



**OBTC 2017 at Providence College
June 14th – 17th, 2017**

Submission Template

SUBMISSION GUIDANCE

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Submission Template for the 2017 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators

1) Title, Abstract & Keywords

In your abstract, please include a brief session description (not to exceed 100 words), and three to four keywords. If your proposal is accepted, this description will be printed in the conference program.

Mutiny in the *Band of Brothers*: A juxtaposition of two leaders

Abstract:

This interactive session challenges management educators to develop pedagogy that will allow students to creatively apply leadership theory in the context of video-case analysis. Using the first episode of HBO's *Band of Brothers*, we invite participants to exchange ideas and offer suggestions related to key leadership and OB concepts most relevant to the storyline. This episode offers a unique opportunity to examine contrasting, and clearly opposing, leadership styles. The ultimate goal is to identify the most relevant teaching topics that would drive home the importance of effective leadership and team development in times of uncertainty and change.

Keywords: leadership, followership, video cases, dissent, mutiny

2) Teaching Implications:

What is the contribution of your session to management pedagogy/andragogy? Specifically, please include your learning objectives, and describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why. Also, include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.

There has been a long-standing practice in management education to leverage video (documentaries, films, television series, YouTube clips, etc.) as a teaching tool to enhance student learning (Michaelsen, 1975; Champoux, 1999; Holbrook, 2009; Tyler, Anderson, & Tyler, 2009; Sprinkle & Urick, 2016). From the topics of recruitment and selection (Billsberry & Gilbert, 2008) to the construct of emotions in the workplace (Stratton, Rotenberry, & Kass, 2011), video is an accessible and effective way to help students create connections between theory and practice. In an effort to add to the library of teaching resources available to management educators, the purpose of our

session will be to present a detailed video case and an accompanied teaching note that explores the complexity of leadership in a context of uncertainty and follower distrust.

In particular, we will show and discuss the first episode of the television-series *Band of Brothers*, entitled *Currahee* (Robinson, Jendresen, & Hanks, 2001). There are two primary learning objectives we wish to accomplish with attendees. First, we seek to provide a creative way for those who teach leadership to help students apply various theories to the characters and interactions in this first episode. Secondly, we want to provide an opportunity to exchange ideas with participants about what other organizational behavior concepts could be explored and applied to analyze the storyline.

Currahee is a powerful depiction of two military leaders attempting to train their followers as skilled and confident paratroopers in preparation for the invasion of Normandy in World War II. This series is based on Stephen Ambrose's *Band of Brothers* (2002) and various written artifacts collected from surviving soldiers. The first episode introduces viewers to the protagonist, Lieutenant Dick Winters, who is the second in command (and eventual leader) of the Easy Company (the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment). He, along with his soldiers, must navigate the unpredictable and manipulative leadership of Captain Herbert Sobel who commands Easy Company. From the initial jump training at boot camp to field exercises in England, Winters and the soldiers become increasingly concerned by Sobel's thirst for power and his eventual incompetence as both a leader and military tactician. Numerous dyadic interactions between Winters and Sobel, along with scenes depicting mistreatment of soldiers and their associated responses, culminate into a mutiny and a final decision by infantry leadership to transfer Sobel out of the unit.

This episode offers a unique opportunity to juxtapose two leaders throughout their dyadic relationship, along with an examination of their specific relationships with the follower group. We have used this first episode with our students to demonstrate a variety of leadership theories and to critically assess the leaders' behaviors and follower responses. Given that the first episode spans a period of two years, students are witness to numerous interactions among the leaders and followers. Leadership contingency theories, such as Situational Leadership II (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2007), provide a helpful lens by which to analyze Sobel and Winters' respective leadership behaviors and their relative effectiveness given the varying degrees of follower readiness over this period of time. For instance, Sobel maintains his directing behavior throughout the first episode even though his followers' competence and commitment levels evolve. While effective during boot camp, Sobel's leadership becomes highly toxic and dismissive of the followers' needs. Winters, however, adapts his leadership behavior throughout the film to the unique and changing needs and readiness of the specific followers. As a relational leader (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011), there are a number of scenes in which Winters showcases his ability to listen, coach, and empower his soldiers during the various training exercises.

As we will share with session attendees, there are also important lessons to be learned from this first episode about team development and norms (Bettenhausen & Murnighan, 1985; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977), political tactics (DuBrin, 2009; Pfeffer,

1994; 2010), dissent and mutiny (Lammers, 1969; Morrill, Zald, & Rao, 2003; Humphreys, Gibson, Oyler, 2013), and leader authenticity (Eriksen, 2009). For instance, as members of Easy Company navigate their way through the challenges of training under contrasting leadership approaches, key processes emerge that ultimately lead to the unit's development and capacity for sustained performance. Furthermore, viewers may note that Sobel engages in Machiavellian behavior (Kessler, Bandelli, Spector, Borman, Nelson, & Penney, 2010) to combat any semblance of power sharing with Winters. Unfortunately for Sobel, he is politically inept. From his inability to develop alliances with his soldiers to his blatant attempt to punish Winters for a fabricated policy violation, Sobel is unable to generate confidence among the soldiers. This is especially the case given his failures during field exercises in which he places soldiers' safety at risk. In the end, followers engage in covert political activities (Morrill, Zald, & Rao, 2003) to undermine Sobel's reputation and eventually mutiny to protest his abusive positional power and incompetence.

3) Session Description and Plan:

What will you actually do in this session? If appropriate, please include a timeline estimating the activities will you facilitate: how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Please remember that reviewers will be evaluating how well the time request matches the activities you'd like to do, and the extent you can reasonably accomplish the session's goals. Reviewers will also be looking for how you are engaging the participants in the session.

Activity	Timeframe
Introduce attendees to the <i>Band of Brothers</i> HBO series, the first episode <i>Currahee</i> , our reasons for using this as a teaching tool, and the purpose of the session. Organize attendees into smaller groups and handout discussion prompts (see below).	10 minutes
Show clip 1 (Boot Camp) and facilitate a debrief discussion on relevant leadership theories and concepts.	30 minutes
Show clip 2 (Field Exercises and Mutiny) and facilitate a debrief discussion on relevant leadership theories and concepts.	30 minutes
Brainstorm other relevant organizational behavior theories and concepts. Wrap-up and share a detailed teaching note as a takeaway for attendees to use and adapt when showing <i>Currahee</i> to their students.	20 minutes
Total	90 minutes

Discussion Prompts

Attendees will be asked to answer these prompts in their small groups at the conclusion of each clip. Groups will share their respective analyses with the session attendees; we will facilitate the discussion and document responses on the board helping identify patterns and any differing or competing viewpoints.

- (1) **Prompt for Clip 1:** From the evidence provided, how would you describe Sobel and Winters' respective approach to leadership? Please use examples from the clip to support your answer.

- (2) **Prompt for Clip 2:** Use the Situational Leadership II Model to diagnose the degree to which Sobel and Winters were effective or ineffective leaders. Explain the followers' responses to Sobel and Winters' respective behaviors during these scenes. Please use examples from the clip to support your answer. What other leadership theories could be applied?

(Provide a handout that briefly outlines the Situational Leadership II Model)

4) Application to Conference theme:

How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of *Navigating the Changing Currents*?

Navigating the changing currents requires the ability to critically think and challenge assumptions. Our session will provide an additional resource for management educators to help students learn about the importance of leading during instability and uncertainty. The first episode, *Currahee*, offers students an opportunity to analyze ineffective leadership and diagnose the shortcomings that lead to eventual mutiny. Additionally, it is a rich video case to examine the importance of adaptation, flexibility, team cohesion, and the courage and selflessness to challenge authority in the face of potential harm. Additionally, using the video as a tool to help teach leadership has an added benefit to create connections between historical events and contemporary challenges. Students can examine why and how the followers in this episode responded to an incompetent leader that had the potential to cause harm. We have found that our students understand the transferability and relevance of this video case to their respective experiences in the workplace, in student organizations, on sport teams, and in university life. When faced with a leader who would put them in jeopardy or for whom they distrust, our students have reflected on the importance of displaying courage and resilience in the face of countervailing pressures. *Currahee* teaches us and our students about the importance of sacrifice, comradery, and risk-taking all in an effort to achieve a unified goal.

5) Unique Contribution to OBTC:

Have you presented the work in this proposal before? If so, how will it be different? Is this proposal under current review somewhere else? If so, please explain. How will your proposal be different for the OBTC conference?

This proposal is neither under review nor has it been previously presented at OBTC. Based on a search of past proceedings, we believe this will be the first time the series *Band of Brothers* has been presented as a teaching tool at OBTC. We look forward to learning from our attendees and sharing our experiences with this exercise as we prepare to explore future dissemination options in relevant management education journals.

6) References

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