

McGinnis, Clark, Allen bring experience to table for USAWC electives

Thomas Zimmerman, Army War College

USAWC faculty bring experience to table for USAWC electives



Dr. Sherwood McGinnis, National Security and Strategy

Having retired from the Foreign Service after 30 years of traveling the world as a diplomat, **Dr. Sherwood McGinnis** continues to serve his country as a Department of Defense civilian looks to enhance the civilian-military

partnership that is a key element of national security.

McGinnis, professor of National Security and Strategy, pursued a career in the State Department that has taken him to Afghanistan, Belgium, Bosnia, France, Mexico and Spain. He has served as the U.S. Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament and Political Advisor at the U.S. Mission to NATO and has deployed twice to Afghanistan in the last five years, each time returning to the USAWC to teach and share his experiences.

“Electives provide an opportunity for students to learn from other members of the faculty, broadening the students’ exposure beyond the core curriculum,” he said. “This includes different perspectives and backgrounds which add to the overall learning experience here at the USAWC. In addition, students have the opportunity to interact in new seminars with additional members of the academic class, thus learning from a wider set of experiences and new ideas. The course material itself adds to the students’ overall knowledge.”

McGinnis brings these experiences to the electives he teaches, a regional studies elective on Afghanistan and Pakistan and an elective in Diplomacy in the Multilateral Environment.

“I feel that what I learned and experienced in Afghanistan coupled with the students’ own experiences

help to create a rich and diverse conversation in the electives,” he said.

It’s important for USAWC students to take the time to study these regions and the use of diplomacy, he said.

“In the current environment, when the President of the United States champions the use of multilateral organizations, development of partnerships and “smart power,” graduates of the USAWC need to understand the elements of multilateral diplomacy,” he said. “There is a good chance that they will be called on to formulate and execute policy in a multilateral environment.

“Understanding Afghanistan, Pakistan and South Asia will help in follow-on assignments to the region, but more importantly in grasping some of the elements of counterinsurgency, regional politics, and economic development that will impact on future national security challenges and the U.S. response to these challenges.”

McGinnis said that the classes provide a different learning environment for everyone involved.

“The electives present the opportunity for experiencing new ideas, new perspectives, from both faculty and other students.”

Air Force Col. Murray “Murf” Clark, Department of Command Leadership and Management

Plato, Aristotle, Shakespeare and John Locke are names known for literary greatness and have been studied by scholars for hundreds of years. Now a group of Army War College students can be added to that list, thanks to a new “Great Books for Leaders,” directed study.

The individual education experience, led by **Air Force Col. Murray “Murf” Clark**, takes a look at the works of these authors and to analyze the others thoughts and ideas of respected thinkers through history while integrating their ideas into a broader and deeper world view.

“The chosen texts will relate more or less directly with the pursuit of better leadership, but I believe almost any great work of philosophy or literature can serve that end,” said Clark. Through the readings and discussion, the course attempts to assess the ideas and value of literary works, political treatises, and personal narratives as they apply to living well and leading well, he said.

The class looks at works like Shakespeare’s *Henry V* and *The Republic* by Plato and how the leadership and human dimension lesson still apply.

“This attempts to broaden their perspectives, adding depth to their understanding, and refining their decision-making skills,” he said.

Clark, who has served in the Air Force for 25 years, came to the USAWC in the summer of 2009 as the Senior Air Force Representative and instructor in the Department of Command Leadership and Management. Before his time here he has served as a tanker pilot, specializing in airlift and refueling hubs.

“There are great leaders and great thinkers behind us,” he said. “The lessons they have learned have been captured in a way that helps us to better understand the human dimension of leadership.”

Clark said that the lessons that resonate through the books remind the students that some challenges are timeless.

Prof. Chuck Allen, Department of Command, Leadership and Management

The “*Creative Leadership*” elective explores creative thinking and the creative process as it relates to leading large organizations through complexity, ambiguity and change by promoting cultures of innovation.

“The concept of creativity is important, but misunderstood,” says **Prof. Chuck Allen**, professor of Leadership and Cultural Studies in the Department of Command, Leadership and Management, who has been teaching this elective here for the past seven years. “Contemporary research on creativity indicates that it is essential to effective leadership.”

By examining selected readings, applying concepts to current issues, and conducting practical exercises, Allen’s students explore creativity from individual, group, and organizational perspectives, and look at ways to apply insights on creativity into building effective teams.

“The course is about leading organizations with talented individuals. We do this with USAWC students by testing concepts in the classroom,” said Allen, who also taught an undergraduate course on creative problem solving at West Point. “We look at how to lead an organization full of people who are more creative than you may be, and how to develop an environment for creativity and innovation to thrive.”

One classroom event that tests student creativity is the egg drop exercise. Students are required to apply creative thinking skills to develop a package that will keep the egg from breaking when dropped from a specified height. Last year students also examined the BP oil spill disaster and thought of ways that it could have been minimized or averted all together by applying more creative approaches from the

outset of the spill.

“Creativity requires effort and thought. It is about accepting and considering different points of view and withholding judgments before making decisions,” said Allen.

“Leadership is not about being in their comfort zones,” he continued. “It is about the value leaders bring to an organization and what they can do to lead others to become successful.”

U.S. Army War College Archives - News Article - 13 March 2012