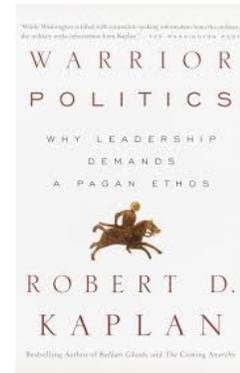




Read2Lead Module

Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos

by Robert D Kaplan



Book Summary from Good Reads: In *Warrior Politics*, the esteemed journalist and analyst Robert D. Kaplan explores the wisdom of the ages for answers for today's leaders. While the modern world may seem more complex and dangerous than ever before, Kaplan writes from a deeper historical perspective to reveal how little things actually change. Indeed, as Kaplan shows us, we can look to history's most influential thinkers, who would have understood and known how to navigate today's dangerous political waters.

Drawing on the timeless work of Sun Tzu, Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, among others, Kaplan argues that in a world of unstable states and an uncertain future, it is increasingly imperative to wrest from the past what we need to arm ourselves for the road ahead. Wide-ranging and accessible, *Warrior Politics* is a bracing book with an increasingly important message that challenges readers to see the world as it is, not as they would like it to be.

What is Read2Lead?

Read2Lead is a series of book studies published by the Center for Junior Officers, a small Army research center dedicated to empowering junior officers to develop themselves and their teams. Read2Lead modules give junior officers a ready-to-use product that they can integrate into leader professional development programs.

What's in this module?

Every Read2Lead module contains:

- A short summary of the book that you can circulate to prime people for reading
- Advice for running your Read2Lead session
- A series of questions that can be used in multiple sessions, with options for using the questions over different lengths of time
- Additional resources that may be helpful for the facilitator

What do I need to provide to run a Read2Lead program?

First, the time. Read2Lead sessions work best when they're done over multiple sessions, so participants can digest books in small "chunks" instead of trying to cram them in all at once. Make sure you give your participants enough time to read the book and not fake the funk.

Second, the books. Books can be purchased with a government purchase card if they remain in the hands of the unit. Buying books for a Read2Lead session can be a great kickstarter for a battalion or even brigade library. You can also provide the books to Soldiers with the expectation that they pass them along to another Soldier when they are done with them. If you choose this approach, you should ensure you mark the books appropriately per the purchasing regulations and legal guidance of your organization.

Third, the space. Read2Lead sessions should be conducted in spaces where everyone can hear and see one another. Be creative: maybe you do them as hip-pocket training on a range, or at the end of motor stables. Or as a brownbag lunch in a barracks dayroom.

When you run the actual session, think of it as a time for your Soldiers to think outside the box, discuss something beyond the day-to-day concerns of the unit, and improve their communication skills. The questions provided on the subsequent pages are a starting point, but feel free to add or substitute your own to make the session more meaningful for your Soldiers.

Warrior Politics Four Week Program Questions

Four weeks is the optimal timing for this book. It minimizes the number of pages Soldiers have to read every week and breaks the book into meaningful chunks. It may be helpful to start by circulating Kaplan's interview from 2012:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnHe5plfgSw> . Kaplan wrote *Warrior Politics* at the outset of the War in Afghanistan and the readers can analyze and frame this conversation with where the United States is today geo-politically.

Past Conflicts

Week 1: Chapters 1-3 (34 pages)

- Why do you think GEN Marshall referenced the fall of Athens for young Army officers? Specifically, what did the Athens of the Peloponnesian War have in common with the United States of Marshall's time? To answer this question, one may have to do further research on the Peloponnesian War (ref additional Resources).
- At the conclusion of Chapter 2, Kaplan compares the English Empire's pursuit of Mahdi to an American effort to destroy Usama Bin Laden. Being this book was published in 2002, how did Kaplan's prediction perform in Afghanistan?
- Consul Quintus Fabius Maximus remarked, "it is better that a wise enemy should fear you than that foolish friends should praise." Have you or your leaders displayed similar behavior? What does your unit do well or poorly that highlights Maximus' sentiment?

Armed Force Creates Options

Week 2: Chapters 4-6 (31 pages)

- On page 49, Kaplan finishes a quote by Thucydides, "which made them (Athenians) confuse their strength with their hopes." What conflicts in American history mirror this quote?
- "The power to hurt is bargaining power. To exploit it is diplomacy." How does this quote and Machiavelli's outlook tie back to Sun Tzu?
- How should Army leaders balance determinism and the outlook of Isaiah Berlin in regards to leadership and or strategy?

Armed Force Creates Foreign Policy Options

Week 3: Chapters 7-9 (37 pages)

- How do you feel about Hobbes' "sum of virtue" on page 81?
- How is Kant different from the other historical figures covered, thus far, in *Warrior Politics*? Why does Kaplan choose to juxtapose his ideals with the Holocaust?
- How does Kaplan's observation and prediction hold up from 2002 through 2020: "Now that America is ascendant, they copy our democracy. If we are weak militarily—if we aren't able to meet the rising challenge of warriors—our political values may be eclipsed entirely." (132-133)

A World Requiring Governance

Week 4: Chapters 10 and 11 (55 pages)

- Do you agree or disagree with Kaplan's assertion that "imperialism, [is] the most ordinary and dependable form of protection for ethnic minorities and others under violent assault" ? Utilize the arguments of the figures in the book to make a case for America's foreign policy in 2020.
- Why do you believe that Kaplan concluded *Warrior Politics* with the example of Tiberius? What themes does he encapsulate? What application does his example have in today's contemporary foreign policy debates?

Additional Resources:

- Need more on Hobbes? Try [Hobbes: A Guide for the Perplexed](#), written by a West Point faculty member.
- For a visual take on Sun Tzu, see "[Visualizing Sun Tzu's The Art of War](#)"
- Want to give your kid a head start on world domination? Check out [A Child's Machiavelli: A Primer on Power](#)
- A documentary on Athens in the Peloponnesian War: "[The Revolution, The Golden Age, and Empire of the Mind](#)" (Amazon prime link)

Warrior Politics Two Week Program Questions

If you cannot dedicate four weeks to reading and discussing the book, then you can utilize the following two-week program.

Bloody Politics

Week 1: Chapters 1-6 (65 pages)

- Which figures of history did you know the most about from the first six chapters? Choose and research a figure and explain what appealed about their philosophy or personal example to you as an Army leader.
- At the conclusion of Chapter 2, Kaplan compares the English Empire's pursuit of Mahdi to an American effort to destroy Usama Bin Laden. Being this book was published in 2002, how did Kaplan's prediction perform in Afghanistan?
- How do the philosophies portrayed in the first six chapters meld with the Army's model of leadership and or your own personal model of leadership? Kaplan outlines leaders who utilize threats, deceit, or naked force to achieve their goals. What American Army leaders have demonstrated similar characteristics?

Power, Values, and the pursuit of Governance

Week 2: Chapters 7-11 (76 pages)

- How is Kant different from the other historical figures covered, thus far, in *Warrior Politics*? Why does Kaplan choose to juxtapose his ideals with the Holocaust?
- After finishing the book, do you feel that America is more or less unique than before reading the book? Do you feel that the Kaplan's comparison to America being an empire is a fair assertion? Does the modern world still operate and require the wisdom of these ancient philosophers/statesmen?
- How do the philosophies portrayed in the first six chapters meld with the Army's model of leadership and or your own personal model of leadership? Kaplan outlines leaders who utilize threats, deceit, or naked force to achieve their goals. What American Army leaders have demonstrated similar characteristics?
- Do you feel more or less motivated to be an Army Leader after completing the book?

Additional Resources:

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- For a visual take on Sun Tzu, see “[Visualizing Sun Tzu’s The Art of War](#)”
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