



2013 Fellows Forum

Reintegrating Veterans into Civilian Life: An Interdisciplinary Discussion

Hosted in conjunction with the Capital City Veteran's Consortium

March 22, 2013

Florida State University

Turnbull Conference Center, Rm. 214

9:05-9:15 AM

Welcome Address, Dean Nancy Marcus

9:15-10:20 AM

Panel 1:

Veterans Affairs: Historical and Philosophical Approaches

"Veterans in Rome"

Dr. Andrea U. De Giorgi, Department of Classics, Florida State University

"The American Veteran and the State: The Limits of Generosity"

Dr. G. Kurt Piehler, Institute on World War II and the Human Experience, Florida State University

"From Civilian to Soldier and Back Again: Lessons We Can Learn From Relational Autonomy"

Dr. Tracie L. Mahaffey, Department of Philosophy, Florida State University

10:20-10:30 AM

Coffee Break

10:30-11:50 AM

Panel 2:

Veteran's Reintegration: Identifying Problems and Solutions

"Veterans in the Criminal Justice System: The Role of Veterans' Courts"

Dr. David L. Albright, School of Social Work, University of Missouri

"The Military Suicide Research Consortium"

Dr. Thomas Joiner, Department of Psychology, Florida State University

"Terrain-Dependent Wheelchair Driver Assistance"

Dr. Emmanuel Collins, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Florida State University

12:00-1:00 PM

Lunch

1:00-3:00 PM

Veterans Consortium Exhibits (OPTIONAL)

Demo of Terrain-Dependent Wheelchair

ABSTRACTS:

“Veterans in Rome”

Dr. Andrea U. De Giorgi, Department of Classics, Florida State University

Arguably, the Roman Army was the means with which Rome rose to prominence and became “the” Mediterranean super power as early as the 2nd century BCE. With time, this formidable military apparatus honed its organization, equipment, supply system, and management; to be sure, by the days of the emperor Augustus no foe could withstand the vehemence of the Roman legions. Evocative names identified the latter: Gemina, Flavia Firma, Valeria, Ferrata, Fretensis, Parthica, to cite but a few. Their deeds, audacity, and courage resonate in the ancient texts and still inspire much awe and admiration.

Less impressive, however, was the Roman state’s concern for its veterans. Prior to the mandate of the emperors Nerva and Trajan a precarious system of small land donations and premiums was in place. Ironically, for many veterans the military discharge posed the challenge of their life. Yet, some of the most distressed and alienated veterans of the civil wars provide us with remarkable narratives of resilience, resistance, and ultimately success. More to point, I will bring into focus a small community of former soldiers in rural Anatolia; in spite of a most disquieting setting and harsh climate they ended up succeeding as entrepreneurs and business-men, against all the odds.

“The American Veteran and the State: The Limits of Generosity”

Dr. G. Kurt Piehler, Director, Institute on World War II and the Human Experience, Florida State University

American society has often been generous to war veterans. There has been consensus since the American Revolution that the federal government must take care of the wounded and the disabled. This commitment has resulted in the Department of Veterans Affairs maintaining one of the largest hospital systems in the world. During the Nineteenth Century, aged veterans received pensions from the federal treasury order to ensure they did not end up in local poorhouses. Even able-bodied GIs returning from World War II received financial support to continue their education, purchase a home, as well as other benefits to aid their transition back into civilian life. The precedent established for World War II veterans would eventually be extended to those who served in Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf War, Iraq War, and the current war in Afghanistan.

Despite this record of generosity, Americans have been divided over whether able-bodied veterans have a right to monetary and other benefits. In the immediate aftermath of the American Revolution, Jeffersonian Republicans rejected claims of the Society of Cincinnati for pensions for the officer corps. After the Civil War, President Grover Cleveland used his veto to challenge efforts to liberalize the pension system for veterans of the Union Army. Returning doughboys of World War I vigorously asserted a claim to a postwar bonus that four presidents, Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, and Franklin Roosevelt with vastly different temperaments and ideologies, rejected. During the early Cold War,

educational benefits were only reluctantly bestowed on Korean and Vietnam War veterans and they were not as generous as for those who served in World War II.

Why have Americans in some eras been generous to veterans and in other eras reject their claims on the state? What is distinctive regarding the American view of veterans and the benefits they are offered? What do public policies toward veterans say about American attitudes toward war?

“From Civilian to Soldier and Back Again: Lessons We Can Learn From Relational Autonomy”

Dr. Tracie L. Mahaffey, Department of Philosophy, Florida State University

Autonomy, if we take the etymology of the word seriously, means self-rule or self-government. The concept captures a desire that many of us have to be the masters of our own destinies. We want our actions to be representative of our beliefs, desires, and values in ways that merely intentional actions are not. Our efforts at self-government are complicated, and sometimes confounded, by social-relational influences because the springs of our actions are formed within a context of relationships and intersecting social determinants. Autonomy is not merely a state of mind. It depends on more than strength of will and character, which our student veterans have in abundance. According to theories of relational autonomy, it is a condition of persons that is based in large part on the social relations people find themselves in. The experiences of veterans, together with social determinants like race and gender, shape the courses veterans take. To be truly self-governing, individuals must possess a level of substantive independence that includes a certain amount of personal and financial security, and freedom to pursue goals and hold values that are different from those who have influence and authority. Building on theories of relational autonomy, we can create a community that maximizes the development of autonomy for student veterans (and all students) by focusing on the social relations necessary for substantive independence and autonomy.

“Veterans in the Criminal Justice System: The Role of Veterans’ Courts”

Dr. David L. Albright, School of Social Work, University of Missouri

There is growing concern regarding military veterans who come into contact with the criminal justice system. Mounting evidence suggests that veterans, particularly combat veterans, may be encountering the criminal justice system due to their unmet mental health needs. Because of the rehabilitative needs of veterans in corrections and the growing awareness of the risks that veterans face when returning home from deployment, community stakeholders advocated for the development of specialized interventions to address the complex needs of this population. One rapidly growing intervention is a veteran’s court. This presentation focuses on what we know about military veterans in the criminal justice system and why veterans’ treatment courts might be viable diversion programs.

"The Military Suicide Research Consortium"

Dr. Thomas Joiner, Department of Psychology, Florida State University

The Military Suicide Research Consortium is part of an ongoing strategy to integrate and synchronize U.S. Department of Defense and civilian efforts to implement a multidisciplinary research approach to suicide prevention. Funded through the Military Operational Medicine Research Program (MOMRP), this innovative cutting-edge research aims to enhance the military's ability to quickly identify those at risk for suicide and provide effective evidence-based prevention and treatment strategies. Ongoing studies funded by the Consortium will be summarized.

"Terrain-Dependent Wheelchair Driver Assistance"

Dr. Emmanuel Collins, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Florida State University

To increase electric powered wheelchair (EPW) safety and efficiency on all terrains (both outdoor and indoor) the control system should have settings tuned to individual terrains. To ensure the correct terrain-dependent control setting is used, a method of identifying the current terrain must be developed. This presentation focuses on progress made in developing a wheelchair that can reliably detect and traverse challenging terrains such as gravel and wet grass. A highlight is the real-time implementation and demonstration of a vision-based approach to terrain classification for an EPW. A road map is given for developing a wheelchair that is truly "terrain smart."