

**The Nature of War Conference, September 9-14, 2007
(Oxford, UK)**

**Arkansas Tech University
Faculty Development Grant--Results
Dr. Adam B. Lowther, Assistant Professor of Political Science**

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ABSTRACT

I received \$3,050 to cover the cost of attending the Nature of War conference at Christ Church College-Oxford University from September 9-14, 2007. The conference was designed to allow junior scholars and others the opportunity to garner insights into the many facets of war and how it is fought in the age of global terrorism by providing five days of intensive lectures from the most respected scholars in the field of War Studies. It was also an opportunity to network with other scholars for the purpose of collaboration on future research and teaching projects. Since my work focuses on the manner in which the United States wages asymmetric conflict, this conference was invaluable to assisting me in my current research project, *Terrorism's Unanswered Questions*. My next research project will be my third book, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq*, and will examine American counterinsurgency efforts during the Iraq War.

In addition to providing useful insights for research, the Nature of War conference provided me with a wealth of material for the courses I teach on war. National Security Policy, American Defense and Foreign Policy and Introduction to Strategic Studies are

three of my courses that are devoted to the subject. Others courses such as International Relations and American Government will also benefit from conference material since they have components that relate to conflict. Students, whom I assist with independent research projects primarily related to conflict, will, in the future, profit from the knowledge I brought back to Tech.

PURPOSE OF THE CONFERENCE

In the 21st Century, is war changing its nature as well as its character? Many of war's features today are less new than we sometimes think. Non-state actors were as much a feature of warfare in the 15th and 16th centuries as they are of our own. Non-combatants were as likely to become victims of war in previous generations as in ours; and many civilians were prompted themselves to take up arms, often regardless of age and sex. Historical perspectives on war are therefore one way in which we can analyze it, and also understand what is really new and what simply seems to be new. By spending a week with the leading scholars in the field, listening to the insights they provided, I am now better able to understand the answer to the question asked above and able to inform my current and future research with this information. I am also incorporating the material into my teaching. The purpose of the conference was exploratory and provided the greatest result in shaping the scope and direction of future work.

SIGNIFICANCE

My most recent work, *Americans and Asymmetric Conflict: Lebanon, Somalia and Afghanistan*, which is available at Amazon.com, examines the question above by looking at three recent American conflicts. In addition to this work, I recently published a prescriptive piece that appeared in the October 2006 issue of *Proceedings*. In “Toward and Adaptive Naval Doctrine” I examine the changing nature of naval combat and suggest that the United States Navy modify its doctrine and return to a force posture where sailors are capable urban warriors. Other scholars have also published widely concerning the nature of warfare and how it is evolving in the 21st century. The current scholarship on the nature of war varies so widely that there is no consensus, nor is there a dominant perspective. With the lectures at the Nature of War conference designed to explore the fundamental aspects of warfare, I gained valuable understanding of conflict and its evolving understanding. I can now inform my current project, *Terrorism’s Unanswered Questions*, and my next project, *Insurgency and Counter-insurgency in Iraq*, with these insights.

ATTAINMENT OF OBJECTIVES

Attendance at the Nature of War conference was exploratory in its objectives. Thus, copious notes and in-depth discussions with senior scholars was the fruit of my participation. I had the opportunity to speak with the author of the most respected work on Fourth Generation Warfare (T.X. Hammes), faculty from the Navy War College (USA), Oxford “Dons” and faculty of the War Studies Department at Kings College.

DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

The results of the conference will be incorporated into the two research projects I mentioned, as well as my courses. There will not, however, be a specific set of results that will derive from the conference. The conference was primarily informative.

CONCLUSIONS

After spending the better part of a week with some of Britain's leading scholars of war, it is apparent that there is great potential to expand the study of war in American university's, which largely neglect the subject and lag behind their British counterparts in this field of study. I hope to be on the leading edge of this endeavor as a member of the Tech faculty. Our initial step of creating a minor in Strategic Studies is an excellent first step to bringing the study of war and strategy to Tech students.