



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 Dialogues on the Experience of War guidelines at

<http://www.neh.gov/grants/education/dialogues-the-experience-war>

for instructions. 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: Completing the Odyssey: A Journey Home
Institution: Touchstones Discussion Project, Inc.
Project Director: Howard Zeiderman
Grant Program: Dialogues on the Experience of War

Completing the Odyssey: A Journey Home

“Glorious Odysseus, what you are after is sweet homecoming...” *The Odyssey*, Book XI

Intellectual rationale and overview of program

Upon their return home, men and women who have served in our military in times of war or conflict deserve special recognition and understanding. How are military members to reintegrate with the civilian world from which they have been removed? Through this National Endowment for the Humanities grant opportunity, “Dialogues on the Experience of War,” the Touchstones Discussion Project proposes a program to engage veterans with humanities texts that explore enduring themes of war and homecoming. In *Completing the Odyssey: A Journey Home*, accounts of Odysseus and modern soldiers are companions for the participants on their own passage home.

Just as veterans have changed during their course of service, so in their absence have their friends, families, and communities. To help ensure successful re-entry to civilian life, our society provides special services for veterans. But more is needed than transition courses, psychological therapy, and adaptive medicines for veterans to return home such that their experiences in war are accessible to themselves and others. Humanities and dialogue offer those unrealized opportunities. Using discourse as a platform for the shared examination of humanities texts and works of art, veterans find a way to reflect on their service. In so doing, they deepen their understanding of themselves and discover how to speak, listen, and connect with others more deeply—fellow service men and women, family members, and their communities.

There is no better place to begin this transitioning from service to civilian life than the great account of homecoming after battle: Homer’s *The Odyssey*. Homer’s account of Odysseus’ journey home tells of the hurdles a warrior must overcome to reunite with his homeland. Men and women who have served during modern conflicts face similar challenges. Just as it was for Odysseus, home



for them is more than a geographic place or memory. It is a place where one expects to find acceptance, belonging, and shared values.

Often, even when those characteristics are present, veterans feel a sense of alienation. By exploring the realm of the humanities, it is possible to reflect on the vital task of homecoming that is shared by men and women returning from service. The world of the sciences aims to represent reality exactly as it is. But the humanities delve into human experience, making hidden possibilities visible. For veterans, the humanities provide perspectives by which personal experience of war can be reflective and exploratory. Through the discussion of personal experience in the context of shared readings, a common ground is established in which the roles of service, commitment, and leadership are re-conceptualized. What do those ideas look like for each of us as individuals?

This proposed NEH Discussion Program, *Completing the Odyssey: A Journey Home*, includes three discussion groups of fifteen participants, led by NEH Discussion Leaders trained in the Touchstones method. The NEH Discussion Leaders will apply their training to engage all participants as active members whose individual voices deepen and broaden their collaborative dialogue. The seminar groups will meet twice monthly for four months at a public community center. They will read *The Odyssey* and consider other works about ancient war—the Trojan War in particular—in conjunction with works about modern war from WWII to the present.

Touchstones has selected the T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) translation of *The Odyssey* both for its readability and for the perspective of the warrior-scholar who translated it. To encourage involvement among diverse groups of veterans, Touchstones will create an audio recording of Lawrence's translation. The recording will be donated to the Library of Congress for inclusion in their National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

In this NEH Discussion Program, each reading from *The Odyssey* is paired with modern works from the humanities from World War II through current conflicts, including personal memoirs,



correspondence, oral histories, poetry, film, and visual arts. Readings about modern wars are selected from three anthologies: *Standing Down: From Warrior to Civilian* published by the Great Books Foundation; *Operation Homecoming* edited by Andrew Carroll; and *Bloods: Black Veterans of the Vietnam War: An Oral History* by Wallace Terry. Additional humanities sources of ancient and modern works are listed in full on the Discussion Leader Preparatory Program and Discussion Program syllabi.

The narrative arc of *The Odyssey* will provide the conceptual framework for this program and contemporary accounts of wartime experiences will be juxtaposed with Homeric themes. Throughout the program, the perspectives, questions, and narratives of the individual participants will further elucidate military themes and traits such as memory, loss, victory and defeat, sacrifice, duty, suffering, courage, heroism, and loyalty. Each group of veterans will examine how these themes must be reflected on and integrated within the context of a homecoming journey.

The keystone of the Touchstones Discussion Program *Completing the Odyssey* will be an explication of each veteran's personal narrative of homecoming—their individual odysseys with their specific obstacles and barriers. Over the course of the eight-session program, participants will craft their personal stories through writing, works of art, interviews, and oral histories. At the conclusion of the Discussion Program, participants will have the opportunity to submit their accounts or artworks to the Veterans History Project, a permanent historic collection housed at the Library of Congress. These personal stories and artifacts will become part of the history and lineage of American service members and will be accessible to the public for posterity.

Just as the education non-profit Touchstones Discussion Project believes the humanities should be available to all people to broaden human understanding, veterans' stories should be available as part of our national conscience. Engagement with the humanities in the context of war and conflict serves as a vital opportunity to build bridges between veteran and civilian, conflict and peace. Through



discussion, reflection, and narratives veterans in this program will model how genuine dialogue shapes a new and inclusive civilian society.

After the conclusion of this project, an optional Touchstones discussion leadership workshop will be offered to participants who wish to replicate this program with groups of veterans and civilians. To encourage this initiative, all materials developed during this program—including the audio recording of Lawrence’s translation; Program syllabi, Discussion Leader’s Guide, Participant’s Workbook, evaluation tools, and open-source material—will be available on the Touchstones website. A list of copyrighted material used in the program will also be included. It is Touchstones’ intention that participants in this program apply the discussion leadership skills they have learned by replicating the discussion groups within their communities.

Design, content, and implementation

a. Preparatory program for NEH Discussion Leaders

Howard Zeiderman, a professor at St. John’s College for 43 years and co-founder and president of the Touchstones Discussion Project, will design and lead an intensive three-day Preparatory Program, which will be held on the historic St. John’s College campus in Annapolis, Maryland. Approximately 15 participants, including Project Staff and Advisory Board members, will participate in the training.

This training prepares prospective NEH Discussion Leaders to facilitate dialogues using a four-stage approach developed by Touchstones that forms inclusive groups. Discussion Leaders will learn specific strategies and methods to achieve full group participation, cooperation across ideological and professional differences, active listening, and collaborative leadership in which all voices are heard. The texts used in the Preparatory Program include the selected works previously outlined. Zeiderman will apply these sources from the humanities for the exploration of questions that illuminate central



themes of military service, homecoming, and human experience. The groups will consider how abilities and skills gained through service are shaped into contributions for the public good.

During the Preparatory Program, Zeiderman's work with the NEH Discussion Leaders will be complemented by lectures and question and discussion sessions delivered by members of the Advisory Board: humanities scholars, military experts, and mental health professionals working with veterans. Included on that Board is Roger Carstens, U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel (retired) and graduate student at St. John's College, who will be the Preparatory Program Assistant.

Eight prospective NEH Discussion Leaders will be invited by the Project Director and Advisory Board to participate in this three-day Preparatory Program. Those participants will include veterans or active duty military, as well as humanities scholars, professionals, and volunteers who work with veterans. The Discussion Leaders may also be recruited from nearby academic institutions, veterans' organizations, and the extensive networks of the Project Staff and Advisory Board. In addition to the Project Director and the Program Assistant, who will also serve as NEH Discussion Leaders for the Discussion Program, four participants in the Preparatory Program will be asked to serve as NEH Discussion Leaders. Two additional alternates will be selected in the case of illness or absence of the primary Leaders.

NEH Discussion Leader Preparatory Program Schedule – The opening comments will be presented by Maryland State Senator John Astle, Colonel in the U.S. Marine Corps (retired). Following the introduction of the participants, the first day of this three-day intensive workshop will explore questions of what constitutes a homecoming, why it is a necessary process for all veterans, how it differs from other homecomings, and particular concerns and difficulties for modern service men and women. Zeiderman will introduce the NEH Discussion Leaders to the Touchstones methodology as a means for overcoming barriers in participation. Using passages from *The Odyssey* that raise questions about the hardships of homecoming, participants will begin to examine what is required to achieve a



successful discussion program. Selections from *The Iliad* that bear on Odysseus' experiences during his journey home will also be discussed. All participants will access Preparatory and Discussion Program materials in their NEH Discussion Leader's Guide.

During the morning and afternoon workshop sessions, Zeiderman will use additional readings from these texts to raise questions that highlight obstacles veterans' face in moving from conflict zones and military regimentation to environments where responsibilities to family, civilian work, and community are paramount. Captain Jeffrey Macris, Ph.D., Associate Professor in the U.S. Naval Academy History Department, and Erinn Woodside, Program Coordinator, will round out the day with a lecture and discussion on the importance of how personal stories and experiences of service members are an integral part of homecoming. His talk will investigate how the development of individual narratives can be employed as valuable tools for participant self-examination and reflection in the Discussion Program.

Day two of the workshop will focus on developing leadership skills for cooperative dialogue. The morning sessions will provide participants with practice fostering cooperation within diverse groups while cultivating active listening skills. Readings from *The Iliad*, Plato's *Republic*, and Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus* on the education of soldiers will be paired with passages from *Bloods: Black Veterans of the Vietnam War: An Oral History*. As participants practice specific strategies for building cooperation in discussion groups, they will also consider questions of difference and similarity in service, sacrifice, and commitment across both military and civilian environments. In the afternoon session, LTC Carstens, Preparatory Program Assistant, will talk about the transformation service members undergo after joining the military. His expertise will help NEH Discussion Leaders to consider how wartime experience irreversibly alters an individual and deliberately changes their previous peacetime habits and expectations.



The final day of the workshop will begin with a talk by U.S. Navy Captain and Clinical Psychologist John A. Ralph, a specialist in active duty military and veterans' mental health issues. He will co-lead a discussion afterward with Michelle Montemayor, Ph.D., M.D. on the challenges that veterans face in re-integration to civilian life.

Afterward, participants will engage in discussions that pair selections from *The Odyssey* with readings on the challenges of homecoming from modern conflicts. Those include: "The Hardest Letter to Write" by Staff Sergeant Parker Goykeres; *You Know When the Men are Gone* by military spouse Siobhan Fallon; and *Phantom Noise*, poetry by Sergeant Brian Turner. Selections from Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* provide additional contemporary viewpoints on the experience of war. The work of art introduced in this session include a photograph by Senior Airman Nathanael Callon, "Outside the Wire," that raises questions about the boundaries between the military and civilians. Participants will also consider military recruitment media (print and television advertisements) in examining questions about the call to service. The Preparatory Program will conclude with an evaluation followed by a networking event.

b. Discussion groups for military veterans and others

The Touchstones Discussion Project will invite 45 veterans and active duty military members to participate in this eight-session *Completing the Odyssey* program. Slated to begin in the fall of 2017, this program will take place at the Annapolis Pip Moyer Recreation Center, where Touchstones has run other civic engagement programs in the past. The center is readily accessed through public transportation and is designed to accommodate disabled persons.

Enrolled Discussion Program participants will be assigned to one of three groups with fifteen in each group. Each of the three groups will be led by two NEH Discussion Leaders, at least one of whom will be a veteran or active duty military. Program sessions will run for 90 minutes, twice a month. After each session, participants may attend a short networking and social gathering.



Participants for the discussion program will be invited from veterans' community organizations in Maryland and Delaware on a first-come, first-served basis. Local chapters of the American Legion, AmVets, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Veterans Centers in Annapolis and Baltimore will receive invitations and instructions for participant enrollment. Wider publication of this program opportunity will include notices at local community colleges, universities, St. John's College, the U.S. Naval Academy, VA Hospitals and Clinics, and social service organizations working with veterans. Touchstones will also seek local media coverage for the program.

How will the participants engage in discussion using selected texts from the humanities? Each discussion group meeting includes selections from *The Odyssey* paired with humanities texts and works of art from modern conflicts—WWII to present. Through the Touchstones discussion method and guidance of the NEH Leaders, veterans will explore assumptions and attitudes unique to themselves and shared with others. All participants in the program will receive copies of T.E. Lawrence's translation of *The Odyssey*; *Standing Down: From Warrior to Civilian* published by the Great Books Foundation; *Operation Homecoming* edited by Andrew Carroll; *Bloods: Black Veterans of the Vietnam War: An Oral History* by Wallace Terry; and an NEH Discussion Program Participant Workbook. A comprehensive list of those selections is provided in both the NEH Preparatory Program and Discussion Program syllabi.

Each session will begin with discussion of a section of *The Odyssey*. By the conclusion of the program, participants will have explored the entire work together. The specific passages for focused examination in each session raise significant issues associated with homecoming and military service. The NEH Discussion Leaders will help participants to formulate and articulate questions that investigate themes in the reading. Next, in small group work they will share questions and explore different perspectives. They will bring that work into the full-group discussion, which the NEH Leaders will open with a question.



After 45 minutes, the NEH Discussion Leaders will close the discussion. Participants will then reflect on topics raised in the session in relation to their personal stories and experiences. As part of the creation of a capstone project, they will spend 15 minutes writing, drawing, or conducting oral interviews of one another. The collection of work from these reflections will form the basis of their own narratives that may be submitted to the Library of Congress Veterans History Project.

The final half-hour of the session will introduce modern works about recent conflicts. Carefully selected to parallel the passages discussed from *The Odyssey*, the modern writings and works of art will raise additional perspectives for discussion. After each session, the groups will be invited to join other program participants in a short social gathering.

For Session 1, the groups will read and discuss Books I-IV of *The Odyssey* and will explore why homecoming is difficult. Paired with that reading, participants will discuss *You Know When the Men are Gone*, written by a military spouse, and personal correspondence from Staff Sargent Peter Gyokeres to his family. In Session 2, participants will explore themes of duty and the call to serve. They will discuss Books V-IX of *The Odyssey* and selections from *The Iliad*, which are paired with an oral history from Sargent Major Edgar A. Huff and recruitment media from WWII to present. Session 3 includes readings of Books X-XII of *The Odyssey* and selections from Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus*. To complement the ancient pieces, K.G. Schneider's modern memoir "Falling In" and General Douglas MacArthur's speech, "Duty, Honor, Country," to West Point cadets in 1962 will be read. These texts raise questions of how military members are trained. Readings for Session 4 again focus on Books IX-XII of *The Odyssey* and introduce modern perspective from "Convoy Day" by Victoria Hudson and *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien, which raise questions on the effects of war. Session 5 explores themes about the longing for home during periods of service. Books V and XII of *The Odyssey* are examined and Book XIII is introduced, while modern poetry from Brian Turner and war journalism of David Finkel in *The Good Soldiers* offer contemporary viewpoints. In Session 6, Books XIII-XVIII of *The*



Odyssey raise issues of personal change and the new strangeness of home. They are compared with selections from Benjamin Bush's memoir *Dust to Dust*. That week, participants will be invited to watch the film, *The Best Years of Our Lives*. In Session 7, discussions will investigate the complexities of returning home. Groups will read Books XIX-XXIV of *The Odyssey* and additional works from O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, as well as Karl Marlantes' *What It Is Like to Go to War*.

The last meeting, Session 8, includes a trip to the Library of Congress during which participants will meet with archivists of the Veterans History Project. They will review curatorial artifacts and participate in a presentation on the making of oral histories. Completed capstone projects—their personal narratives—may be submitted to the Library at that time.

Following the Discussion Program conclusion, participants may attend a Touchstones discussion leadership workshop that prepares them to replicate this program. That workshop will be scheduled for a future date so as to accommodate the greatest number of participants.

Project faculty and staff

Howard Zeiderman, Project Director, is a professor at St. John's College, where he has been a senior faculty member in the all-seminar Great Books program since 1973. Zeiderman studied at Dartmouth College and St. John's College, where he received his B.A. before completing graduate work in philosophy at Princeton University. In addition to his role at St. John's College, Zeiderman served as the Director of Executive Seminar programs worldwide for the Aspen Institute. In 1984, Zeiderman co-founded the Touchstones® Discussion Project, an education non-profit organization, to teach educators and students to use humanities texts in seminar environments for the development of essential skills in speaking, listening, reading, critical thinking, and collaborative leadership.

Roger Carstens, Preparatory Program Assistant, is a retired Army Special Forces Lieutenant Colonel whose distinguished career includes tours in Afghanistan and Iraq and work as a Legislative Liaison on Capitol Hill. A writer on national security affairs, he is widely published and has been a



featured guest on C-SPAN's "Washington Journal," and National Public Radio. LTC Carstens will lecture during the Preparatory Program.

Stefanie Takacs, Project Evaluator, is the Executive Director of the Touchstones Discussion Project. Ms. Takacs has extensive experience in educational and socio-behavioral program training, implementation, and evaluation in organizations and schools. Ms. Takacs is the author of Touchstones' middle grades community service volume and *Touchpebbles Volume C* and co-author of *Touchstones 'Alif: Readings from the Arab Tradition* and *Touchstones: Exploring American Perspectives*. Ms. Takacs earned a B.A. from St. John's College in Annapolis, MD and a M.S. in Educational Psychology from Fordham University, NY with an emphasis on educational program evaluation.

Erinn Woodside, Project Coordinator, is Touchstones Discussion Project's Programs Coordinator. She graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 2008 and then served for eight years as a Communications Officer. Captain Woodside served three tours in Iraq and Afghanistan between 2010 through 2013 and was awarded a Purple Heart for wounds sustained in Iraq. In 2014, she deployed with the U.N. in Liberia. She has a M.A. in Liberal Arts from St. John's College. Ms. Woodside will provide administrative and program support.

Maryland State Senator John C. Astle, Lt. Col., (retired), Vietnam veteran and public servant for more than 30 years, serves on the Advisory Board. He will deliver opening remarks during the Preparatory Program and has offered public space for program purposes, if needed.

Captain Jeffrey Macris is Associate Professor at the U.S. Naval Academy and has served as a strategic expert on the Middle East. CAPT Macris earned a Ph.D. in Middle East Studies from John Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. He is a published author, and his work has been included in the *Journal of Middle East and Africa Studies*. Macris has been featured on C-SPAN for his expertise on military affairs and will lecture in the Preparatory Program.



Captain John Ralph, U.S. Navy, is a clinical psychologist. He served in Iraq and was also the Deputy Director for Mental Health at Walter Reed Medical Center in Bethesda. He earned his Ph.D. from Northwestern University in Clinical Psychology and is a leading expert on veterans' mental health. He is the Director of Midshipman Development at the U.S. Naval Academy. CAPT Ralph will lecture during the Preparatory Program on the special needs of returning veterans. He will be joined by Michelle Montemayor, Ph.D., M.D., from New York University, who specializes in treating PTSD.

Additional members of the Advisory Board who are not presenting during or participating in the Preparatory or Discussion Programs but are advising Touchstones on proposal content and program structure include: Christopher Howard, Ph.D., (retired Air Force Reserve Lt. Col.), who is the current president of Robert Morris University and a member of the U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs' MyVA committee, and Margreta de Grazia, Ph.D., the Emerita Sheli Z. and Burton X. Rosenberg Professor of the Humanities at the University of Pennsylvania. Complete biographies for Project Staff and Advisory Board members are provided in Section 5.



Institutional Context

The Touchstones Discussion Project, a registered 501 (c) 3 organization, has as its mission to build critical thinking, communication, and leadership skills through respectful and engaging discussion-based programs. This mission supports the Touchstones vision of a world where people of all backgrounds, beliefs, and ideologies work together in mindful and collaborative discourse to address complex local and global issues. All Touchstones programs feature works from the humanities as central tools for reflection and the examination of what it means to be human. Touchstones brings its more than 30 years of experience in training discussion leaders and designing educational programs to the development of this project.

Touchstones defines a genuine discussion as one in which all participants have a legitimate and essential voice, where there are no factions or subgroups, no dominance or exclusion, where presuppositions and diverse perspectives are made explicit, and where the ultimate outcome is shared leadership among all members of the group. In order to overcome the challenges and maximize the use of individual talent and experience in the discussion setting, Touchstones programs utilize a four-stage developmental approach. Starting with issues in participation and moving through barriers in cooperation to active listening and close reading, each Touchstones group evolves such that all members are simultaneously participants and leaders. Through this method, participants in Touchstones discussion programs become members of a community capable of joint exploration and collaboration. To date, more than five million people of all backgrounds have participated in Touchstones programs in 40 countries and in six languages.

Touchstones has a long history of running local civic engagement programs that serve as successful models for participant recruitment and program implementation. Touchstones' organizational work includes programs with St. John's College, St. Mary's College in Moraga Hills, Montgomery College, Rowan University, Robert Morris University, Hampden Sydney College, Christ



College School of Nursing and Behavioral Health, Shimer College, Federal government agencies, Maryland MVA, Nationwide Insurance, Anne Arundel Leadership Council, Democratic Leadership Council, and the government of Tanzania. For this project, Touchstones will partner with the Library of Congress for the Veterans History Project, St. John's College for preparatory program venues, the Mayor's Office of Annapolis for dissemination of program information and access to public meeting space, and the Veteran's Center in West Annapolis for information about additional local services available to veterans.

Touchstones programs have included veterans for several decades. Starting in senior citizen centers and residential facilities in the early 1990s and then in Maryland prisons at Jessup in the mid-1990s, Touchstones programs have engaged many thousands of veterans from WWII to those of current conflicts. Touchstones programs continue to engage older veterans in groups run at senior centers and through Anne Arundel County Community College's lifelong learning programs, as well as younger veterans in the men's and women's prisons in Jessup, Maryland.

Zeiderman's work with incarcerated veterans began when a group of prisoners serving life sentences read one of Touchstones' Leader's Guides and asked if he would come train them as discussion leaders. That launched an innovative two-year program designed to cultivate discussion leadership among those men, who wished to use discourse to humanize their environment. In honor of his work with incarcerated veterans in 2014, Zeiderman attended a special ceremony at Jessup with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Maryland. In 2015, Zeiderman launched a Touchstones program that includes veterans incarcerated at Maryland Correctional Institute for Women.



Evaluation

This project employs multiple evaluation tools to assess outcomes. The NEH Discussion Leaders will be surveyed on their pre- and post-Preparatory Program understanding of discussion leadership skills in a collaborative seminar environment. The six selected NEH Discussion Leaders and two alternates will complete an initial survey that gauges individual awareness of group dynamics, personal leadership strengths, and appreciation for diverse perspectives as a means for deepening understanding and connection. They will also be asked about the role the humanities play in society, in the civic re-engagement of veterans, and in their own goals as citizens and participants in this project.

A post-Discussion Program survey will be administered to the NEH Discussion Leaders to assess personal growth and challenges encountered during the course of the entire project. That survey will include several open-ended short-response questions about project strengths and weaknesses. Feedback will be used to improve future preparation of discussion leaders and program structure.

Participants in the Discussion Program will receive two questionnaires—one at the program's outset and the other at its conclusion. These pre- and post-Program surveys will evaluate how exploration of the humanities has supported changes in self-awareness, self-efficacy, and perceived or desired changes in themselves and others. They will be asked about those changes as members of a newly formed veterans' community and as individuals and civilians completing their odyssey home.

I long—I pine, all my days—
To travel home and see the dawn of my return.
And if a god will wreck me yet again on the wine-dark sea.
I can bear that too, with spirit tempered to endure.
Much have I suffered, labored long and hard by now
in the waves and wars. Add this to the total—
bring the trial on!

The Odyssey, Book V



Discussion Leader Preparatory Program for *Completing the Odyssey: A Journey Home*

The NEH Discussion Leaders will be prepared through an intensive three-day workshop held on the historic St. John's College campus in Annapolis, Maryland. The workshop will include a combination of theory and methodology of discussion-based learning; a thorough review of the humanities texts and works of art selected for the Discussion Program. Participants will spend considerable time using text, participant history, and the discussion process itself to build inclusive dialogues and narratives on the experience of war.

The eight sessions and themes outlined in the Program Syllabus will be specifically addressed through the Touchstones methodology and expert-led talks and discussions. The Project Director will lead the practice discussion sessions with the humanities texts included in the Discussion Program. Members of the program Advisory Board will speak and lead discussions on topics, themes, and challenges related to service and a return to civilian life. This multi-dimensional approach joins diverse sets of expertise to provide the Discussion Leaders with a thorough and practical foundation employing the selected humanities content in a lively and thoughtful seminar environment. Furthermore, this workshop affords the Discussion Leaders the opportunity to practice discussion leadership skills and reflect on their own service backgrounds that will be invaluable when connecting participants' personal histories with the themes raised in the works. By the end of the Preparatory Program, NEH Discussion Leaders will be prepared to delve into the humanities selections in depth and address the needs of diverse participants.

Required Reading and Preparation for NEH Discussion Leaders

Touchstones: Discussion Leadership, Getting Started

T.E. Lawrence's translation of Homer's *The Odyssey*

Selections from *Standing Down: From Warrior to Civilian* edited by the Great Books Foundation

Selections from *Bloods: Black Veterans of the Vietnam War: An Oral History* by Wallace Terry

Selections from *Operation Homecoming* edited by Andrew Carrol

Specific selections from these anthologies and other works included in the Preparation Program are as follows: *You Know When the Men are Gone* by Siobhan Fallon; Staff Sergeant Peter Gyokeres' "The Hardest Letter to Write;" Homer's *Iliad*; fragments by Gaius Julius Hyginus on Odysseus; oral history of Sergeant Major Edgar A. Huff; WWII through present military recruitment media; Plutarch's *Life of Lysurgus*; Plato's *Republic*; Gen. Douglas MacArthur's speech "Duty, Honor, Country;" K.G. Schneider's "Falling In;" personal correspondence of Captain Ryan Kelly; Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*; "Convoy Day" by Victoria Hudson; photograph by Senior Airman Nathanael Callon; photographs of The Siren Vase; *Phantom Noise*, poetry by Brian Turner; journalism by David Finkel in *The Good Soldiers*; Benjamin Bush's memoirs *Dust to Dust*; and Karl Marlantes' *What It Is Like to Go to War*.

The Feature film, *The Best Years of Our Lives*, directed by William Wyler, 1946, will be shown during the Discussion Program for all participants.



Training Workshop Schedule

Day 1

- Noon Welcome lunch and opening remarks from Maryland State Senator John Astle
Introductions and program overview: Why the Humanities? - Howard Zeiderman, Project Director
- 1:00 – 2:00 Lecture with discussion: Homecoming - Along the Journey Home - LTC Roger Carstens, USA (Retired)
- 2:00 – 3:30 *Discussion Leadership, Getting Started* - What are the barriers to building collaborative and inclusive discussion groups in which all voices are heard? Workshop session using a selection from *The Odyssey* and strategic interventions to foster participation - Stefanie Takacs, Project Evaluator
- 3:30 – 5:30 Presentation of Program Materials and Discussion - Reading and discussing selections from *The Odyssey* and humanities texts and photographs of The Siren Vase depicting Odysseus and the Sirens - Howard Zeiderman, Project Director
- 5:30 – 6:30 Dinner
- 6:30 – 7:30 Lecture: Role of Narratives for Veterans, From the Call to Serve to Separation - Captain Jeffrey Macris, USN, Professor of History at U.S. Naval Academy and Erinn Woodside, Program Coordinator

Day 2

- 8:00 – 9:00 Breakfast talk with discussion: Transformation into Soldier - LTC Roger Carstens
- 9:00 – Noon Discussion Leadership - Fostering Cooperation within Diverse Groups
Reflecting through discussion practice about how the humanities are tools to access diverse perspectives and build community - Howard Zeiderman, Project Director
- Noon Lunch
- 1:00 – 4:00 Discussion Leadership - Cultivating Active Listeners: Hearing beyond Ourselves
Understanding the ramifications and diverse experiences in the context of war - Howard Zeiderman, Project Director
- 4:00 – 5:30 The Role of Service Member’s Personal Narratives in History - Oral Historian from Library of Congress

Day 3

- 8:00 – 9:00 Breakfast talk with discussion: Challenges to Reintegration in Civilian Life - Dr. John Ralph and Dr. Michelle Montemayor
- 9:00 – Noon Reading and discussions on modern conflict texts, personal narratives, photographs, poetry, and film selections from the humanities - Howard Zeiderman, Project Director
- Noon Lunch
- 1:00 – 4:00 Discussion Leadership - Using Collaborative Leadership to Achieve an Integrated Homecoming - Howard Zeiderman, Project Director
- 4:00 – 5:30 Closing remarks and program evaluation
- 5:30 – 6:30 Happy hour networking



Completing the Odyssey: A Journey Home Veterans Discussion Program Syllabus

Program Texts and Materials

Readings for this Discussion Program come from the T.E. Lawrence translation of the ancient epic *The Odyssey*, which participants will read in full. It will be paired thematically with selections from three modern anthologies: *Standing Down: From Warrior to Civilian*, *Bloods: Black Veterans of the Vietnam War: An Oral History* by Wallace Terry, and *Operation Homecoming* edited by Andrew Carrol. In each program session, participants will have time to develop personal narratives on their experiences in service and homecoming. Following each session, participants are invited to network and socialize with participants from other groups.

Specific selections from these anthologies and other works included in the Discussion Program are as follows: “You Know When the Men are Gone” by Siobhan Fallon; Staff Sergeant Peter Gyokeres’ “The Hardest Letter to Write;” Homer’s *Iliad*; fragments about Odysseus by Gaius Julius Hyginus; oral history of Sergeant Major Edgar A. Huff; recruitment media from WWII to today; Plutarch’s *Life of Lycurgus*; Plato’s *Republic*; Gen. Douglas MacArthur’s “Duty, Honor, Country;” K.G. Schneider’s “Falling In;” Captain Ryan Kelly’s personal correspondence; Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried*; “Convoy Day” by Victoria Hudson; photograph by Senior Airman Nathanael Callon; photographs of The Siren Vase; *Phantom Noise*, poetry by Brian Turner; David Finkel’s *The Good Soldiers*; Benjamin Bush’s memoirs *Dust to Dust*; and Karl Marlantes’ *What It Is Like to Go to War*.

Program Schedule & Syllabus

Session 1: Introduction – What is a homecoming and why is it difficult?

Trojan War: *The Odyssey*, Books I-IV

Iraq and Afghanistan: Siobhan Fallon’s *You Know When the Men are Gone* and “The Hardest Letter to Write” by Staff Sergeant Peter Gyokeres

The first program session explores the challenges of homecoming for veterans. Participants learn about the Touchstones discussion method as they practice working in small groups prior to a full group discussion. Participants will reflect on their experiences in service and journeys home.

Session 2: The Call to Serve

Trojan War: *The Odyssey*, Books V-IX, *The Iliad*, Book XI, fragments by Gaius Julius Hyginus

Vietnam: Oral history of Sergeant Major Edgar A. Huff

The second meeting focuses on reasons people leave home in service to their country. These rationales range from duty and patriotism, to forced conscription, pursuit of an opportunity, avoidance of other responsibilities, or glory. Participants explore a call to fight in the Trojan War and compare those accounts with Huff’s oral history and recruitment media from WW II to the present.

Session 3: Becoming a Warrior

Trojan War: *The Odyssey*, Books X-XI, “The Life of Lycurgus” by Plutarch, Plato’s *Republic*

Vietnam: “Duty, Honor, Country” Speech by Gen. Douglas MacArthur at West Point 1962

Gulf War: “Falling In” by K.G. Schneider

Iraq: Personal correspondence of Captain Ryan Kelly

Discussion in the third session examines how one surrenders peacetime habits and expectations in the transformation to soldier. Accounts of Odysseus’ role with the Trojan horse, the education of Spartans



in Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus*, and Plato's *Republic* are contrasted with personal memoirs, correspondence, and a speech from modern conflicts.

Session 4: Implications of War

Trojan War: *The Odyssey*, Books IX-XII, The Siren Vase, 480BC-470BC (circa)

Vietnam: Selections from *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien

Iraq: "Convoy Day" by Victoria Hudson

Afghanistan: "Outside the Wire" photograph by Senior Airman Nathanael Callon

This session focuses on effects of war on members of the military. We see Odysseus as pirate, mercenary, a man without memory among the Lotus Eaters, and with the Cyclops. Participants will also view and discuss photographs of The Siren Vase, which depicts Odysseus and the Sirens.

Session 5: Longing for Home

Trojan War: *The Odyssey*, Book IV and XII

Iraq/Afghanistan: *Phantom Noise*, poetry by Brian Turner, and David Finkel's *The Good Soldiers*

Participants in this session will reflect on the often contradictory feelings of wanting to return home and also to stay in war. Readings include Odysseus' refusal of Calypso's offer of immortality, his invitation to marry the princess Nausikaa, and his interview with Tiresias in Hades. Contemporary perspectives come Brian Turner's poems and reflections of journalist David Finkel.

Session 6: Returning to a Place

Trojan War: *The Odyssey*, Book XIII-XVIII

Iraq: *Dust to Dust* by Benjamin Bush

WWII: *The Best Years of Our Lives*, feature film directed by William Wyler*

Soldiers first steps in returning home may too often remain unexamined. Veterans return to a place but not a home; home has changed and become unrecognizable. This session looks at Odysseus' sense of alienation in his first steps into Ithaca, which is compared with excerpts from Bush's memoir. *A special screening of *The Best Years of Our Lives* will be held for participants on a weekend afternoon.

Session 7: Rediscovering Home

Trojan War: *The Odyssey*, Book XIX-XXIV

Vietnam: From O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* and Karl Marlantes' *What It Is Like to Go to War*

Participants will read about Odysseus' return and those closest to him (his son, wife, and father) as they consider why and how connections with one's past must be re-established upon return. Modern selections animate discussions of how resolutions between expectation and reality are deeply personal.

Session 8: Modern Contributions to the Humanities

Groups will meet at the Library of Congress, where archivists at the Veterans History Project will present curated memoirs, works of art, and audio interviews from past service members. Participants will be encouraged to submit their narratives to the Veterans History Project. Upon return to Annapolis, groups will meet for a final discussion on their overviews and the program experience. One-page overviews of participants' narratives will be the texts for discussion. Touchstones will hold a discussion leadership workshop at a later date for participants who wish to replicate this program.

