

# USAWC electives: Students learn to manage change

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*Craig Bullis brings up a key point from a recent guest speaker during a seminar room discussion Feb. 24. This academic year Bullis is teaching the “Systems Leadership: Organizational Theory and Change” elective*

An element of strategic leadership is the ability to manage through the ambiguity and complexity inherent in large organizations, while balancing competing requirements, to achieve a greater end.

Dr. Craig Bullis, professor of management in Army War College’s department of command, leadership and management, provides insight to this challenge in his elective, **“Systems Leadership: Organizational Theory and Change.”**

Based on Gareth Morgan’s eight metaphors of an organization, Bullis’ elective course provides students with an understanding of the internal workings of large organizations and challenges them to develop ways of thinking to help them work through complexity and ambiguity.

“The course is based on how to define organizational systems, generally focused on processes internal to an organization,” said Bullis, who taught similar courses on leadership at the undergraduate and graduate levels at West Point. “We look at organizations through each of the eight metaphors, paying attention to the many nuances to managing effectively.”

Metaphorically, according to Gareth, all organizations are like machines, organisms, brains, cultures, political systems, psychic prisons, continual transformation and instruments of domination, and these

things work simultaneously within an organization, competing for resources and challenging leaders.

“This course is more about the cognitive aspects of managing complexity at the strategic level,” Bullis said. “Strategic leaders focus externally. It also is important that they understand how their organizations work internally so that they will be better prepared to respond to and influence external effects.”

“I really believe that what I owe our students is not what to think, but how to think about challenges they will face, he said. “And from a very personal perspective, like many on the staff, I have children who chose to serve in the Army. If I can make their senior leaders more effective, they will benefit.”

U.S. Army War College Archives - News Article - 23 March 2012