



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY
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MADN-SOC

10 January 2019

MEMORANDUM FOR Students in SS457 Grand Strategy AY 19-2

SUBJECT: Dr. Max Margulies's Teaching Philosophy

1. **Purpose.** This memorandum outlines my teaching philosophy, how I operate in the classroom, and what to expect during the upcoming semester.

2. **Teaching Method.** Grand Strategy—how states deploy the resources at their disposal to pursue large-scale political goals—has a direct impact on your lives as future army officers. These decisions have a direct effect on where you may deploy, what jobs you may be asked to perform, and the resources at your disposal. I strive to help you understand the world around you and it is relevant to your life. As a result, you should want to learn the material we cover in this course. Beyond the importance of the subject matter, this course also emphasizes skills that will be useful to you during your career as an army officer and beyond. By the end of the course, I want you to feel comfortable thinking like a social scientist; this means we will focus on important skills like critical thinking, crafting and supporting an argument, and spoken and written communication. These skills will help you throughout your career as you find yourselves needing to respond to challenging, unfamiliar circumstances with limited information. Lastly, I aim to support your growth as leaders of character by fostering opportunities for leadership and accountability.

My approach to fulfilling these goals is founded on my belief in the importance of an interactive classroom. There is important material I need to impart to you. Primarily, however, you will be best served in this course by participating as much as possible. I emphasize classroom discussions as the best way to grapple with and understand new ideas. I want you challenging yourselves, each other, and me. I want you to ask questions—this is a great way to clarify concepts, gauge your understanding of material, and learn how to apply what is often abstract theory to the real world. It is my responsibility to guide, frame, and integrate these discussions with course concepts, but without your active participation you will not develop the analytical skills or subject matter expertise needed to succeed in this course.

3. **My Commitment to You.** I will always be prepared, informed, timely, and accessible. In preparation for every lesson, I review all required material and many supplemental materials to provide you with an engaging and informative class. This includes a familiarity with current events and an expertise in the academic study of international relations, both of which I integrate into class wherever possible to give you a complete picture of the field and why it is important. I

will evaluate and return graded assignments in a fair and timely manner with clear and constructive feedback, and I will be willing to meet with you to discuss your performance in the course (please see the Section Guidance for further details). I will continuously communicate expectations, standards, and any information important for you to succeed. I would like you to view me as a helpful resource in your development as scholars and officers.

4. **My Expectations of You.** I expect you to come to class on time and prepared for the day's lesson. This is particularly important given the interactive nature of my classroom. If you have not completed and thought about the readings, you will not be able to evaluate their arguments and theories, and so will not be able to test and develop your critical thinking skills. I strongly suggest you take notes while you read, and keep track of points that you think are particularly important or confusing. You are all in this class by choice, so I expect you to engage with the material and participate in class discussion. This does not mean you need to be a master of the material—asking questions is just as important and effective as answering them. You do need to listen to me and to your classmates and to think critically about material we discuss. Lastly, I do my best to keep track of all students' progress in the class, but I need you to be proactive and let me know when you are struggling with material or if other issues arise, too.

5. **Respect.** The material in this course covers a diverse set of arguments and viewpoints. Moreover, these arguments often have relevance to important policy debates. Our goal is to evaluate these arguments—as well as our own beliefs and opinions—objectively, using the social scientific method. You will get the most out of this class if all students feel comfortable sharing and challenging each other's positions. To facilitate this, we must conduct our discussion in a professional and respectful manner at all times, for all students. You can and should critique each other, but you must also strive to understand each other. This is a critical skill for good scholarship as well as for successful officership. I will not tolerate personal attacks of any sort.

6. Please feel free to contact me at max.margulies@westpoint.edu or 845-938-3497 for clarification or additional information concerning any of these points. I would love to meet with all of you individually to learn about your experiences at West Point, your interests in and outside the Army, and how I can help you succeed in this course, so please visit me in Lincoln Hall, room 203. I look forward to working with you over the coming semester.

MAX Z. MARGULIES
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