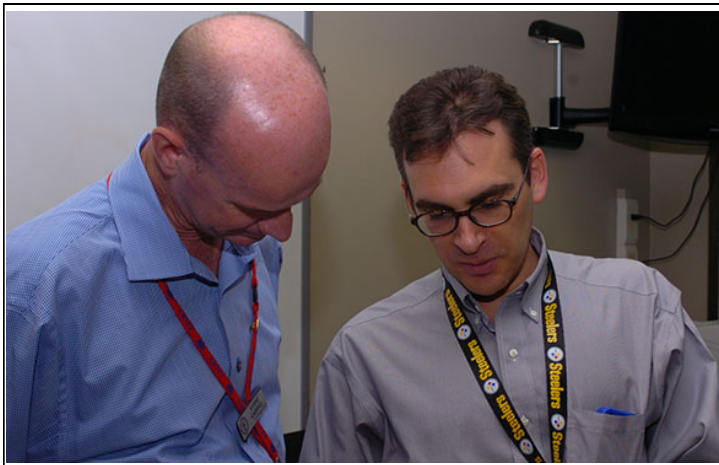


# Neiberg uses history to frame present-day challenges

By Thomas Zimmerman

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*Dr. Michael Neiberg, professor of History, Department of National Security and Strategy, discusses Thucydides with Australian Fellow Col. Shane Gabriel after a recent class.*

“History gives us perspectives on problem of the past and helps us understand the problems of today in a sharper focus. Whether or not we know it, we’re here because of the events of the past,” said Dr. Michael Neiberg, professor of History in the Department of National Security and Strategy.

An expert on World War I, Neiberg is the author of 10 different books, the most recent one being “Dance of the Furies: Europe and the Outbreak of World War I,” which was published in 2011 by Harvard University press.

The common explanation for the outbreak of World War I depicts Europe as a minefield of nationalism, needing only the slightest pressure to set off an explosion of passion that would rip the continent apart. But in a crucial reexamination of the outbreak of violence, Neiberg shows that ordinary Europeans, unlike their political and military leaders, neither wanted nor expected war during the fateful summer of 1914. By training his eye on the ways that people outside the halls of power reacted to the rapid onset and escalation of the fighting, Neiberg attempts to dispel the notion that Europeans were rabid nationalists intent on mass slaughter. He reveals instead a complex set of allegiances that cut across national boundaries.

Neiberg, who originally came to the Army War College as the Harold K. Johnson Chair of Military History in 2010, shares his love for history with the students in a attempt to help them gain a fresh perspective on today’s’ challenges.

“I love being here just for the chance to discuss important issues at a higher level with students and faculty with similar interests,” said the Pittsburgh, Pa. area native. “I am very impressed on how much the Army values its history. It’s great to be able to share what I know and also learn from others.”

Neiberg also taught history at the Air Force Academy from 1997-2008. Neiberg is a graduate of the University Michigan and earned a PhD. from Carnegie Mellon University.

Neiberg was driven to history to because of an unique interest in armed conflict. “I’ve always been interested in how wars develop lives of their own and how the periods of peace don’t look like people expect them to,” he said. “How wars begin and why the end is really fascinating to me.”

He also said that an understanding of history and how it affects the presents is an important strategic leadership skill. “History can provide a whole set of critical thinking skills for strategic leaders that will help them see the full complexity of an issue and the range of options open to them,” he said.

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