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West Coast Teenagers Trade in Skateboards for Political Philosophy Books

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A number of West Coast high school students tried out a new kind of mind-expansion this past June 17 to 21: Westwood Study Center's Leadership for America Summer Seminar. Twenty students converged upon Trumbull, a reconstructed hacienda manor in Novato, California, to join Dr. Gerard Wegemer, professor of English at University of Dallas, in a challenging foray into the study of rhetoric, its positive role in the service of leadership, and the misuses to which it can be subject.

Assisted by Ph.D. candidate Travis Curtright, Dr. Wegemer led the participants in a series of classes, discussions, and written assignments that sought to uncover leadership issues as a thread uniting such historically diverse sources as Plato's *Apology* and *The Republic*, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, The Declaration of Independence,

President Lincoln's and John Paul II's speeches to America, and Goodwin's screenplay *The Quiz Show*.

"For many, it is their first encounter with university caliber intellectual work," declared seminar director Hank Lopez-Ona. "This seminar is all about expanding the horizons of the young men who attend. Before this week they thought Ethos, Pathos, and Logos were names of software companies in Silicon Valley. Now they know them to be rhetorical categories that affect the way we frame the great questions that all societies consider." He also noted that this year the seminar itself had an expanded geographical horizon, attracting young men from Seattle to Southern California.

High school junior Nick Wignall, a veteran of previous leadership seminars, found the historical perspective helpful. "It is a bit

difficult to follow the ancient Greeks as they relate the three parts of the human soul to the elements of effective rhetoric. It is much easier to appreciate their theories after seeing them come to life in theatrical settings of Shakespeare or the real-life drama of American foundation and statesmanship." Wignall found his fellow students less irascible than those of last year. "Last year the discussions were more heated, but this year the comments were more thoughtful. Who knows? We may be on the way to becoming philosopher-kings, or at least on the threshold of exiting the cave."

Sports and various presentations on college life supplemented the program. "These presentations and this seminar build on the formation available at Westwood Study Center all year long," noted Kevin Heaney. "Various honors programs and service projects allow us to challenge

students to be intelligent, well-prepared men of character." Who should apply? "Motivated high school students who want to make a difference."

Westwood Study Center is based in Mill Valley, just north of San Francisco, California. It organizes a variety of academic, cultural, athletic and spiritual activities for young men. Westwood entrusts the spiritual components of its programs to the Prelature of Opus Dei.

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