



## **Beyond Boyd: Maneuver Warfare Theory and Practice for the 21st Century**

### **Entry Requirement**

This course is designed for Marines in the ranks of sergeant and above, and has a prerequisite assignment to assess each applicant's suitability: In an essay of no more than 750 words answer the following question:

***MCDP-1 was last revised in 1997. Is Warfighting due for another revision? Why or why not?***

To submit, send your prerequisite ESSAY to the following EMAIL: [MCU\\_CDET\\_ContinuingEducation@usmcu.edu](mailto:MCU_CDET_ContinuingEducation@usmcu.edu) under the SUBJECT heading: **BEYOND BOYD PREREQUISITE ESSAY SUBMIT.**

### **COURSE FORMAT**

Anticipate approximately 6 hours of work per week for 9 weeks. The format for the first 8 weeks is to read, view, and listen to the assignments and then participate in a group discussion as well as several Decision-Forcing Cases (DFC). The group discussion and DFCs should be a constructive back-and-forth exchange of ideas and views, increasing understanding of the topic through a sharing of ideas and posing of questions. Grading is entirely subjective. At the conclusion of week 8, the knowledge gained and

familiarity with the course content will help you write a 1,200 – 1,500 word assessment paper during week 9.

## **COURSE GOAL**

This course is part of a Marine Corps University initiative to foster a deeper understanding of maneuver warfare concepts and the relevance of MCDP 1 in the 21st century. It seeks to contribute to this goal by developing Marine Leader-Teachers who understand Maneuver Warfare and are prepared to facilitate a College of Continuing Education course on MCDP-1 and foster maneuver warfare capability within their organizations.

MCDP-1 states, "Maneuver warfare is a warfighting philosophy that seeks to shatter the enemy's cohesion through a variety of rapid, focused, and unexpected actions which create a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation with which the enemy cannot cope." If nothing else, this course is intended to help the Marine Corps move past a superficial, spatial understanding to focus on the most important parts of this definition: shattering the enemy's cohesion through a variety of rapid, focused, and unexpected actions which create a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation with which the enemy cannot cope.

## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

This course is a critical examination of MCDP 1 and its implementation informed by study of the history of the maneuver warfare movement; the conceptual contributions of Sun Tzu, John Boyd, and other theorists; the current and future operating environment; and the latest thinking on conflict by likely U.S. adversaries. This course is part of a College of Continuing Education (CCE) initiative to support CMC's guidance to reinvigorate maneuver warfare within the Marine Corps. Students of all backgrounds who complete this course with satisfactory performance will be qualified to teach the forthcoming CDET elective offering on MCDP 1 titled *Warfighting*, and some may be qualified to teach onsite and online seminar offerings of this same *Beyond Boyd* course.

This course is divided into eight seminar lessons followed by an individual-effort final assessment.

### **Lesson 1: The Maneuver Warfare Movement in the U.S. Marine Corps**

This lesson will provide learners with a background on why the Marine Corps adopted Warfighting as its fundamental philosophy of war in 1989.

## **Lesson 2: Revisiting Sun Tzu**

This lesson promotes a deeper understanding of Sun Tzu's theory and its importance within maneuver warfare. By studying the historical and philosophical context, and then revisiting Sun Tzu's words, learners should be able to appreciate some fundamentally different themes from those developed from the Western tradition, yet which remain important to maneuver warfare and Warfighting doctrine.

## **Lesson 3: John Boyd's Master Synthesis**

In this lesson learners will focus on John Boyd as the thinker who synthesized a very diverse range of theories and historical analyses to develop the theory behind maneuver warfare. Learners will see that it requires considerable effort to understand Boyd's message. The reward is a much richer understanding than the oversimplified OODA loop so many believe to be his major contribution.

## **Lesson 4: Looking Beyond Boyd**

The readings in this lesson focus on ideas that grew from those people who had been promoters of maneuver warfare in one form or another. With the benefit of more than two decades since the maneuverists attempted to progress beyond Boyd, we should critically examine these ideas to assess their utility.

## **Lesson 5: Warfighting: Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1**

This lesson provides learners with an opportunity to re-engage MCDP 1 and its supporting publications with the benefit of a more sophisticated understanding of its theoretical and historical context than they probably had during earlier readings of this doctrine. Its purpose is to evaluate this fundamental doctrine and the degree to which it can promote the Marine Corps to be a maneuverist force, as well as any doctrinal shortcomings that may present obstacles to this goal.

## **Lesson 6: Facilitating Maneuver Warfare**

This lesson addresses the ways in which maneuver warfare can be promoted within an organization, and helps learners see that maneuver warfare really does require a cultural shift--The way it is taught is just as important as what is actually taught. Learners must consider which techniques can be used to foster both the development of a maneuver warfare culture and the capability to do maneuver warfare.



## **Lesson 7: The U.S. Marine Corps and Potential U.S. Adversaries**

This lesson is focused on considering the organizational impacts of the maneuver warfare movement. It considers the ways and degree to which General Gray's intended reforms made the Marine Corps a maneuverist organization, and some of the ways and reasons the Marine Corps may have fallen short of this goal. This lesson also examines the way potential adversaries may be exploiting such weakness, or are otherwise beginning to think and act, in maneuverist ways.

## **Lesson 8: Maneuver Warfare and Future War**

This lesson is more abstract and futurist, examining the relevance of maneuver warfare to future war by theoretically considering its relevance and applicability in the longer-term changing character of war.

### **Final Assessment**

Write an essay of a quality suitable for publication and be no more than 1,500 words answering the following question: Should the Marine Corps revise MCDP-1?

### **Course Materials:**

All course materials are available on the Moodle learning management system. Learners are not required to obtain any additional textbooks or other sources to complete this course.

### **Assessments**

Learners will be evaluated through two types of assessment activities:  
70 percent for discussion\* contribution.  
30 percent for the essay final assessment.

A mastery score of 80 percent for the entire course is required to pass.

\*Note: Each learner will participate in and critically evaluate several Decision-Forcing Cases (DFCs). ***Those learners who desire to qualify as instructors for the Warfighting General Scholarly Elective will lead a decision-forcing case as a pass/fail requirement.***

## **FACULTY BIO**

Shawn P. Callahan is the director of *The Theory and Nature of War* course within the U.S Marine Corps Command and Staff College Distance Education

Program. He served as an F-18D Weapons and Sensors Officer in the Marine Corps for 22 years before retiring as a lieutenant colonel in 2014. During that time he participated in combat and contingency deployments to Europe, the Middle East, and the Western Pacific. He earned a BS from the U.S. Naval Academy and an MA in American history from the George Washington University, and is a doctoral candidate in American History at the University of Maryland. Between his active duty assignments and civilian employment, Mr. Callahan has 12 years of teaching experience in the military education system.

