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The Cadet's Creed *Critical Discourse Studies in Archives Instruction*

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Abstract

The Cadet's Creed was written by a Norwich University professor in 1927 and is a key text for the university's present-day Corps of Cadets. This essay reflects on a unit in a Public Speaking class that explored the current and historical dimensions of the Creed, particularly the author's little-known connection to the Vermont Eugenics Survey. This text has a multimedia presence and can be found on the campus website, in published documents, on plaques, and also in spoken performance when cadets recite it to affirm their loyalty to Norwich and the Corps. Today, Norwich University has two student populations: military cadets who study alongside "civilian" students. Both groups were challenged yet ultimately affirmed by this difficult project. Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) approaches were used at three points: first, in guiding my analysis of this complex archival document; second, in classroom instruction; and finally, in reflecting on student reactions. The largely positive responses to this unit indicate that pedagogy informed by CDS can support students' participation in the challenging national conversation about historic institutional artifacts and their contemporary resonance.



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Norwich University, the Military College of Vermont, is unusual for a small, liberal arts college. Founded by Captain Alden Partridge in 1819, Norwich is the oldest private military college and known as the “birthplace of ROTC.” As one of the six senior military colleges in the United States, it offers a military-style residential leadership academy called the Corps of Cadets. Roughly two-thirds of its 2,200 undergraduate students belong to the Corps, and the remaining third of the students are “civilians,” who live the lifestyle of traditional college students while surrounded by military cadets.

The Norwich University website attracts applicants with dynamic images of cadet and civilian students in high-tech classroom facilities, military training exercises, and on the athletic field. Those interested in the Corps will click through webpages describing a leadership training program that begins with “Rookdom,” an intense period when new freshmen are pushed physically and mentally to learn the expectations of Norwich military cadets. Figure 1 illustrates the rigor and restrictions of Rook Week, the orientation for freshmen cadets, in its image of students rigidly cramming their “Rookie Knowledge” from the *Cadet Handbook*, or as it is more popularly known, the *Rook Book*. At the end of this week, rooks participate in the New Student Oath Ceremony when they take the Cadet Oath. The first line of this oath is “I will abide by the Norwich Creed.” On the website, the Cadet’s Creed appears with the Oath (see Figure 2), although they are separate in the *Rook Book*.



Figure 1. A screenshot from the Norwich University website showing new freshmen in the Corps of Cadets memorizing “Rookie Knowledge” from the *Cadet Handbook*.

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the Norwich University website. On the left is the Norwich University logo with the year 1819. In the center is the motto "Expect Challenge. Achieve Distinction." To the right is a search bar and a menu icon. Below the navigation bar, the page content is organized into sections:

- Cadet Oath and Creed** (Section Header)
- The Cadet Oath** (Section Header)
 - I ... will henceforth strive to live by the Norwich Creed.
 - As a member of the Norwich Corps of Cadets I promise to accept and apply the principles of the Honor Code; to abide by the Norwich Rules and Regulations; to obey the legal orders of Norwich officials and my seniors in the Corps of Cadets; to foster the Norwich spirit; and to uphold the traditions of my Alma Mater.
 - In all my endeavors from this day forth I will reflect the spirit of the Norwich motto: "I will try"
- The Norwich Cadet's Creed** (Section Header)
 - I believe that the cardinal virtues of the individual are courage, honesty, temperance and wisdom; and that the true measure of success is service rendered—to God, to Country, and to Mankind.
 - I believe that the fundamental problem of society is to maintain a free government wherein liberty may be secured through obedience to law, and that a citizen soldiery is the cornerstone upon which such a government must rest.

Figure 2. Screenshot of the Oath and Creed as they appear on the website.

The Norwich University Archives blog post “The Cadet’s Creed Rings True for 90 Years,” does not exaggerate when it observes that the Cadet’s Creed “has become an integral part of the Norwich identity. Along with the Cadet Oath, it represents everything that a Norwich education stands for.” Thus, I was troubled to learn that the author of the Creed, K. R. B. Flint – an alumnus, former professor, and university benefactor – was affiliated with the eugenics movement. My knowledge of Flint’s ties to eugenics came from a digital archives project hosted by the University of Vermont, not from Norwich University.

In 2017, Norwich launched the Caraganis Prize, a new award for excellence in pedagogy using archival texts from our university collections. I had proposed a unit for a Public Speaking class that promoted civil discourse in connection to the Cadet’s Creed -- and won. My class project would guide students from analyzing and researching the Creed to designing an event that would facilitate discussion of this complicated text. Digital and physical archival materials housed by two institutions, Norwich University and University of Vermont (UVM), were essential in expanding students’ understanding of the text and the author’s association with eugenics.

CDS as a Foundation for Archival Pedagogy

Prior to designing my unit for Public Speaking, I used Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) approaches to analyze the Cadet’s Creed in the contemporary media ecology of Norwich University and explore its historical context. CDS is multidisciplinary, drawing widely from fields ranging from sociolinguistics to literary studies and rhetoric. Texts (broadly defined) are investigated within structures of power in society in a qualitative style of social science research called Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is critical with the intention of “making visible the interconnectedness of things” (Fairclough, 2010, p. 39), of using a critical sensibility to illuminate the relationship of the features of the text with discourse and sociocultural practices.

CDA presents researchers with several methodologies that can be customized to the text under examination (Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 3). Because the Cadet’s Creed is both historical and contemporary, existing physically and digitally, I used the Discourse Historical Approach of CDA to engage in what Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak call a “retrospective critique” that “attempts to

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integrate much available knowledge about the historical sources and the background of the social and political fields in which discursive ‘events’ are embedded” (2000, pp. 34-5). This perspective is supplemented by a multimodal analysis (Jancsary, Höllerer, & Meyer, 2016) that considers content, genre, modality, and connections between messages, discourse, and ideology (p. 191).

CDA is a common methodological approach in educational research that is well-suited for archival inquiry. Indeed, CDA has been praised for its particularly suitable “marriage of text and context” that “provide[s] an excellent methodological basis for archival work” (Huckin, Andrus, & Clary-Lemon, 2012, p. 111). In Rebecca Rogers’s analysis of more than 250 educational research articles from 2004-2012 that incorporated CDA, she found that the majority focused on “the discursive contours of learning and transformational or emancipatory educational practices” (2018, p. 468), which is an element of this project as well. As Reisigl and Wodak note, any CDS inquiry is rooted in personal knowledge and experience (2000, p. 33), which requires mindfulness of my own bias, limitations as a nonhistorian, and perspective as an employee rather than an expert on Norwich University.

The Text: Present

I begin with my analysis of the text, continue with the design and delivery of the unit, and finally, in the spirit of reflective teaching, consider the outcomes of this unit, both for myself and students. The Norwich Cadet’s Creed is a brief statement, just 183 words. Here is the text as it appears on the website page “Cadet Oath and Creed”:

The Norwich Cadet’s Creed

I believe that the cardinal virtues of the individual are courage, honesty, temperance and wisdom; and that the true measure of success is service rendered—to God, to Country, and to Mankind.

I believe that the fundamental problem of society is to maintain a free government wherein liberty may be secured through obedience to law, and that a citizen soldiery is the cornerstone upon which such a government must rest.

I believe that real education presupposes a sense of proportion in physical, mental, and moral development; and that he alone is educated who has learned the lessons of self control and open-mindedness.

I believe in Norwich, my Alma Mater, because within her halls throughout the years these tenets have found expression while men have been taught to be loyal to duly constituted authority in thought and word and deed; to view suffrage as a sacred privilege to be exercised only in accordance with the dictates of conscience; to regard public office as a public trust; and finally to fight, and if need be to die, in defense of the cherished institutions of America.

– K.R.B. Flint, Class of 1903

Cadets primarily associate the Creed with the *Rook Book*, where it appears as a complete text and is referenced two other times, in the Cadet Oath and on another page that describes the

Centennial Gates. Figure 3 depicts one of several campus landmarks that references Flint and the Creed. This plaque states “obedience to law is liberty,” which is recontextualized from Flint’s Creed. Along with the Cadet’s Creed, the *Rook Book* presents a brief biography of its author:

K.R.B. Flint, NU 1903, joined the Norwich faculty in 1907 and was associated with the University as a teacher, head of the Department of Social Sciences, and Professor Emeritus for sixty-two years thereafter. The University awarded Professor Flint an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws when he retired in 1952. Flint Hall is named in his honor. (p. 158)

When cadets encounter Flint Hall (see Figure 4) as a campus building, they may associate it with the Cadet’s Creed.



Figure 3. A gate to campus with a sentiment from the Cadet’s Creed: “Obedience to the Law is Liberty.”

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Figure 4. The entrance to Flint Hall, site of faculty offices and the Office of Communications.

As part of the *Rook Book*, the Creed is an element of the Rookie Knowledge that must be memorized and recited during rook training. Student bloggers describe this experience on the university's website. As Simka Stephenson wrote in 2015:

After Command Reveille, I am off to class from 0800 until 1200. After that, I usually have about three hours to do homework, run errands, keep my room clean, my uniforms looking perfect and study my Rookie Knowledge. Rookie Knowledge is the Norwich Motto, the Vision Statement, the Mission Statement, the Cadet's Creed, the Norwich Theme, ranks, and a long list of important dates in Norwich history. Rooks are required to know much of this by heart.

These blogs document students' lives and also promote the Cadet Corps experience to college applicants. The Creed thus has an intertextual connection to other texts within the *Rook Book* and on the website, and an intermedial connection to physical locations on campus.

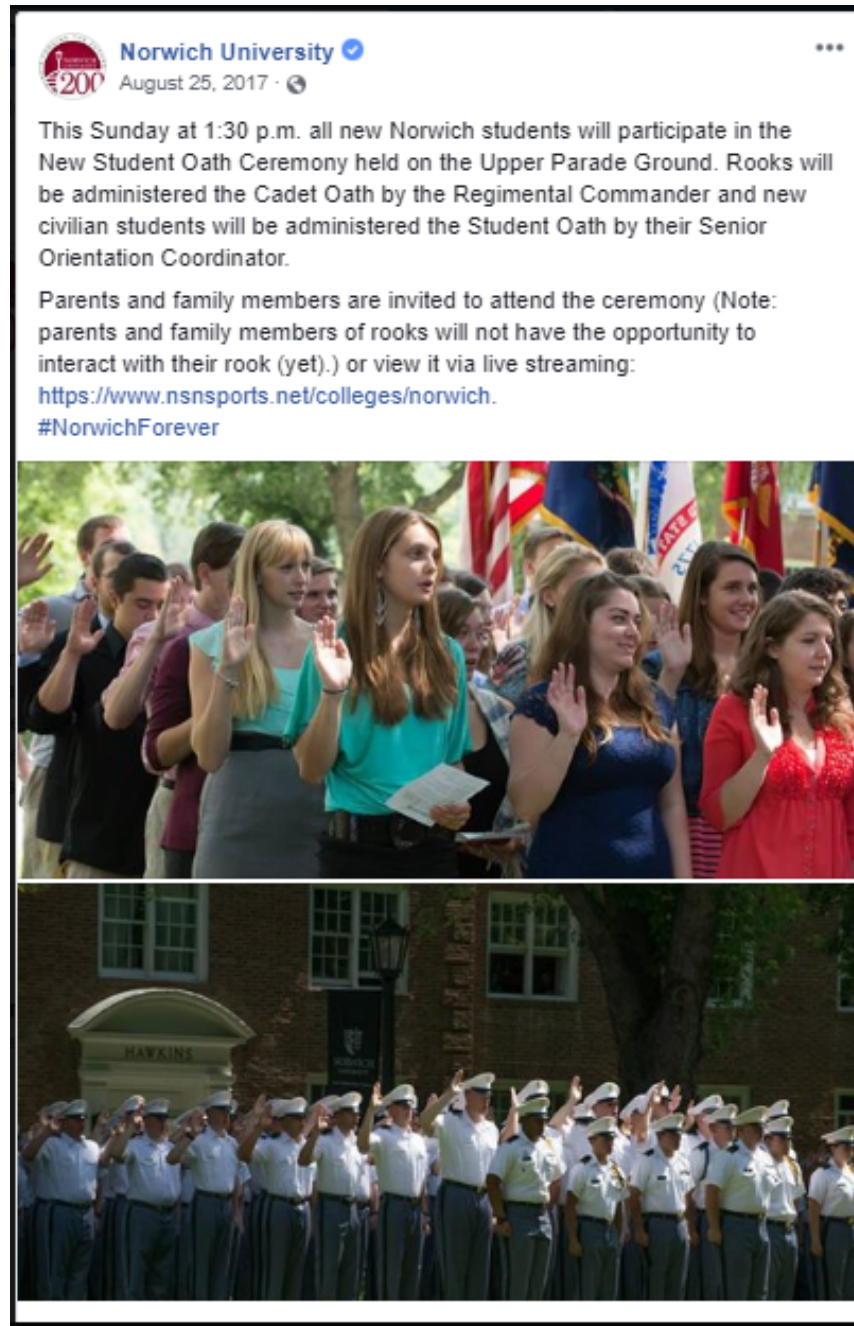


Figure 5. A Facebook post promoting the New Student Oath Ceremony in 2017. Family and friends are invited to watch a livestream of the ceremony or attend in person. Note hashtag “#NorwichForever.” [https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=norwich university cadet oath ceremony&opensearch=1](https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=norwich%20university%20cadet%20oath%20ceremony&opensearch=1)

Because the Creed is identified within the Cadet Oath, it is strongly associated with that text and with Cadet Oath Ceremony. Figure 5 shows a Facebook text that alerts students’ families about the event and encourages them to livestream the New Student Oath Ceremony. On this occasion, rooks raise their hands and affirm their fidelity to the Norwich Creed. Because the Oath is recited and performed, it becomes a multimodal text reinforced by spoken delivery and gesture.

This Facebook post also contains the hashtag “#NorwichForever,” which links the Cadet experience, the Oath, and implicitly the Creed to a campus slogan. Thus, the Cadet’s Creed exists as a multimedia text with complex associations to cadets’ lived experience and the Norwich University brand. Each iteration of the Creed serves to strengthen students’ affiliation with the text.

The Text: Past

The *Rook Book* does not reveal important details about the Cadet’s Creed. It was written in 1927 with the original title of "A Norwich Man's Creed." The language of the text itself has not been altered, and it is an interesting statement of Flint's Progressive Era and post WWI values. Flint mentions temperance, suffrage, public service, defense of “the cherished institutions of America,” and it includes gendered language and symbols.

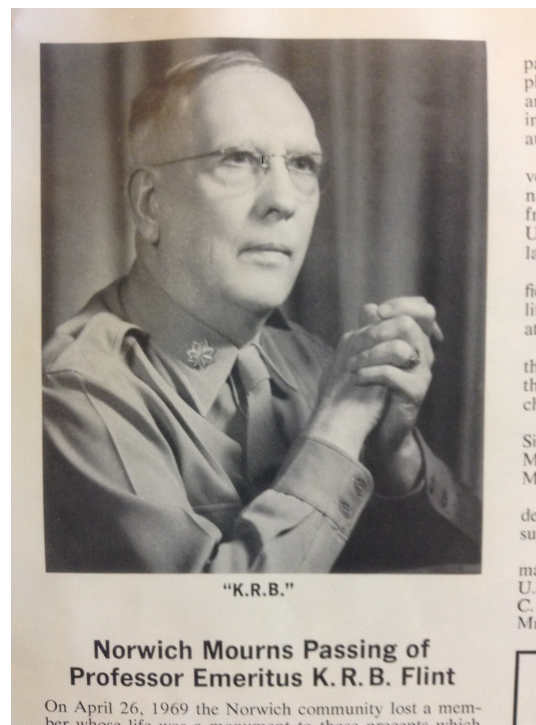


Figure 6. A photo of Flint from his obituary.

The “Guide to the Kemp Russell Blanchard Flint Papers (1915-57),” an online and paper finding aid in the Norwich University archives, fleshes out K.R.B. Flint’s biography. Flint was born in 1880 and died in 1969. He was a public intellectual and active community member, delivering lectures on the Chautauqua circuit about municipal planning and leading the annual town meetings in Northfield, Vermont, where Norwich is located (Norwich University Archives 2010; see Figure 6 for a photograph of Flint). The Vermont Eugenics Survey is not noted in his biography in the *Rook Book* or archives. Thus, I was surprised when I did a simple web search on Flint that directed me to *Vermont Eugenics: A Documentary History*, an online archive hosted by the University of Vermont. This archive features primary sources and historical information related to the Vermont Eugenics Survey. Flint has his own page listed under “Participants and Partners” as a member of the Vermont Eugenics Survey advisory board from 1925-36 (Gallagher, 2001).

Eugenics was a widespread ideology in the United States in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Eugenics beliefs sound ludicrous today but at the time were presented with a veneer of progressive idealism. Consider, for example, the account of a lecture by a Brown University biologist at the Norwich University annual biology club banquet in 1929. The student newspaper reports that the guest speaker, Dr. H. E. Walter, discussed genetics, heredity, and chromosomes. Apparently, he brought a chart that illustrated how “in two generations, a person with an Irish grandparent may not have a drop of Irish blood in his veins.” Dr. Walter then elaborated on “significant advances” in genetics: “The fact that feeble-mindedness acts as a unit character has been established; this means that feeble-minded parents will always have children of the same sort. Thus society has a basis on which it can work to eliminate some of the undesirable traits of the race.” He appealed to the assembled cadets with a military-sounding quote from Major Leonard Darwin (son of Charles): “The eugenic ideal should be followed like a flag in battle without thought of personal gain” (“Biologists”).

This kind of pseudo-scientific biological determinism justified the victimization of thousands of marginalized Americans throughout the twentieth century through undisclosed human experimentation, forced sterilization, separation of family members, punitive mental health practices, and discriminatory immigration laws. Eugenics also offered Adolf Hitler a scientific-sounding platform for his program of racial hygiene in Germany (Gallagher, 1999, p. 4), which led to genocide on a massive scale.

It is beyond the scope of this essay to describe the breadth of eugenics, even in the small state of Vermont. Nancy L. Gallagher, author of *Breeding Better Vermonters*, describes eugenics as a well-intentioned movement that became a “social weapon” (1999, p. 2). Its main proponent in the state UVM Professor Henry Perkins (1877-1956) was a zoologist who led the Vermont Eugenics Survey from 1925-36. He also served as president of the National Eugenics Society from 1931-34. Gallagher notes that Flint’s scholarship, notably his monograph *Poor Relief in Vermont* (published by the *Norwich Record* in 1916; see Figure 7), was influential in providing academic support to the eugenics movement (p. 78). Flint’s advocacy for eugenics is clear in his claim that “sterilization or segregation of the feebleminded may gradually eliminate their kind” (p. 8).

KRB Flint's *Poor Relief in Vermont*, 1916

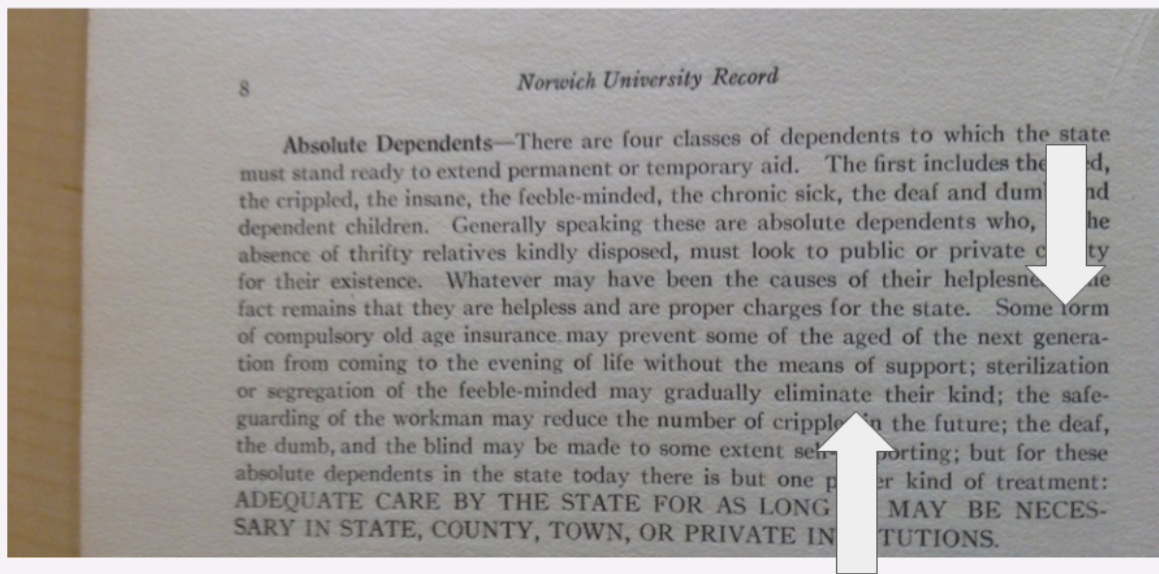


Figure 7. A slide from the forum presentation pointing to Flint's quote about sterilization in *Poor Relief in Vermont*. Note Norwich's association to the publication.

Overseen by a board including Flint, the Vermont Eugenics Survey conducted heredity studies of Vermont's population that displayed the "3 Ds," dependency, delinquency, and mental defect (Gallagher, 1999, p. 50). This practice targeted Vermont's disenfranchised -- poor women, Abenakis, and French Canadian Catholics -- with intrusive attention. In 1926, Flint actively supported the Vermont Eugenics Survey in promoting the voluntary sterilization act. He instructed Perkins to provide state legislators with the pamphlet "A Eugenics Catechism" (p. 78). The Law for Human Betterment by Voluntary Sterilization finally passed in 1931, which permitted the legal sterilization of more than 250 of the Vermont's "feeble-minded" (Kaelber, 2009).

"A Eugenics Catechism" (1926) is a brief pamphlet published by the American Eugenics Society and is available as a digitized document online through *Vermont Eugenics: A Documentary History*. The "Catechism" offers a definition ("Eugenics is the study of those agencies under social control which may improve or impair the inborn qualities of future generations of man either physically or mentally") and presents a Q&A about associated subtopics. The following extract comes from the section called "Inheritance":

Q. Does everyone believe in the inheritance of physical characteristics? A. Everyone who has investigated the subject. Q. Does everyone believe in the inheritance of mental or moral characteristics?

Here is the same cluster of topics from the section of the Cadet's Creed asserting that mental, moral, and physical character are necessary for "real education." In the Creed, Flint wrote that these qualities must exist "in proportion," an idea that is not found in the "Eugenics Catechism" but that is stressed in an influential text by eugenics forerunner Sir Francis Galton. In the introduction to his 1904 paper titled "Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope, and Aims," Galton posited

that “the character depends largely on the *proportion* between qualities, whose balance may be much influenced by education” (emphasis in the original).

The historical record demonstrates that Flint was affiliated with the Eugenics Survey, and he knew about the “Eugenics Catechism,” which appeared in print just one year prior to his Cadet's Creed. The sentiment and semantics in the “Catechism” and Galton's article suggest a connection to the section about “real education” in the Cadet's Creed. This analysis of context, discourse, and the historical record informed my pedagogical choices for the Cadet's Creed unit.

The Class Project Proposal

Several features of the Cadet's Creed and its history are interesting to a contemporary audience: for example, why is “obedience to the law liberty?” Why does “real” education presuppose a “proportional” moral, physical, and mental development? Why don't Cadets learn about the title change? And if the title is now inclusive, why do the old-fashioned pronouns and gender connotations persist within the text itself? Is it necessary to restrict the Cadet's Creed to the Cadet Corps rather than the community at large? How do students feel about the role of religion in an oath required by an educational organization? Does the language of the Creed reveal any connections to eugenics? And should the university do anything to acknowledge Flint's role in the Vermont Eugenics Survey?

In Spring 2017, with these questions in mind, I designed a unit for my Public Speaking class and submitted it to the Caraganis Prize, a new campus-wide contest to create pedagogical materials using archival sources. My three-week unit would lead students through an analysis of the Cadet's Creed and use primary source pedagogical activities including close reading, discussion, first-hand document investigation in our Archives lab, and web research with archival collections of digitized documents at UVM and Norwich. The culminating activity would be an exploratory class forum to discuss the significance of the Cadet's Creed. I hoped multiple perspectives could be raised in an atmosphere that explicitly aimed for civil discourse.

I aligned the unit with critical pedagogy, a well-known liberatory educational approach (cf. Kincheloe, 2008) that would allow us to problematize an established Norwich University tradition yet encourage various viewpoints. As Jan McArthur puts it, critical pedagogy should create an environment “in which people engage with the disagreement rather than rant or retreat” (2010, p. 5). Critical Pedagogy is not a neutral activity and focuses on problems or social issues. In this case, I was concerned that Norwich cadets were required to memorize a Creed written by a eugenicist, and also perplexed about the building on campus named in his honor. As the instructor, my goal was to maintain a “performance of neutrality” (Kopelson, 2003, p. 115) that could challenge students in developing their thoughts, generating evidence, and navigating the complex territory of disagreement. The “critical” mindset of Critical Pedagogy easily aligns with the outlook of CDS, which permitted me to create activities inspired by the Discourse Historical Approach in the classroom.

My proposal strategically foregrounded three concepts that are important to Norwich University's institutional identity: democracy, citizenship, and multiple perspectives. I described how Kate Shuster of the Southern Poverty Law Center explained that “democratic societies thrive on dissent, discussion, and debate” (2010, p. 5). I reminded my proposal readers how the media is frequently polarized and aggressive, full of arguing rather than reasoned argument. I referenced Norwich University's “Guiding Values,” a statement that is often mentioned on campus, also

promoted in the *Cadet Handbook* (2016, p. ii), and in fact posted in some classrooms. Guiding Value 3 claims that diverse opinions are a “cornerstone” of democracy. My pitch emphasized that multiple perspectives about the Cadet’s Creed would provide students with vital practice in civil discourse and democracy in action.

Classroom Instruction

In Fall 2017, the political atmosphere surrounding historical memorials was tense in the United States. My students were familiar with the national debate about the future of Confederate monuments in Charlottesville, Virginia, and elsewhere in the United States. They had not heard of a local controversy, one that would offer us an entrée into eugenics. The Dorothy Canfield Fisher contest, named after the Vermont author who lived from 1879-1958, is run by the Vermont Department of Libraries and recognizes the favorite books of the state’s school children. A local activist had asked for this award to be renamed, drawing attention to Canfield Fisher’s affiliation with an organization with a eugenical agenda (Walsh, 2017). The movement to change the name of the award has generated discussion and debate throughout the state.

We began the unit with a general discussion, which was interesting because of the two student lifestyles and the gender distribution in the classroom. My group of students was evenly split between cadets and civilians; however, there was only one female student in the class, and she was on leave for most of the unit. Many of the civilian students had never heard of the Cadet’s Creed though several grew deeply invested in it as the unit progressed.

In one heated moment, two students squared off with clashing points of view. One cadet had staked a strong claim that civilian students were not entitled to an opinion on the Cadet’s Creed because it is an oath taken only by members of the Corps. A civilian athlete on our university’s soccer team -- the Cadets -- firmly disagreed. He declared that any athlete, any student, could be considered a Norwich Cadet, that the Cadet’s Creed was a statement that represented us all. Heads around the classroom shook and nodded during this passionate conversation that cut to the core of our university’s identity. Implied in this discussion was criticism that I, as someone unaffiliated with the Corps or the military, did not have the appropriate institutional authority to bring this text in front of the class for discussion.

The majority of the students thought that the language of the Creed was powerful, finding the text and its ideals moving and profound. Some students articulated a fear that our attention to the document might result in changes to it, such as revisions to its gendered language to promote inclusivity, which only one student was even willing to contemplate. The discussion became heated when one cadet stated that “Any woman who knows anything about historical documents would not consider changing the language of the Creed.” All the students looked at me, not just as the instructor but as the only female in the room that day. I replied, “No, I disagree.” A reasoned explanation escaped me as I realized the implications of the student’s comment. He insinuated that (a) I was ignorant about historical documents, (b) gender inclusivity was only relevant to women, and (c) educated women (unlike me) would unanimously support his perspective. I could not maintain a “performance of neutrality” in that moment and struggled to respond.

In our sessions at the Archives Instruction Room (see Figures 8 and 9), Head of Archives Kelly Nolin pulled examples of the Cadet’s Creed to develop the students’ understanding of its publication history. Students found its first appearance in the student newspaper *The Guidon* in 1927 along with its publication in annual *Rook Books* and several articles about Flint from the

alumni magazine the *Norwich Record*. We also had a table of Flint's monographs and articles, including *Poor Relief in Vermont*. I arranged a table of printed documents from the UVM archive, including the description of Flint's role in the Vermont Eugenics Survey and the "Eugenics Catechism." These links were available to students later through our online classroom. I also assigned a worksheet based on Walsh's article about the Canfield Fisher controversy (2017), which contained a succinct overview of eugenics in Vermont.



Figure 8. Cadet and civilian students in the Archives Instruction Room.



Figure 9. An archival copy of the *Cadet Handbook* with “A Norwich Man’s Creed.”

Following this hands-on archival exploration, we had some very intense discussions about the history of the Cadet’s Creed. The eugenics connection shocked and appalled students, but they were divided about whether the Creed itself displayed any influence from eugenics. Several cadets suggested we hide Flint’s association with eugenics, that we conceal this information for the good of Norwich. They feared that if a different version of Flint’s biography became known that a cherished document of the Corps would be taken away. I was alarmed by this attempted cover-up and invoked Guiding Value 8, “we hold in highest esteem our people and reputation.” By researching Flint and understanding his legacy, we were honoring him and had nothing to hide.

Students were excited and intimidated by the culminating forum. My original concept of student proposals was voted down in favor of a more neutral, informative presentation. Students wanted to know why I hadn’t invited the college president, retired Rear Admiral Richard Schneider. I said that I’d be happy to, but that his schedule was quite busy, and that his presence would raise the stakes of the forum considerably. Emboldened, students said, “do it!” The president responded immediately; his assistant told me that he had cleared his schedule in order to attend.

In keeping with my role as facilitator, I asked the students to handle every moment of the forum from greeting the guests to the final acknowledgments. The framing and organization of the forum were discussed intensely. Students wanted to set the right tone, deciding to begin with a recitation of the Creed and description of what it meant to them. I suggested that we follow up the 15-20 minute collaborative presentation with focus groups. Students didn’t like the semantic associations with “focus groups;” to them, this term suggested a problem. After a long discussion, the class approved a more neutral phrase, “discussion groups.” Students made conscious choices with their attire. The cadets deliberated extensively about the details of their dressier uniform options: the blues or the Bs, short or long sleeves, a tunic or no tunic? And how would the civilian males dress -- shirt, tie, jacket required?

We prepared our collaborative presentation using Google Slides. Students contributed slides for their sections, and I added consistency in the slideshow design. A few students' slides demonstrated research initiative and critical thinking. One student (see Figure 10) found an online image of eugenics-related ephemera that related to the line in the Creed about "proportion" in "real education." The slideshow also created tensions in class when some submissions were late; others were inadequate. The fall semester Army Field Training Exercise occurred on the weekend before our big presentation, leaving many of the cadets exhausted, unprepared, and unrehearsed. Monday's run-through was a disaster.

A Possibly Eugenicist Section in the Creed

"Real education presupposes a sense of proportion in physical, mental and moral development"



Figure 10. A student-made slide from the forum presentation.

By Wednesday, the students had turned themselves around. We had twelve guests, stakeholders from our community including the college president, Dean of Students, Commandant Office staff, the Library Director, college chaplain, faculty, archivists, librarians, and the student Cadet Colonel. The class confidently delivered the presentation and then segued into the discussion sections that featured spirited participation from presenters and attendees (see Figures 11-13). At the end of the hour, President Schneider praised the students and encouraged us to publicize our findings. The forum showcased the students' expertise in the history of the Cadet's Creed in addition to substantial skill development in audience awareness, primary source research, multimedia collaboration, rhetorical framing, persuasive speaking, and presentation delivery.



Figure 11. Discussion groups at the forum (by Mark Collier, Norwich University photographer).



Figure 12. The presentation at the forum (by Mark Collier, Norwich University photographer).



Figure 13. A discussion group including a faculty member, the college president, and students (by Mark Collier, Norwich University photographer).

Feedback and Evaluation

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, both from guests and class participants. Fourteen of the fifteen students completed an optional reflection questionnaire in class the following week. All respondents felt positive about the forum and believed we had achieved our goal of civil discourse. Several commented that the discussion had been their favorite part. It was, as one wrote, a “wonderful conversation.”

In their reflections, students indicated surprise at the attendees’ strong and diverse opinions. A few participants had recommended changes to the Cadet’s Creed to add inclusive language or update the Creed entirely. Another guest vehemently disagreed, objecting to changing even one word. This issue demonstrates the way an archival text can promote students’ awareness of authorship, semantic choice, and a document’s shifting meaning in different contexts. Clearly, the forum supported multiple perspectives. A student acknowledged the complexity of the issue when he wrote: “We got people informed and talking, but not enough so to form a solid opinion and make a decision on a course of action.”

These reflections were not anonymous, which allows me to view the responses of the Cadets and civilians separately. Most of the civilian students, four out of seven, stated that they enjoyed learning about different aspects of the project such as eugenics, the history of the university, Flint as the author and namesake of a campus building, how Norwich was connected to political events in the state of Vermont. In one student’s view, the project resulted in increased respect for the university. The activity was challenging, one student wrote, which brought the class together. Another civilian developed an identity as a “cadet,” broadening this term to represent all Norwich students not just Corps members. He wrote:

Although it's an oath that I didn't take or have to memorize, I wear the Norwich sabers and shield on my jersey every game and I feel that in doing my part representing and fighting on a soccer pitch for Norwich that the values in the Cadet's Creed still hold true in my actions and thoughts. So I feel a deep connection for the Creed and what it stands for.

Of the three who did not find themselves interested in the archival text, two mentioned that they valued the opportunity to present on a topic of importance, particularly to the college president. One civilian, however, wrote that he would have preferred presenting about another topic.

Of the seven cadets, five felt very positive about the forum, and one student felt neutral. Six cadets found that the research deepened their appreciation of Flint and the Cadet's Creed. One student realized that "there may be deeper meaning to what I learn and say" and that it "reaffirmed [his] belief in the words of the Creed regardless of who wrote it." Six students said that the research project made them feel proud of their membership in the Corps. One student explained that his and his classmates' faith in the Creed was motivating, that it "made us work that much harder." Another commented "My mind is now more open as a result of this project."

The final cadet's thoughts were more difficult to parse. He wrote: "[The research project] strengthened my ties to [the Cadet's Creed] and made me believe that KRB Flint's legacy was being looked at through a singular narrow point of view." His further comments noted that he "disagreed with the scope of the investigation" in our class.

After viewing these responses, I believed the project as a whole to be a success. Nevertheless, I was preoccupied with the tense atmosphere during the unit. Despite offering students a unique public speaking opportunity with real significance, my final student course evaluations were lower than usual, with two pointed comments about my "political agenda" and making students "uncomfortable." I was puzzled by the former comment but found wisdom in the latter: why **had** the project felt so uncomfortable? And what could I learn from our discomfort? And why did a student, who was for the first time exposed to the history and author biography associated with the Cadet's Creed, find my approach to be "narrow"?

Discussion

To develop an interpretation of our class project, we need to "read" both the text and the classroom, again considering a CDS framework in order to view the Cadet's Creed as it existed within a network of institutional relationships that included the text, the students, the university, and myself. One significant element of a Norwich University classroom is student lifestyle, which is reflected in their attire. In my classroom, half of the students wore the military-style uniforms of the Norwich University Corps of Cadets. The other students were outfitted in the informal garb found at any small liberal arts college in the United States.

Professors' clothing is also revealing. Tenured and tenure-track faculty, even those with no prior association to the military, wear the uniform of the Vermont State Militia (VSM) with an insignia that displays their faculty rank. Instructional faculty regardless of academic rank are typically addressed as "professor," yet an associate professor, for example, is outfitted as a lieutenant colonel in the VSM with silver oak leaves on the uniform epaulettes, the insignia of this rank. Uniformed professors are saluted by students in the Corps while walking between campus buildings. Non tenure-track faculty, most staff, and civilian students do not wear uniforms or

participate in military courtesy. The VSM faculty uniform is relevant here but also itself a site of institutional conflict.

As a non tenure-track faculty member, I wear no uniform. With a brief glance at me on the first day of class, students can draw inferences about my scholarly achievement, disciplinary expertise, and institutional authority. Though I have numerous privileges in society at large (white, middle class, able-bodied, a master's degree), I am a female lecturer at an institution with a student body that is majority male (about 75%). Chance had given me a disproportionately male class, and I had underestimated the extent that cadets would feel threatened by what they perceived as a challenge to a cherished Norwich tradition. Some cadets had responded with resistance, reading our situation as politicized, in which my female identity cast me into a role of feminist change agent. My attire demonstrated, to the students, a lack of institutional authority and disciplinary expertise.

In the decade I have worked at Norwich, I have regularly heard a segment of cadets express dissatisfaction with the policies of the Corps of Cadets by hearkening back to the storied traditions of the "Old Corps," an idealized vision of Norwich that existed at some hazy, indeterminate point in the past (see [this article](#), for example). The "Old Corps" sentiment glorifies a Norwich prior to civilians and female cadets, back to an era of more demanding standards, fraternities, and secret societies such as the Skull and Swords or the Night Riders. The "Old Corps" represents a time of real heroism and hazing, which is romanticized by some modern-day cadets who feel deprived of opportunities to demonstrate their toughness. The "Old Corps" sentiment is symptomatic of nostalgic escapism, a desire to recreate Norwich's past with only the shallowest understanding of it. In Fall 2017, "Old Corps" concerns seemed strong with several cadets in my Public Speaking class.

Grousing for the "Old Corps" can target civilians. For example, one major milestone in the life of a Norwich Cadet has been the junior ring, which was extended to civilians beginning in 1990. As student journalist Stephanie White found out in April 2018, "Unfortunately, civilians still receive backlash from those in the Corps who think that civilians do not deserve them." Anti-civilian prejudice has been a salient part of White's Norwich experience. She writes: "This ring means that we have survived all the hate and backlash that sometimes comes from being a civilian on this campus."

Administrators and the campus brand do not encourage the Old Corps view of Norwich, but they promote a different fantasy. "Tradition," "history," and "legacy" are significant campus buzzwords that are heralded by the president and other administrators in their speeches that usually finish with "Norwich forever!" (cf. Figure 3 for the social media hashtag). The university is indeed committed to preserving its history. The Sullivan Museum, for example, is a Smithsonian affiliate. The Archives and Special Collections division is another source of campus pride; it is robust for a small liberal arts college with three archivists, a spacious reading room, a dedicated Archives Instruction Room, and storage space. The Cadet's Creed project was inspired by the new award, the Caraganis Prize, itself an obvious sign of Norwich University's dedication to history. Norwich's recent bicentennial is the basis for a campus logo, an online countdown clock, and the cornerstone of a major fundraising campaign. This vision of Norwich's history is purely laudatory, encouraging the campus community to focus only on historical accomplishments through soundbites.

Our inquiry into the past decentered students accustomed to this anodyne view of Norwich University. Educators who incorporate diversity or social justice topics in the classroom can expect a certain amount of student resistance, particularly if the instructors are regarded as members of an affected demographic. Compositionist Karen Kopelson (2003) developed a technique to address this resistance through the instructor's "performance of neutrality," in which "teachers work with and, in many cases, work against their own identity markers and, in that process, to work with and against student antagonism to identities and issues of difference more generally" (p. 121). This pedagogical pretense, one that I had utilized to the best of my ability, requires that the instructor perform a "reappropriation of traditional academic postures, such as authority, objectivity, and neutrality" (p. 118). These three qualities -- "authority, objectivity, and neutrality" -- were impossible for me to exemplify in the eyes of the students. Several regarded me as a triple threat, a (a) low status (b) female (c) civilian instructor. When I had raised the topic of gender-biased language as a subject for discussion, my actions were perceived as anti-male and anti-historical. A few students also equated my lack of uniform with inexperience and judged the content of my course to be inappropriate. I had not anticipated the schism between civilian and Corps students in connection to this Creed, nor did I know that my class would be nearly all male. Finally, students mistook critique for criticism, viewing academic discussion of the Cadet's Creed as a threat to an "Old Corps" tradition. In hindsight, the tension in the classroom was inevitable.

My reflection situates the Cadet's Creed unit within campus tensions surrounding student impressions of legitimacy, issues of identity, and institutional notions of history. Insights gleaned from this first iteration point to pedagogical strategies that could assist students in coping with an academic activity that challenged aspects of their worldview. Now that I understand these pressure points within the classroom, I am better equipped to guide students, especially the cadets, through a research topic that genuinely disturbed them. We cannot pretend to be objective when we first learn that a campus hero, and by extension our own university, contributed to harmful, discriminatory practices of the past. This resistance is something that I can proactively monitor and further research as a topic for my own professional development. Thanks to the forum, I have stronger ties with the staff in the Office of the Commandant, who can explain that academic research projects about the history of the Corps of Cadets do not threaten its authority. I can also bring in "the brass," so to speak, to reinforce my credibility and institutional affiliation. Trusted colleagues such as deans and department chairs could contribute guest lectures, sharing their expertise while I again attempt a "performance of neutrality" and implement pedagogical techniques that manage cognitive dissonance through mindful listening (Berila, 2016).

Conclusion

The Cadet's Creed project models one way that archival research, both physical and digital, can draw students into a challenging national conversation about complex institutional artifacts. Through activities guided by the Discourse Historical Approach of CDS, my class participated in a retrospective critique that promoted a diachronic view of the Cadet's Creed in connection to discourse, context, and power in society. As Reisigl and Wodak explain (2000), the Discourse Historical Approach "aims at the revision of an actual 'picture' or 'narrative' of history and, in consequence and in the future, at a new responsible way of dealing with the past and its effects" (p. 35). Over the course of the unit, archival texts and secondary sources added depth and nuance, which revised students' "picture" of the Cadet's Creed.

In 1919, K.R.B. Flint was thinking about institutional history and legacy when he wrote the inscription emblazoned on the Centennial Gates:

In the centuries to come let
All who enter through this
Gate be faithful to the past. (126)

A recent post on the Kreitzberg Library Archives blog can be seen as a symbolic gateway, one that is appropriate for our digital age and our university's recent bicentennial. Titled "The Cadet's Creed Rings True for 90 Years" (2017), the blog post briefly mentions my project and then reframes Flint's legacy, describing him as "controversial" figure with a connection to eugenics. A link on this post connects to Flint's entry in the University of Vermont's online eugenics archive. This hyperlink invites readers to click through a digital gateway and "be faithful to the past," to acknowledge a significant episode in Norwich University's history and consider its legacy.

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