun. I Miss My War.” This session considers the impact of war and service on all of us. The three Owen poems demonstrate the impact of service over time on the service member touching on dichotomy of hope, heroism, patriotism and disconnection. “Monument” considers the problem of memorializing war, opening up questions about how best to collectively remember the experiences of war. These texts relate to themes of service and patriotism as well as empathy and imagination.

Locations, Participant Recruitment, and Other Considerations

The program will take place at the Maine State Prison, the Mountain View Correctional Institution, the Kennebec County Jail, Aroostook County Jail, and Somerset County Jail. There will be additional sites located in Augusta and Portland to serve participants in Maine’s Veterans Court. Selection of participants will be at the discretion of administrative authorities at each site. We have spoken with the leadership teams at each facility and the Veterans Court, and in every case the leadership has been enthusiastic about offering the program and making it possible for justice-involved Veterans to participate.

PROJECT FACULTY AND STAFF

MHC Director of Programs Elizabeth Sinclair will serve as Project Director. Jan Bindas-Tenney will serve as Program Officer. Dr. Jeannine Uzzi (University of Southern Maine) and Dr. Gregory Fahy (University of Maine at Augusta) have both had extensive experience leading Veterans Book Group programs in Maine and will serve as lead advisors as well as NEH Discussion Leaders. Dr. Jeffrey Sychterz (University of Maine Augusta at Bangor), Sam Boss (Bates College), Melinda

Plastas (Bates College) have also led Veterans Book Group and will serve as advisors and NEH Discussion Leaders. Other advisors include Veterans and session co-facilitators: Dr. Cliff Trott (Portland Vet Center), Nancy Laffin-Gillespie (Lewiston Vet Center), James Orr (Veteran Mentors of Maine), and Norman Lawrence (Veteran Mentors of Maine). Crucial site partners and advisors include Justice Nancy Mills (Maine Veterans Court), Warden Randall Liberty (Maine State Prison), Joseph Fagnant (Houlton Hodgdon Adult & Community Education, Aroostook County Jail), Marsha Higgins (Mountain View Correctional Facility), Susan Knight (Somerset County Jail). Additional partners who have contributed to program development include Anne Archibald (VA Maine Healthcare System), Elizabeth Simoni (Maine Pretrial Services), and Ken Mason (Kennebec County Sheriff).

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The Maine Humanities Council uses humanities disciplines to effect positive change for Maine communities. Our programs and grants encourage critical thinking and conversations across social, economic, and cultural boundaries. The Council is committed to the principle that the humanities can reach audiences of all backgrounds in ways that make a significant difference in their lives. As a statewide nonprofit, the MHC has cultivated major institutional as well as grassroots partnerships throughout the state of Maine.

Through the award-winning program *Literature & Medicine*, the MHC has worked for nearly twenty years with medical personnel serving the Veteran population. This expertise enabled the development of Veterans Book Group in 2014 and a subsequent NEH Standing Together grant in 2016. MHC's staff has extensive experience in working with scholars, Veteran communities, and Maine's correctional institutions, and this project will benefit greatly from those relationships.

Collaboration will be essential to the success of the project, and throughout we will be partnering with the following organizations: VA Maine HealthCare, Maine State Prison, Houlton

Adult Education/Aroostook County Jail, Mountain View Correctional Facility, Somerset County Jail, Lewiston Vet Center, Veteran Mentors of Maine, Maine Pretrial Services, Portland Vet Center, and the Maine Veterans Court. Each correctional facility and Vet center provides staff members and organizational leaders who are deeply invested in this initiative and are eager to implement it within their organizations.

EVALUATION

Since 2014, the Maine Humanities Council has worked with the Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts to develop survey instruments to assess the Council's reading and discussion program for Veterans. Our comprehensive program evaluation seeks input from program participants, scholars, and Veteran co-facilitators, as well as site liaisons. There has been a high return rate for the surveys yielding actionable items for improving the program. We will use separate evaluation instruments for the preparatory program for NEH Discussion Leaders and for the discussion groups themselves.

Our evaluation instruments ask questions about the quality and relevance of the readings, the issues raised, and participant comfort with both the reading level and the tone of the readings. We ask similar questions about the discussions themselves to assess the facilitation of the group, especially the Veterans' comfort and the quality of discussions and the skill of the NEH Discussion Leader. Veteran response to the groups has been extremely enthusiastic. The surveys help us gain a more concrete understanding of what Veterans value about the groups, their idea of other topics and texts, and how we can better prepare and support the scholar and Veteran co-facilitator to improve how they work with one another.

Hard Journeys Home Preparatory Program
August 2019

Readings: (please read in advance)

- Background and logistics: Veterans Book Group Program materials; background materials on historical context of readings (see list of additional resources).
- *American Journal: Poems for Our Time* edited by Tracy K. Smith, poems: “From Personal Effects,” “The Long Deployment,” “We Lived Happily During the War” (Graywolf Press, 2018);
- *The Essential Homer* translated & edited by Stanley Lombardo, selections: *Odyssey* Books 8, 9, 13, 19 (Hackett Publishing Company, 2000) and *Iliad* Books 9, 16, 22, 24;
- *Powder: Writing by Women in the Ranks, from Vietnam to Iraq* edited by Lisa Bowden and Shannon Cain: “Memorial Day Pow-Wow” by Dr. Donna Dean, “Lost in Translation” by Sharon D. Allen, “Convoy Day” by Victoria A. Hudson, LTC. (Kore Press, 2008);
- *The Things They Carried* by Tim O’Brien: “The Things They Carried” and “How to Tell a True War Story.” (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009).
- All other texts are in the binder.

7:30a.m. **Continental Breakfast**

8a.m. **Welcome and Introductions** (Dr. Hayden Anderson, Executive Director and Lizz Sinclair, Director of Programs, Maine Humanities Council)

8:30a.m. **Overview of the Veterans Book Group program** (Lizz Sinclair, Director of Programs, and Jan Bindas-Tenney, Program Officer, Maine Humanities Council)

- Overview and goals
- The roles and responsibilities of the scholar, Veteran Co-Facilitator, MHC staff

8:45a.m. **A Taste of the Experience** (Dr. Greg Fahy, University of Maine at Augusta, and James Orr, Veteran Mentors of Maine)

- Discussion of “After War: a Failure of Imagination” by Phil Klay (Iraq; essay)
- Reflection on the process

9:30a.m. BREAK

9:45a.m. **Facilitating Text-Based Discussions** (Dr. Fahy)

11a.m. **Military Culture**

- Introduction to military culture (Dr. Cliff Trott, Team Leader and Veteran, Portland Vet Center and Veteran Co-Facilitator)
- What this means for facilitation

12p.m. LUNCH

1p.m. **The Culture of the Maine Criminal Justice System**

- Introduction to culture of the criminal justice system (Warden Randall Liberty, Maine State Prison, Susan Knight, Education Coordinator for Somerset County Jail, and Elizabeth Simoni, Executive Director of Maine Pre-Trial)
- What this means for facilitation

2p.m. **Close Reading of Texts** (Dr. Jeannine Uzzi, Classics Scholar and Provost at University of Southern Maine, and Robert Farnsworth, Assistant Professor and Lecturer (Writer-in-Residence), Depart. of English, Bates College (ret.))

- Classical Texts– Historical context; close reading from the epics, *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*.
- Modern Texts– Approaches to facilitating poetry discussions. Includes close reading of “Memorial Day Pow Wow” by Donna Dean and “Monument” by Mary Ruefle to demonstrate methods to open up poetry in group discussions
- Visual Texts – Approaches to facilitating discussion on photographs

4p.m. **Concluding questions and thoughts**

Additional Resources for Facilitators for Preparatory Session and Discussion Groups
(MHC will make these available. Some will be assigned, others will be recommended)

Content Resources

- Knox, Bernard. “Introduction” in Robert Fagles’ *The Iliad* (Penguin, 1998), pp. 3-76.
- Knox, Bernard. “Introduction” in Robert Fagles’ *The Odyssey* (Penguin, 1999), pp. 3-76.
- Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford University Press, 1977)
- Meyer, G.J. *A World Undone: The Story of the Great War, 1914 to 1918* (Random House Publishing Group, 2006)
- Nagy, Greg. *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Poetry* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), pp. 1-42.
- Shay, Jonathan. *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (Atheneum, 1994; Touchstone, 1995).
- _____. *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming* (Scribner, 2002).

Military Culture Resources

- *National Center for PTSD*– www.ptsd.va.gov
Follow links for good information, including “Returning From the War Zone Guides.” Also includes an online course on military culture for mental health care providers, also helpful for non-clinicians:
https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/communityproviders/military_culture.asp#sthash.cU%20%20%20%20Tp9WYw.dpbs
- Sontag, Deborah and O’Leary, Amy. “Dr. Jonathan Shay on Returning Veterans and Combat Trauma” *New York Times*, January 13, 2008 (includes audio interviews).
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/13/us/13shay-interview.html>
- *Veterans Administration web resources*– www.va.gov
Valuable information on military culture, terminology, lists of conflicts the U.S. has been involved in, transitioning home, issues for returning veteran, lists of VA clinics, hospitals, and Vet Centers in each state, veteran service organizations, and much more.
- Forum on Women Veterans: “Demographics, needs, and priorities” Patricia M. Hayes, Ph.D. Chief Consultant, Women Veterans Health
<http://www.va.gov/WOMENVET/docs/ForumHayes.pdf>

Hard Journeys Home
A Book Group for Justice-involved Veterans in Maine

Full Syllabus: 6 meetings. All readings provided.

- *American Journal: Fifty Poems for Our Time*, edited by Tracy K. Smith (Graywolf, 2018)
- *The Essential Homer*, translated and edited by Stanley Lombardo (Hackett Publishing Company, 2000)
- *Powder: Writing by Women in the Ranks, from Vietnam to Iraq*, edited by Lisa Bowden, Lisa and Shannon Cain (Kore Press, 2008)
- *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009)
- All other readings provided in a binder for participants.

MEETING 1: Introductions

- “Lost in Translation” by Sharon D. Allen in *Powder: Writings by Women in the Ranks, from Vietnam to Iraq* (Iraq; poem)
- “Katayusha Rockets” by Brian Turner in *Here, Bullet* (Alice James, 2005) (Bosnia; poem)
- “From Personal Effects” by Solmaz Sharif in *American Journal: Fifty Poems for Our Time* (Iran; poem)

Guiding Questions: What do you notice in the poems? Where are the speakers of the poems located? What are the speakers of the poem feeling? What do these poems say about the experiences of war?

MEETING 2: Experiences of War

- Homer’s *Iliad* (Books 9 and 16 in *The Essential Homer*)
- “The Interval” by Ellen N. LaMotte in *The Backwash of War* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 1916) (World War I; essay)
- “The Things They Carried” by Tim O’Brien in *The Things They Carried* (Vietnam; short story)
- “Convoy Day” by Victoria A. Hudson, in *Powder: Writings by Women in the Ranks, from Vietnam to Iraq* (Iraq; short story)

Guiding Questions: How would you describe the bond between Patroclus and Achilles? What does this suggest about the bond between service members in general? What do you notice about LaMotte’s account of World War I? How would you categorize her experience? What things stood out to you that they carry? What did you carry? What is the feeling or mood of “Convoy Day”?

MEETING 3: Telling the Story

- Homer’s *Odyssey* (Books 8 and 9 in *The Essential Homer*)
- “How to Tell a True War Story” by Tim O’Brien from *The Things They Carried* (Vietnam; short story)
- “Memorial Day Pow-Wow” by Dr. Donna Dean in *Powder: Writings by Women in the Ranks, from Vietnam to Iraq* (2008) (Iraq; poem)

Guiding Questions: What is the message or point of the stories Odysseus tells? Is there any evidence that Odysseus is exaggerating? Or is he telling the truth? What does “true” mean in this context (“How to Tell a True War Story”)? How does storytelling fit in to the Veteran experience? Why do

people choose to tell or not tell their stories? What ceremonies do we have in our society to help Veterans come home?

MEETING 4: Coming Home

- Homer's *Odyssey* (Books 13 and 19 in *The Essential Homer*)
- "Tips for a Smooth Transition" by Siobhan Fallon in *Fire and Forget*, edited by Roy Scranton and Matt Gallagher (Da Capo Press, 2013) (Iraq; short story)
- "The Long Deployment" by Jehanne Dubrow in *American Journal: Fifty Poems For Our Time* (Afghanistan; poem)

Guiding Questions: Was there anything unexpected in Odysseus' return to Ithaca at long last? What is the root of the tension between Odysseus and Penelope? What works to build trust between family members and service members when they come home? What undermines that trust? What does this poem ("The Long Deployment") say about absence and loss? What does this poem say about the experience of deployment for a spouse?

MEETING 5: Living in a War Zone

- Homer's *Iliad* (Books 22 and 24 in *The Essential Homer*)
- "The People's War: A German Family's Story" by Christoph Bull in "WW2 People's War," (BBC, 2003) (World War II, personal story)
- "How We Left Mogadishu" by Gulaid in *Somalis in Maine: Crossing Cultural Currents*, edited by Kimberly Huisman et. al (North Atlantic Books, 2011) (Somalia; essay)
- "The Ultimate Safari" by Nadine Gordimer in *Jump* (Bloomsbury, 1991) (South Africa; short story)
- "We Lived Happily During the War" by Ilya Kaminsky in *American Journal: Fifty Poems for Our Time* (America; poem)

Guiding Questions: What do you make of Achilles's anger? Why does Achilles kill Hektor? Why does he return the body to Priam? How is the civilian experience of war different from the service member perspective? Do any of these stories resonate with your experiences interacting with civilians during your service? Is it important that this story ("The Ultimate Safari") is told from the child's perspective?

MEETING 6: The Ripple Effects of War

- "Dulce et Decorum Est," "Arms and the Boy" & "Disabled" by Wilfred Owen, 1916 (World War I, poems)
- "Monument" by Mary Ruefle (poem) from *The Most of It* (Wave Books, 2008) (conflict unspecified, prose poem)
- Photographs of War Memorials including Vietnam War, local Civil War, World War I.
- "After War, a Failure of Imagination" by Phil Klay (New York Times, Feb. 8 2014) (Iraq; essay)
- "I Miss Iraq. I Miss My Gun. I Miss My War." By Brian Mockenhaupt (Esquire, June 26 2007) (Iraq; essay)

Guiding Questions: What do these three poems tell you about impact of service over time? What is this poem ("Monument") saying about making a memorial or monument to war? How should we memorialize war? What is the relationship between imagination and compassion or empathy? What is the failure? How do we bridge the divide? Do you miss service? Why or why not?