The Purpose of the Case Method

The case system, properly used, initiates students into the ways of independent thought and responsible judgement.\(^1\)

Charles I. Gragg

The object of the instruction is less to acquire positive knowledge than to develop the habit of thinking, so as to insure action from foresight rather than impulse.\(^2\)

Emory Upton

The primary purpose of the case method is to provide a Marine with the ability to quickly make sense of a complex situation, rapidly arrive at a suitable response, and swiftly communicate that decision to others. In other words, the experience of working through decision-forcing cases makes a Marine more capable of independent, responsible, and mutually cooperative action than he would otherwise be.

In the course of achieving its primary purpose, the case method also accomplishes a number of other things, each of which is valuable in its own right. By exciting the interest of students, the case method fosters interest in professional military education. By placing such things in a lively context, the case method facilitates the learning of techniques, procedures, nomenclature, and conventions. By providing both a forum for discussion and concrete topics to discuss, the case method encourages professional dialog. By giving Marines practice in the art of decision-making, the case method refines professional judgement. By asking difficult questions, the case method empowers Marines to reflect upon the peculiar demands of the profession of arms.

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