



**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
**UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY**  
West Point, New York 10996

MADN-SOC

20 Aug 2007

MEMORANDUM FOR Students in XXYYYY

SUBJECT: Teaching Philosophy

1. Purpose. This memorandum will outline my teaching philosophy, how I operate in the classroom, and what you can expect during the upcoming semester.

2. Introduction. XXYYYY will facilitate your critical examination of complex issues and readings that will assist you in analyzing the world you will operate in as Army officers. This will improve your ability to think critically and to make reasoned decisions in complex and uncertain environments -- an essential skill for your future.

3. My approach to learning and knowledge.

a. During the upcoming semester you should not expect me to simply provide you with knowledge about international relations. Instead, you will be responsible for using your reason to analyze a variety of competing theories about how the world works. It is not enough to simply memorize material or have opinions. You must think critically about the readings. You can expect me to guide your learning and to serve as a source of subject matter expertise. I may not have all the answers, but I will help you to find those answers.

b. One of my goals is to promote deep learning of international relations. It is not enough to merely memorize key words or phrases for the WPR and then forget what you have learned (surface learning). Instead, the goal of the course is to get you thinking about theories and using those theories to explain contemporary international politics.

c. Assessing learning is a critical part of teaching. Throughout the semester, I will use a variety of tools to measure your understanding of international relations. In addition to graded events, you can expect to see many informal evaluations of your learning. These informal assessments will assist me in tailoring the class to meet your educational needs.

4. Student participation. Passively sitting through class will not prepare you for success. There will not be enough time in class to cover every important point from the readings. The most successful students will take notes on the readings, take notes in class, and engage in academic discussions about the material outside of class. I encourage the formation of study groups.

5. Teaching methods. Individuals learn in a variety of ways. As a result, I will design each class to use a variety of teaching methods. Students who struggle during any one method should take advantage of the others to develop their proficiency with the course materials.

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a. Current events. Most classes will begin with informal student presentations of a current event. As Army officers, international affairs are not merely of intellectual interest – they will personally affect us. It is our obligation to be informed, and be able to interpret events and policy decisions for our soldiers.

b. Classroom discussion. All classes will incorporate some form of discussion. This discussion will not revolve around my opinions or interpretations. Instead, it will focus on your ideas about the readings and how they apply to the world. My role is to provide you with a controlled, moderated, and professional forum to experiment with new ideas. Often, I will operate as a devil's advocate to challenge you to think through all sides of an issue. Dissent in discussion is expected and encouraged.

c. Group work. Most classes will include small group work analyzing the readings or evaluating practical exercises. Your active participation in group work is just as important as your participation in discussion. Group work will conclude with all members of the group providing the rest of the class with information about their discussions.

d. Hypothesis development. While study of international relations cannot be conducted under conditions ideal for scientific research, it is possible to apply the principles of scientific methodology to the discipline. Throughout the semester, I will assist you in developing testable research hypotheses about how the world works and push you to subject those hypotheses to rigorous empirical testing.

6. Respect. This class is designed to facilitate a comfortable, open, free and frank exchange of thoughts, ideas, and opinions. No one should allow their personal feelings to interfere with the academic pursuit of knowledge and understanding. Participants will ensure their comments are accurate, demonstrate appropriate restraint, and show respect for the opinions of others.

7. Please contact me at [John.Doe@usma.edu](mailto:John.Doe@usma.edu), office: 845-938-9999, or cell: 999-999-9999 for clarification or additional information concerning any of these points.

/original signed/  
JOHN J. DOE  
MAJ  
Instructor,