

Society for Military History  
Policies and Procedures  
Marshall Lecture Committee Policy

**Purpose.** The George C. Marshall Lecture honors its namesake and signal contributions to the field of military history. Delivered at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, it demonstrates the field's breadth, heights, and importance to the profession at large. The Marshall Lecture Committee is responsible for selecting and inviting the Marshall Lecturer on an annual basis.

**Committee Composition.** The committee consists of the SMH vice president (chair), the president of the George C. Marshall Foundation, the director of the Adams Center for Military History, a second representative of the Marshall Foundation and two SMH members at large who are appointed to staggered, three-year terms.

**Procedures.**

- a. The committee chair will convene the committee remotely (i.e. via email, telephone, video conference, etc.) within three months of the most recent Marshall Lecture. The agenda for this meeting will be as follows:
  - i. Discussion of the most recent lecture (numbers in attendance, reception, etc.)
  - ii. Review of the slate of potential speakers remaining from the previous year's deliberations and informal nomination of additional candidates. The committee should consider the advice (if any) of the previous year's committee but is not bound by its recommendations.
  - iii. Discussion of candidates' merits and strategic considerations for sequencing based on fleeting opportunities, sustainable diversity, and thematic convergences (considering the conference theme or venue, the commemoration of anniversaries relevant to the speaker's work, etc.). The evaluation criteria will include:
    1. The significance of the speaker's body of scholarly work and/or signal contributions.
    2. The extent to which the speaker's reputation transcends the field of military history narrowly defined (and will thus appeal to a broader audience and expand that audience's conception of what constitutes military history).
    3. The extent to which the speaker represents and promotes the increased diversity of the field.
    4. The speaker's rhetorical skill.
    5. The extent to which the speaker's expertise reflects the theme of the conference at which he/she/they will speak or is otherwise relevant to the conference's venue in terms of strategic opportunities.
    6. Other strategic considerations per above and in the light of [past lectures](#).
  - iv. Formal nomination of speakers for *the next* Marshall Lecture only. Each member of the committee may make a single nomination, which must be seconded by another

committee member to be added to the ballot. Should the committee achieve consensus at this stage, the chair will extend an invitation to the desired speaker per paragraph 3c (below) without recourse to a ballot.

- v. Adjournment.
- b. The committee chair will submit the names of the nominees to the SMH business manager for an electronic ballot, which will go out to all committee members within two days. Committee members will have one week to vote, rank-ordering the speakers. The business manager will tabulate the results (awarding first-place votes 5 points, second-place votes 3 points, and third-place votes 1 point) and inform the committee of them. In the event of a tie, the business manager will send out a run-off ballot, again allowing a week for responses. Nominees who are not selected may remain in consideration for future lectures.
- c. Upon selecting the preferred speaker, the committee chair will invite that person to deliver the upcoming Marshall Lecture. An example letter of invitation is attached.
  - i. If the speaker accepts, the committee chair informs the committee and the SMH executive director, who assumes responsibility for further coordination.
  - ii. If the speaker declines due to a schedule conflict but indicates genuine regrets, the committee chair may—after consultation with the committee—re-extend the invitation for the following year and extend an invitation to the second-place vote-getter for the coming lecture. This is the only circumstance under which a committee may designate speakers beyond the upcoming lecture.
  - iii. If the speaker declines outright, the committee chair will extend the invitation to the second-place candidate. In this event, all members of the committee will exercise special discretion regarding the circumstances of the selection.
  - iv. If the alternate declines, the committee will reconvene and restart the process with a new slate of nominees (which may include those considered but polling third or lower).
  - v. Invitees who decline the invitation will be removed from the informal slate of potential speakers.

Dear Professor X:

I write today in my capacity as Vice President of the Society for Military History (SMH) to invite you to deliver the George C. Marshall Lecture on Military History for 2019. The Marshall Foundation and the SMH would be thrilled to have you deliver this lecture in any year, but it seems particularly appropriate that you do so at the peak of the semicentennial commemoration of America's war in Vietnam. As always, the venue will be the annual meeting of the American Historical Association (AHA), which is slated for Chicago, January 3-6, 2019. The lecture is tentatively planned for 5:30 pm, Saturday, January 5, 2019. We will be able to notify you well in advance if this time or date changes.

The purpose of the Marshall Lecture is to honor signal contributions to the field of military history, and to demonstrate that field's breadth and importance to the profession at large. Past Marshall Lecturers have included such renowned scholars as Drew Gilpin Faust, Paul Kennedy, John Shy, Ernest May, Allan R. Millett, Russell F. Weigley, Geoffrey Parker, Richard Kohn, Edward Coffman, Gerhard Weinberg, David Hackett Fischer, James McPherson, and Isabel Hull. We would be honored were you to take your deserved place on this list.

If you accept this invitation, the Society for Military History and the George C. Marshall Foundation will be happy to offer you a combined honorarium and travel stipend of \$3,000. In addition, the SMH requests the right to publish your lecture in *The Journal of Military History* without further payment, and the Marshall Foundation would like to have the right to publish the lecture separately at its expense without further payment. The SMH will host a reception after your Marshall Lecture, and the Marshall Foundation will host a small dinner in your honor after the reception.

I am confident that all of the more than twenty-six hundred members of the SMH will be delighted if you agree to deliver the Marshall Lecture and represent our field before the American Historical Association. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,