

DAVIS

PRESIDENT OF THE NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, Rhode Island
02840

21 February 1978

Dear Vince,

I'm sorry to be so late acknowledging your good letters and valuable enclosures of 19 and 31 December. Things have been pretty busy around here, but they didn't stop me from reading your recommendations and taking them very seriously. I welcome your advice, and the time and care you put in setting it down. After I went over it, I passed the material to my course assistant Joe Brennan, philosophy Professor Emeritus of Columbia U., who was up here last weekend, and he agrees with me that your experience and wisdom have produced a number of suggestions we've got to give much thought to. Kant's Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals is on our tentative reading list. Over the past weekend we worked out a reading list, tentative course description, and title -- "Foundations of Moral Obligation" -- all subject to change before we lock the course in.

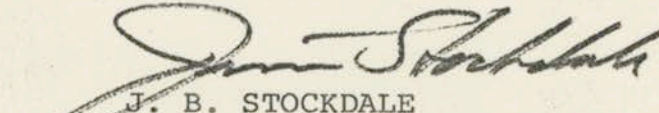
I'm inclined to the idea that the best way to present my elective is as a straight course in moral philosophy, letting the military applications come out of the principles, rather than starting with military situations. These, I hope, will shake out in the discussions as we go along. Any way you take it, it's a challenging task, and that's why I was so glad to get your good advice and suggestions. That Whitehead quote on imparting information is great, and I liked the letter from the lady whose barn roof fell in while she was trying to finish her term paper for you. I agree with you that Reinhold Niebuhr is stronger on American society than he is on international politics.

Things are moving here, and I'm pleased with a new elective system I'm putting through. The faculty seems to like the idea too.

Thanks again, Vince, for your interest and advice. Your material is going to be kept close at hand as we work this thing through.

Let us keep in touch.

Sincerely,


J. B. STOCKDALE
Vice Admiral, U. S. Navy

Professor Vincent Davis
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Enclosures

(A Proposed course description and Reading List): I Am not in concrete on these, so please keep them to yourself. Everybody raises the issue of "practicality" and "military application". Hell, I'll be giving the lectures. You can bet that I can point out the practicality. Also, I'm giving credit for this course. It can't be just a good 'ol boys' bull session. (I know you understand + probably agree with my views).

COURSE DESCRIPTION

(ELECTIVE)

FOUNDATIONS OF MORAL OBLIGATION

(Stockdale)

Since Socrates, moral philosophy has been taught both as a technical discipline and as a guide to life. Basic ideas to be discussed in this course include right, good, honor, duty, freedom, necessity, law, justice, happiness, insofar as these pertain to the human situation generally and to the military ethos in particular. Lecture topics, discussions and readings will be drawn from both classical and modern sources including the Old Testament, the Socratic dialogues of Plato, the ethical writings of Aristotle, Kant, Mill, and Sartre. There will be supplemental readings in Emerson, Thoreau, Dostoyevsky, Conrad, Koestler, Kafka, Solzhenitsyn.

TENTATIVE READING LIST FOR ELECTIVE
FOUNDATIONS OF MORAL OBLIGATION (Stockdale)

Job	Book of (Old Testament)
Plato	Apology, Crito, Phaedo
Aristotle	Nichomachean Ethics (selections)
Epictetus	Enchiridion
Kant	Fundamental Principles of Metaphysics of Morals
Mill	Utilitarianism
Emerson	"Self-Reliance" in Emerson, Essays
Sartre	"Existentialism is a Humanism" in W. Kaufmann, Existentialism
Monod	Chance and Necessity
Wittgenstein	Norman Malcolm, Ludwig Wittgenstein: a Memoir
Stockdale	Selected Writings and Addresses

PARTIAL LIST OF LITERARY WORKS THAT MAY BE
CHOSEN TO SUPPLEMENT ABOVE: all novels --

Conrad	Typhoon
Kafka	The Trial
Koestler	Darkness at Noon
Camus	The Plague
Solzhenitsyn	One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch
Heller	Catch 22
Dostoevsky	The Brothers Karamazov (The Grand Inquisitor) Notes from the Underground
Crane	The Open Boat