

Elective explores intelligence theories, practices, integration

By Curt Keester 17 May 2018



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Former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper addresses Army War College students during a lecture in Bliss Hall April 10, 2018.

USAWC students introduced to community of experts

CARLISLE, Pa. (May 17, 2018) – Intelligence today spans traditional fields of thought, according to the DeSerio Chair at the War College. A 2018 USAWC elective course introduced students to a community of experts who challenged students to apply understanding of technologies, behavior factors in decision-making, decision analytics, confirmation bias, psychology, and institutional systems.

Dr. Genevieve Lester, DeSerio Chair for Strategic Intelligence, and Col. Mark Haseman, director of Strategic Intelligence, introduced an elective to refine students' concepts of strategic intelligence with a mosaic of perspectives from the practitioner and academic communities.

intelligence education supports the development of critical thinking, said Lester. "When we talk about building this program, it's not just so that we can learn about the intelligence enterprise, but rather to develop an understanding of the field so that students can be really critical about the intelligence they're getting and learn how to use it best."

Guest speakers included prominent leaders in the U.S. intelligence community. Each offered new insights to help students' readiness to scrutinize strategic intelligence and topics identified by military and joint intelligence staffs.

- Dr. Paul Pillar used 9/11 and the Iraq weapon of mass destruction assessment to illustrate intelligence-related challenges; he is a 28-year veteran of the Central Intelligence Agency and author of several books on intelligence and national security policy.
- Dr. Richard Betts shared vast expertise on the interaction between strategic intelligence professionals and senior decision-makers, surprise, and intelligence failure, and he provided details on the impact of confirmation bias, disregarding intelligence and ambiguity surrounding decision making. Betts is director of the International Security Policy program in the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University. Betts
- Adam Wasserman discussed strategic intelligence concepts, principles, policy and practices, and the use of Red Teams to challenge assumptions. A 35-year CIA veteran, Wasserman is currently the CIA faculty representative at Air War College,
- Rose McDermott discussed both intelligence failure and success and assessed the variables that contribute to the various outcomes. She illustrated how institutions change and adapt in response to threat, crisis, failure and success. McDermott drew from her book, ***Intelligence Success and Failure***, and her expertise in cognitive and behavioral factors in decision-making.
- James Clapper addressed the intelligence community's obligation to provide the most reliable information possible. Clapper's lengthy career in intelligence included service as former Director of National Intelligence for both President Barack Obama and President Donald Trump.

Students found special opportunities through the elective, e.g., participating in a National Intelligence Council event in Washington, D.C.

"I consider it to be something of a privilege to be able to sit down with someone like Clapper or Paul Pillar or Dr. Betts who are willing to take the gloves off and speak to us candidly," said USAWC student Paul Mekkelson, National Geospatial – Intelligence Agency.

"This class really widened my aperture and looked at strategic intelligence as a profession and as a trade craft," he said. "We were able to look at things like politicization of intelligence -- or, is it right or is it wrong to advocate for something -- without going into the classified realm. We were able to talk about the field in general."
