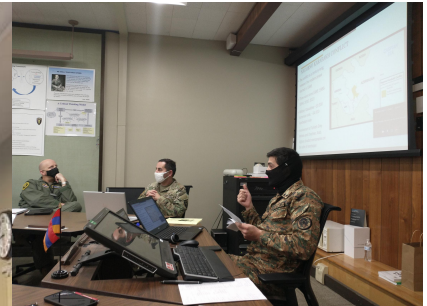


USAWC elective explores how senior leaders can better understand and combat terrorism

By Elena Patton, Public Affairs Office 13 February 2022



USAWC students receive an overview in their 'Terrorism and Counterterrorism' class taught by Dr. Heather Gregg.



Lt. Col. Hayk Amalyan, a USAWC international fellow, gives a presentation to his colleagues in the 'Terrorism and Counterterrorism' elective.

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The U.S. Army War College offers a variety of electives to its students throughout the year. Electives enable students to tailor their educational experience and delve into their professional interests. Among the electives offered to Army War College students, 'Terrorism and Counterterrorism' is a highly subscribed choice this term.

Dr. Heather Gregg, a research professor of military strategy at the Strategic Studies Institute, designed this nine-week course to focus on how senior leaders can better understand and combat terrorism. The curriculum includes case studies of national and international terrorism that help students understand what gave rise to these examples of terrorism, why they went away, and how to fight it.

Violent extremism is one of the five major threats to US national security, identified in the National Defense Strategy. In her second year of teaching this course, Gregg clarified that terrorism is not going away.

Although there are foundational concepts Gregg wants every student to understand, she tailors the class to the students' professional concerns. "Journals allow students to work through ideas, and I pick out key themes to frame the discussion," said Gregg. "This is an opportunity for students to get collective feedback on ideas discussed in their journal entries and learn from others' ideas."

"I love learning from the students," said Gregg. "I love hearing about their experiences and their insights."

Students' perspectives

Col. Kevin Payne, a USAWC student and a Military Police Officer, is currently taking the course. After graduating, he will assume command of the 15th Military Police Brigade, the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

"Prison environments can breed radical ideology and thought," said Payne. "You have groups of men or women, coming from all parts of the world, all sectors of society, living behind four walls, some for the rest of their lives, and they can be very influential, and I just want to understand that better."

"The class aligns with many of the other themes in the USAWC curriculum," said Payne. "Counter-terrorism involves governance, strategy, international relations theory, diversity, and radicalization, the importance of historical mindedness."

Lt. Col. Hayk Amalyan is a USAWC international fellow. He previously served as the Senior Officer of the International Military Cooperation Desk of the Defense Policy Department of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia.

He expects to assume a similar position centered on military, multinational defense/security cooperation, and international relations upon returning to his country.

He noted that his country faces security threats projected by extremist mercenary fighters motivated by geo-political reasons.

"Expanding my knowledge of terrorism and counter-terrorism will further help me to use my knowledge for the Ministry of Defense in developing

defense capabilities, policy, and strategies for the Republic of Armenia to counter this threat," said Amalyan.

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