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Case Study Method: A Teaching Tool in Homeland Security and Emergency Management Education

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EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

The Case Study Method

A Teaching Tool in Homeland Security and Emergency Management
Education

Al Lawrence, J.D.

Jim Savitt, Ph.D.

Empire State College



Origins

- Originated in medical and law schools
- Adopted by Harvard and Northwestern business schools



Original Purposes

- Make study legitimate, as in other professional schools
- Lack of materials
- Encourage student involvement
- Greater analysis
- Develop professional expertise
- Real experience and best practices



Present Purposes

- Rapid changes in organizations, technology
- Professionals change careers
- No point in teaching skills, content
- Teach critical thinking
- How to think on feet
- Expose students to complexity and uncertainty



Good case studies

- Timely
- Relevant
- Combine narrative and quantitative data
- Realistic
- Promote active learning
- Constructivist theory
- Can be simple or 40-50 pages
- *Require consideration from multiple perspectives*



Student Preferences

- Studies show students dislike *ambiguity*
- Want certain answers, tangible results, closure
- Don't like being left up in the air
- Students like simple, easy cases
- Want all the information they need to solve problems
- Not accustomed to being asked their opinions



Instructor Preferences

- More complicated, layered scenarios
- Reality is that all facts not always available
- Not clear what facts are relevant or what weight to give them



Instructor Responsibilities

- Be flexible, reflective facilitators of knowledge
- Socratic questioning
- Create safe environment for students to risk behaviors and express opinions
- Keep discussions on track
- Create community of life-long learning



John Dewey (1933)

- “Only by wrestling with the conditions of the problem at hand, seeking and finding his own way out, does he think....[I]f he cannot devise his own solution...and find his own way out he will not learn, not even if he can recite some correct answer with one-hundred percent accuracy.”



Cesare Beccaria

- “The history of mankind is an immense sea of errors, in which a few obscure truths may here and there be found.”



John Stuart Mill

- “The only way in which a human being can make some approach to knowing the whole of a subject is by hearing what can be said about it by persons of every variety of opinion and studying all modes in which it can be looked at by every character of mind. No wise man ever acquired his wisdom in any mode but this.”



Sources of Case Studies

- Video presentations (PBS, “60 Minutes”)
- Guest speakers
- Newspaper or journal articles
- Role plays
- Films
- Books



Harvard Case Studies

- JFK School of Government sells case studies on public policy, ethics, international relations, law enforcement, leadership, national security, public administration, technology, terrorism
- Online tutorial on teaching by case study
- Harvard Business School case studies on project management *and other topics*



Air University

- “Lessons learned” case studies on leadership, values and ethics, war on terrorism, homeland security



Other Sources

- Naval War College on the national security environment and institutions
- Maxwell School at Syracuse University/School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins
- FEMA EMI online *Emergency and Risk Management Case Studies Textbook*
- FEMA courses in Decision Making in Crisis, Flood Plain Management, Social Dimensions of Disaster



Full Texts

- Many books on disasters, 9/11, etc.
- Science professor uses Michael Crichton's novel *State of Fear* as case study on global climate change
- Film "Under Siege," challenge accuracy, study underlying facts



Another Approach

- DIY
 - A Case Study
 - Thacher, David: "The Local Role in Homeland Security," 39 Law and Society Review 635-76 [September 2005]
 - Excerpts from the article (in the next four slides)
 - Multiple disciplines / issues simultaneously
 - Several disciplines / issues singly
 - Classroom or on-line case analysis
 - Team-based or solo
 - Post-analysis follow up with full article or larger excerpts



Excerpts from Thacher (General Background:
Credit to <http://www.wordle.net>)

Wordle Applet



Print...

