

Valley Forge - Connecting Leadership Theories

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No battle was ever fought at Valley Forge. But the site of the Continental Army's winter encampment of 1777-78 under General George Washington, proved to be the turning point of the Revolutionary War. A new army emerged later that spring from Valley Forge, where ragged local militia, state controlled troops and the Continental Army were transformed into one Army, capable and anxious to bring newly found skills to bear in a fight with the British.



International fellows – 74 senior army officers from 70 countries studying this year at the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pa. spent a day at Valley Forge under the guidance of the Harold Keith Johnson Chair of Military History for the Army War College, Dr. Holly Mayer.

Col. Rory Crooks and Dr. Holly Mayer speak to International Fellows at Artillery Park in the Valley Forge National Historic Park during their staff ride,

Sep. 28

“From a standpoint of the Army War College core curriculum, Valley Forge offers insights to the relationships between strategic leaders during the encampment, the successful outcomes from early examples of defense management, and echoes of applicable strategies from theorists that would follow the American Revolution,” said Col. Rory Crooks, director of the International Fellows Program.

“Ultimately, the winter encampment there provided our International Fellows an example of an episode in American history when our military was beset by overwhelming problems,” said Crooks. “It was the role of extraordinary strategic leaders like Washington who were able to envision a strategy toward victory, as well as the equivalent of “security force assistance” from friendly European partners, that gave us the opportunity to become the nation we are today,” he said.

“Valley Forge has great implications since we have finished our strategic war study and now we are entering into strategic leadership so we can connect those theories with leadership,” said Nepalese Col. Santosh Dhakal.

“Politics is the supreme tool, which ultimately guides war, which was applied here even during the revolutionary war. During this time the United States was not yet independent, did not have a solid Army, but they started exercising a kind of checks and balance -- a true application of Clausewitz’s trinity,” he said.

“The Staff Ride was very interesting and a visit to Valley Forge is essential to understand the historic background of the development of the United States,” German Col. Martin Werneke said. “Getting the military perspective from Col. Rory Crooks and historic background from historian Holly Mayer was great.

German Col. Martin Werneke intently listens to Dr. Holly Mayer discuss the events throughout the encampment at Valley Forge during the International Fellows staff ride to Valley Forge National Historic Park



“There was even a connection to the current Strategic Leadership Course regarding the great personality of George Washington as strategic leader,” said Werneke.

The International Fellows are fully integrated into all Army War College studies, in seminar cohorts that duplicate the mix of US Army, other US Services, federal agencies, and other nations that engage in the strategic security environment. Throughout the year, they engage in additional experiences as part of the Field Studies orientation to the United States’ culture, economic, history and values.