



**FEMA**

R5204

Dear National Fire Academy Student:

By now you should have received an email from the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) Admissions Office. This notification indicates your acceptance into the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), National Fire Academy (NFA) “Applications in the Exercise of Leadership: Capstone II” (R5204) course.

The course materials for this course are now available in the NFA Online Mediated platform. This web-based system will provide not only the Student Manual (SM), but formal discussions, activities and electronic submission for all course work assignments. You will, or already have, received instructions specific to accessing your NFA Online Mediated account for this specific course. You are expected to bring your laptop or other device capable of completing online education requirements, including completing in-class assignments. Your pre-course assignments will also be available in the NFA Online Mediated classroom.

This is a six-day class that starts on a Sunday at 8:00 a.m. (EST). Subsequent classes will meet daily from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with evening activities possible.

The NFA classroom environment is computer based. Increased numbers of students and instructors are bringing laptop computers or other electronic devices to campus; you are responsible for the security and maintenance of your equipment. The NFA cannot provide computer software, hardware (which includes disks, printers, scanners, monitors, etc.), or technical support for your device. For your convenience, we do provide surge protector power strips at each classroom table.

If you need additional information related to your course’s content or requirements, please contact Mr. Edward Kensler Jr., training specialist, Leadership and Partnership Branch, at 301-447-1158, or by email at [edward.kenslerjr@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:edward.kenslerjr@fema.dhs.gov). Good luck, and I hope to see you on campus.

Sincerely,

Eriks J. Gabliks, Superintendent  
National Fire Academy  
U.S. Fire Administration

Enclosure

December 2023

*R5204 Exercise of Executive  
Leadership: Capstone II*

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Pre-Course

March 2023

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## **Module 1: Capstone Research Paper**

Students will upload the Capstone Research Paper (CRP) prior to arrival at the National Fire Academy. Complete CRP-related information can be found in the CRP Research Guidelines, as well as in *M5104 Applications in the Exercise of Leadership: Capstone I*.

### **Pre-Course Assignment 1**

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Upload your CRP and the approved research proposal form that you received in *M5104 Applications in the Exercise of Leadership: Capstone I*.

# Module 2: Capstone Presentation

## Pre-Course Assignment 2

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Upload the PowerPoint presentation (PPT) prior to course arrival. Note: the PPTs will be used to preload presentations prior to student arrival and are not graded on their own.

Comprehensive guidance for the capstone presentation is in the **Student Manual**:

- **Unit 4: Capstone Research Presentations**
- **Appendix A: Preparing and Delivering the Capstone Presentation**
- **Appendix B: Capstone Presentation Examples.**

You should consult the instructions for **Activity 4.1: Capstone Research Paper (CRP) Presentation**, along with the **Capstone Research Paper (CRP) Presentation Rubric**, to ensure you understand the scope of the activity and criteria by which you will be graded. Be sure to watch the video embedded in the activity! (See the *Harvard Business Review* article "[How to Give a Killer Presentation](#)" [Anderson, 2013].)

## Module 3: Preparation for Gettysburg Staff Ride

**Please read this entire module and Student Manual carefully!** It is very important that, between now and your departure for Emmitsburg, you carefully plan your preparation with these listed requirements, balancing the other pre-course assignments accordingly. (And pack appropriately!)

### What Is a Staff Ride?

The staff ride will occur during the resident *R5204* course. The activity of a staff ride has military origins dating to the early part of the 20th Century. Military officers would travel to selected battlefields, prepared with at least some knowledge concerning the battle to be studied, and would be immersed within the battle by viewing and walking the ground under the guidance of military historians and other officers. Therefore, the purpose of a staff ride is to enjoin the participants in the pursuit of learning (critically) from an important historical event—in this case, the Battle of Gettysburg—with the intent of both integrating and transferring lessons that have value both professionally and personally. The Gettysburg Staff Ride as an element of the *R5204* course will identify five cases or phases of the Battle of Gettysburg, along with staff who operated there, specifically studying and discussing their use of authority, influence, and decision-making (i.e., the exercise of leadership).

A staff ride is much more than a guided tour of the area in which the event occurred.

Through preparation (this letter and the requirements listed), observation, analysis, and discussion—and in partnership with an interpretive, federally Licensed Battlefield Guide, the *R5204* course facilitators, and their colleagues—each participant should expect to examine and potentially modify their existing perceptions regarding the use of authority and the behavior of exercising leadership. Since *R5204* is the EFO Program capstone course, this activity should be viewed similarly, as a capstone EFO Program activity.

### Pre-course Assignment 3\*

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*\*Mark “complete” in the learning management system (LMS); no upload required.*

View the movie *Gettysburg*. The movie *Gettysburg* was released in 1993 by New Line Cinema and is available via online streaming platforms. It remains widely available on DVD format at minimal cost. The movie is 4 hr and 14 min long. The movie was adapted to screenplay format from the novel *The Killer Angels*, authored in 1974 by Michael Shaara. The author received the Pulitzer Prize for this writing.

The participant is reminded that Sharra’s work is historical fiction. Most of the characters existed, and the events that are portrayed occurred, but the movie is an adapted screenplay of the book, which is not completely accurate. A useful way to think about the movie is that it is about 70% historically accurate. However, the movie will provide the *R5204* participant a fairly accurate review of the battle and provide an introduction of most subjects that will be discussed during the staff ride. **(To separate fact from fiction, it is recommended that you read the**

**book *Gettysburg: A Testing of Courage* by Noah Andre Trudeau before you view the movie.)** While viewing the movie, the following five questions should be contemplated. The participant is encouraged to make notes for each question as you view the movie:

- Heifetz and Linsky (2002) state that “it becomes critically important to communicate in every way possible the reason to sacrifice...people need to know that the stakes are worth it.” Who has done a better job of this—General Lee or Colonel Chamberlain? Explain your answer.  
(Background note: General Robert E. Lee is the commanding general of the Army of Northern Virginia during the Gettysburg campaign. In essence, he is “the CEO” of his army at Gettysburg, responsible for approximately 75,000 soldiers. Colonel Joshua Chamberlain is a Regimental Officer of the 20th Maine Regiment. He is at the 5th level within the hierarchy of the Union Army of the Potomac at Gettysburg and has direct responsibility for approximately 380 soldiers).
- Organizational culture was a significant influence on both Lee and Chamberlain. In what ways are the organizational cultures of both the North and South armies similar to those of today’s fire and EMS?
- Heifetz et al. (2009) recommend that “integrating your ambitions and aspirations” is a way of “staying connected to your purpose.” How does this statement apply to the Union Regimental Commander Colonel J. Chamberlain on the afternoon of July 2 while defending the left of the Union line?
- One can argue that Lee was “connected to his purpose” through his close “integration of his ambitions and aspirations.” Heifetz et al. (2009) explain that “having a sense of purpose is essential to the practice of leadership,” but they warn that “purpose can also become a constraint.” What are some of the common traps that Lee may have fallen into?
- Prior to and during the Battle of Gettysburg, the perceptions of soldiers on both sides were that a great battle was forthcoming and that loss would most likely be significant. Where might the Battle of Gettysburg fall within the Heifetz and Linsky model of the “Zone of Productivity?” Why?

**While not required, it is strongly recommended that you read Trudeau’s book, as it will support not only the entire story of the Gettysburg campaign, including the Battle of Gettysburg, but also provide sufficient information for participation in the case assignment that will happen on campus.**

#### **Pre-course Assignment 4\***

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*\*Mark “complete” in the LMS; no upload required.*

#### **Adopt an Identity**

You will be assigned the identity of a Battle of Gettysburg officer in the LMS. Several participants in the course will be assigned the same identity. In advance, you are to perform some reading and study to get to know this assigned officer. **The expectation is that**



**participants will familiarize themselves with their assigned personality, and a Wikipedia-type search is acceptable.**

Be prepared to provide a brief presentation (i.e., 1–2 min) in the field about this assigned person, to include both background and battle performance.

You will be assigned one of these personalities: Lee, Meade, Reynolds, Buford, Ewell, Longstreet, Sickles, Chamberlain, Hancock, or Lincoln.

### **Pre-course Assignment 5\***

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*\*Mark “complete” in the LMS; no upload required.*

You will be assigned one of five Gettysburg Cases the LMS. **Review the Case Assignments within the Student Manual prior to arrival.**

Review Activity 3.1 Gettysburg Staff Ride Case Presentation and Activity 3.2 Gettysburg Staff Ride Integration thoroughly.

While the pre-coursework is not graded, please ensure that you are prepared because Activity 3.1 WILL BE GRADED when on campus.

### **Logistics Planning**

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It is important for your personal well-being and safety that each participant is properly prepared for the staff ride. Depending on the time of year that your *R5204* course is scheduled, there may be the potential for weather implications that will necessitate the packing of clothing items to accompany you to Emmitsburg.

Consider these aspects:

- For the staff ride, plan on wearing comfortable clothing, particularly in warm weather months. In colder months, consider layering and head protection, along with gloves. Footwear should be comfortable and depending on precipitation at the time of the staff ride, water resistive shoes or boots may be required.
- If you are particularly or even moderately sensitive to sun, ensure that you bring sunscreen with the SPF rating that you require. Additionally, bring your own bug spray for tick protection.
- While water is normally provided, you may wish to bring a personal container. As you know, in warmer weather this is important to maintain hydration levels.
- Bring an umbrella for your own personal use, along with perhaps a small poncho or water resistive covering.
- Finally, please prepare for any potential medical needs (e.g., glucose for low blood sugar, an EpiPen for an allergic reaction, etc.).

- If you have mobility issues which may prevent you from negotiating terrain, notify the National Fire Academy in advance so this can be accommodated.

Throughout the staff ride, efforts will be made to provide access to public restrooms whenever practical, but please keep in mind that availability of facilities may be very limited, especially on the field. Although the coach used for the ride usually has a bathroom, it is normally considered to be for emergencies. This information is offered in advance to assist in planning for your personal comfort.

In summary, the staff ride is “a rain or shine event” that requires proper preparation. The National Fire Academy will do everything possible to enable the staff ride to occur, regardless of the time of year that your *R5204* course is scheduled. However, as safety and health are of paramount concern, any adverse situation that would place anyone in harm’s way will result in an alternative delivery method.