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**Warrior-scholars gain skills, bring insights to summer course**

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What does it take to read analytically and think critically about complex topics such as democracy, freedom or equality? How can students best understand and engage with key concepts and arguments posed in such writings, and how can they best write essays to reflect that understanding?

Those skills were taught in an intensive one-week summer course, the Warrior-Scholar Project, whose goal is to facilitate the transition of veterans and enlisted service men and women from combat life to institutions of higher education. The project, which launched at Yale University in 2012 and then expanded to Harvard University and the University of Michigan, now is offered at 11 colleges or universities across the country.

Fourteen students attended Cornell’s course, which was held July 19-25 and focused on the nature of democracy in the United States, democratic constitutionalism, competing conceptions of liberty and equality, and governance in the modern world. Four Cornell professors – Gretchen Ritter, the Harold Tanner Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences; John Siliciano, senior vice provost for academic affairs; Hunter Rawlings, Cornell president emeritus and current president of the Association of American Universities; and Andrew Chignell, associate professor in the Sage School of Philosophy – taught the seminars.

"The students were thoughtful and engaged," said Ritter. "They brought great insights from their experiences in the military to our discussions of American democracy."

"One of the highlights of the course was the reading and discussion of Frederick Douglass' 1852 oration, 'What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?'" said Jared Woodrey, MBA '15, a veteran communications officer of the Marine Corps and assistant director of the program at Cornell. "Some
students could identify with Douglass’ oration and speak to the racism they have encountered in their own lives, while others had never thought about freedom from that perspective.”

Siliciano’s examination of the U.S. Constitution and the oath of enlisted service personnel who pledge to defend it provided another high point. “The opportunity to hear Professor Siliciano review the Constitution in great detail as a legal document was fascinating,” said Sidney Ellington, a retired senior Navy officer and executive director of the Warrior-Scholar Project, who sat in on the classes.

Morning seminars were followed by afternoon writing classes and workshops taught by student tutors and staff from the national program. One of these, Matthew Menezes, a Warrior-Scholar Project alumnus who served almost nine years in the Army, including two deployments to Afghanistan, was the project’s director at Cornell. “The staff at Cornell welcomed the Warrior-Scholar Project with open arms, and the veterans attending the course had the best possible experience. Cornell’s dedication to accommodating all the program’s needs ensured this was a positive experience and testifies to the university’s commitment to the veteran community,” he said.

At dinner students discussed cultural differences between military and academic life, and area veterans shared their experiences starting a small business; pursuing a career in science, technology, engineering or mathematics fields; and the social aspects of being a veteran.

“We believe that veterans can bring leadership, team-building and problem-solving skills to their communities,” said Ellington. “But they need to learn skills to transition from the structure of military life to civilian life and particularly to academic life. The Warrior-Scholar Project empowers them to make that transition.”

“One of the significant benefits of the Warrior-Scholar Project is that the students now know each other, their tutors and other project alumni,” said Vice Provost Judith Appleton. “When they then go to college, they can get feedback and encouragement from other warrior-scholars, who share their backgrounds and transition experiences.”

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