

First Year Residence Course delivers the same quality education in a new format

By Elena Patton, Public Affairs Office 21 June 2021



From June 14-25, Distance Education students participate in unique resident course activities to transition into their second year studies.

Almost 400 USAWC students are participating in the First Resident Course of Distance Education Program. This two-week course is the pivot point between their first year and second year studies. In their first year, students learned about Strategic Leadership, National Security, Policy, and Strategy, War and Military Strategy, Global and Regional Issues by writing papers and participating in online forums with their student peers. This is the foundation for strategic-level learning that students will build on in their second year courses.

Although the course is virtual this year, June 14-25, the faculty will ensure the experience is enriching for the Class of 2022: 308 Army students, 11 Marines, 10 Navy, 20 Air Force, 4 international fellows and 42 civilians. Of these, 150 students are National Guard officers and 149 are Reserve

officers. FRC students reflect, discuss and synthesize first-year learning through a set of wargames, guest speakers, noontime lectures and engagements with think tanks, federal agencies, and embassies.

"It is their capstone event," said Col. John Mowchan, director of First-Year Studies. "It also functions as a transition point between the theoretically based course of their first year to the second year where they will dive into the operational strategic level to complete out their two year program."

"... [T]his course is important because the subject matter experts and course authors of their earlier courses all get a chance to talk with students about these things that they have been reading about and studying during their first year," said David Jenkins, director of FRC.

Technology has improved so much that the virtual environment closely mirrors the in-person, face-to-face environment through video class and discussion forums, providing each student with an excellent educational experience, noted Jenkins.

Guest speakers include external experts and Army War College faculty:

- Retired Lt. Gen. David Huntoon, former Superintendent of the United States Military Academy at West Point
- Amb. Daniel Kurtzer, former U.S. ambassador to Egypt and Israel
- Dr. Peter Feaver, Duke University Professor of Political Science and Public Policy
- Maj. Gen. Michelle McGuinness, Deputy Director for Commonwealth Integration
- Dr. Peter Kilner, Chair for Character Development at West Point
- Dr. Hal Brands, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies Professor of Global Affairs
- Dr. Michael O'Hanlon, Brookings Institution director of research in foreign policy
- Dr. Kevin Weddle, DEP instructor will deliver a noontime lecture on the Saratoga Campaign
- Col. John Mowchan, DEP First Year Director, will lecture on Turkey-U.S.-NATO Relations.

The FRC plan includes virtual engagements with representatives from the Afghanistan, Australian, and Canadian embassies. During the virtual D.C. staff ride, an immersive FRC activity, students select from a variety of engagements, based on their interests. Students can choose from engagements with the Department of Justice, Department of Veteran Affairs, International Monetary Fund, and other government agencies.

"For most, [the staff ride] is their first opportunity to interact with other departments, organizations and representatives at the strategic level," said

Mowchan.

Seminar discussions are facilitated by Col. Jared Harper, Dr. Renée Kiel, Col. John Mowchan, Dr. Kevin Stringer, who taught the first-year courses.

The class will graduate from the two-year Distance Education Program in July 2022.

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