

Distance education class starts countdown to graduation

Staff Sgt. Corey Baltos

Distance education class starts countdown to parade-field graduation Friday, 9 a.m.



As part of their second resident course at Carlisle, members of the Distance Education Class of 2011 traveled to the Gettysburg

battlefields to view strategic challenges in a historical context.

Photo by Scott Finger.

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July 18, 2011 -- For the past two years, 365 senior military officers and government employees have been conducting an elaborate juggling act. Many have juggled a civilian job, family, responsibilities in the National Guard or Reserve, as well as studies with the Army War College. In four days they will put down one of the balls when they graduate from the Army War College's distance education program.

Most of their work has been done at a computer, doing research and corresponding with their classmates and instructors via email and on-line chats. However, the class comes together for two weeks a year to interact and focus exclusively on their course work.

The first resident course takes place in June after their first half of their course work. The course provides a capstone for the first year of studies said Col. Darrell Fountain, First Resident Course director.

“Guest speakers provide a wrap-up on each of the four courses, as well as talk about each element of national power, diplomatic, information, military and economic.”

The second resident course takes place at the end of their second academic year and culminates with their graduation. During this last phase, which the Class of 2011 is in now, the students attend the Strategy Implementation Seminar and a Gettysburg staff ride in order to better understand what happened, why it happened, and what could be learned and applied to future strategic issues.

Maj. Gen. Gregg Martin, the Commandant of the Army War College, welcomed the distance education class of 2011 as they



begin their final two-week resident phase. The 365 members of the class will graduate on Friday, July 22.

Lt. Col. William Britt said he looked forward to going to Gettysburg because he had had a great experience with the Antietam staff ride

of the first resident course due to the knowledge of the War College staff.

While the majority of the Distance Education Class of 2011 is Army, it includes 21 officers from other services. Marine Col. Mark Jamison found attending an Army school to be rewarding.

“I enjoyed the experience and the interaction with my classmates. Every time I go to an Army school I am better for it.” Jamison, a Marine lawyer, first experienced Army schools when he attended the Army Judge Advocate General School in 2001.

The resident phases are a break from the internet-based interaction of most courses.

“The ability to have face-to-face discussions was lost. Everything from an answer to a question to a response to a fellow student had to be written out,” said George Polich, DE class of 2011. “However, I was bowled over by the resources the college had for us to interact through the computer. It didn’t matter if you were west coast, east coast or in Afghanistan, you could still participate.

“ I cannot imagine another college who does that as well,” said Polich.

The Distance Education Class of 2011 graduation ceremony is scheduled for 9 a.m. July 22 at the Wheelock Bandstand. The guest speaker will be former Secretary of Defense Dr. William J. Perry, who is now the Michael and Barbara Berberian Professor at Stanford University.