

# 1 What to think about as you watch

Much in the movie is relevant to what we do in this class. We watch the movie over three days. To orient our overarching purpose in watching the film, consider the quote from CBB:

"War is the collective pursuit of a dangerous activity. But the collective pursuit occurs person by person. Why do individuals participate in war, whether voluntary or conscripted? In battle, what makes the fighting unit stay together as a collective, even as the lives of the individuals are at stake? What are the hidden actions individual soldiers and commanders might wish to take advantage of? What are the observable, low-cost proxies that may serve as signaling and screening devices? How is the reward and punishment system structured? What sorts of formal and informal contracts govern the relation between and among the various players in the military?"

Brauer, Jurgen; van Tuyl, Hubert. Castles, Battles, and Bombs: How Economics Explains Military History (Kindle Locations 1105-1109). University of Chicago Press. Kindle Edition. p. 38 in paperback edition (Chapter 1).

There are other parts of the movie that are interesting—and of interest to themes of the class—as well. Here is a list of some of them:

1. Teamwork
  - (a) On the beach
    - i. How important to each individuals' probability of living?
    - ii. How important to success of mission?
  - (b) The Captain's role
    - i. Manager?
    - ii. Leader?
  - (c) Taking out machine gun (day 2 of our watching):
    - i. How important to each individuals' probability of living?
    - ii. How important to success of mission?
2. Informational issues: Opportunities to shirk:
  - (a) (day 2 of our watching) Can you imagine the eight-man patrol carrying out their assignment differently (cops and doughnut shop)
  - (b) During battle scenes?
3. Modeling: how did planners assess what size invasion force they would need?

4. Mexican standoff scene:

Thucydides in *The Peloponnesian War*: (Harmondsworth, Mddsx., 1954, p. 49)

What made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the *fear* which this caused in Sparta (italics mine)

Thomas Schelling in *The Strategy of Conflict* , Harvard University, Cambridge MA and London UK, 1960, 1980, ISBN 0-674-84031-3

“[I]f I go downstairs to investigate a noise at night, with a gun in my hand, and find myself face to face with a burglar who has a gun in his hand, there is a danger of an outcome that neither of us desires. Even if he prefers to leave quietly, and I wish him to, there is a danger that he may think I want to shoot, and shoot first. Worse, there is danger that he may think that I think he wants to shoot. Or he may think that I think he thinks I want to shoot. And so on”(Schelling, 1960, p. 207).

## 1.1 Broader issues

Shooting prisoners, rules of war

## 2 Some perspective

[https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/2016/0516\\_dday/docs/d-day-fact-sheet-the-beaches.pdf](https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/2016/0516_dday/docs/d-day-fact-sheet-the-beaches.pdf)

"Utah Beach. Utah was the most western beach between Pouppeville and La Madeleine, three miles long, assigned to the U.S. 1st Army, 7th Corps. Casualties were the lightest of all landings – out of 23,000 troops, only 197 men were killed or wounded"

"Omaha Beach. Omaha was between Sainte-Honorine-des-Pertes and Vierville-surMer, six miles long (largest). Taking Omaha was the U.S. 1st Army, 5th Corps' responsibility, with sea transport from the U.S. Navy and elements of the Royal Navy. The movie Saving Private Ryan portrays some events here. The 1st Infantry assault experienced the worst ordeal of DDay operations. The Americans suffered 2,400 casualties, but 34,000 Allied troops landed by night-fall"

<https://www.dday-overlord.com/en/d-day/beaches/omaha-beach/2>

On Omaha, five waves. First wave: 1450 soldiers.



### 3 Contextual background

The picture is of Vanderbilt students on Omaha Beach. It would have been a long way to go, under artillery and rifle/machine gun fire, on June 6 1944.

1. "pre-sighted, ... dead men": Artillery (German in this case) had set their artillery to hit a particular location on the beach—somebody earlier had watched the artillery send "marker rounds" towards the location and then called in adjustments until they were on the mark. This allows the artillery to quickly fire at all the pre-sighted spots on the beach.
2. Beach obstacles: the crossed steel girders were set up to make sure the invaders had to come at low tide, making the attack across the beach a longer, harder slog.
3. "Where are we?" No GPS back then.
4. "88's": a type of German artillery; Deuce-and-a-half: a truck that carries either men or supplies or both; "change out barrels": machine guns if used continuously heat up their barrels, and they will warp if they are not changed out with a spare barrel before they get too hot..
5. FUBAR: acronym for "\*\*\*\*\* up beyond all repair."
6. Sullivan brothers: five brothers who had all been assigned to the same ship, which was attacked, leading to the death of all five. The armed forces changed their policy and stopped allowing all brothers to be assigned to the same unit. This was allegedly continued in Vietnam—but with some

notable exceptions: Larry and Dan Lewis (they were in my company in Vietnam, but only one at a time was allowed to be "in the field," i.e., engaged in infantry operations); The Hagel brothers—one of which became a US Senator from Nebraska (R) and then Sec. of the Army under Obama (with lots of fellow Republicans trying to obstruct his appointment).

7. Dirt put in containers from Africa, Italy, and then France: The "European theater" of WWII started with the invasion North Africa in November 1942, followed by the invasion of Italy in 1943, and then the invasion of France.
8. Kasserine Pass: a location in North Africa where the US Army suffered a big defeat and in which US troops retreated in disorder.
9. Rangers: a more elite unit of soldiers. Like paratroopers, they would all have been volunteers.
10. "stick." This means the number of paratroopers who jump together from a single plane. Maybe 20 over Normandy? I'm not sure.
11. Dog tags: little metal things—two of them—with all of an individual's key personal information stamped into it, used to identify the dead/wounded. Carried on a little chain around the neck, or sometimes laced onto a boot.