

Dean's Weekly
27 October 2010
English and Philosophy

Past Events

1. On Wednesday, 20 October, Dr. Elizabeth Samet and MAJ Damon Durall accompanied thirteen cadets from EP367 (Drama) to the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. The day began with a backstage tour, which included the various rehearsal spaces where performers were practicing; the workshop, where props and costumes are prepped and tested; costume and dressing rooms; and the stage itself, with its many levels and complex system of lifts and turntables. In the evening the group attended a performance of Puccini's *La Boheme*.



2. From 18 to 20 October, philosophers MAJ Chris Case, MAJ Debbie Mann, and LTC Jeff Wilson served as mentors for the 25th Annual National Conference on Ethics in America. The conference is presented by the USMA Class of 1970 and hosted by the Simon Center for the Professional Military Ethic. The NCEA Conference Program describes the gathering as a forum to “promote awareness among undergraduate students of ethical issues in collegiate communities and in professional career fields.” The theme this year was the USMA Class of 1970 motto: “To Serve with Integrity.”

During the three days, students from colleges and universities across the United States gathered in Eisenhower Hall, alternating between plenary-speaker presentations by people from a variety of fields and small-group discussions, during which the plenary talks’ subjects were used as springboards for further exploration of ethical issues in the students’ own lives. The small-group structure placed 8-10 students with one mentor, who served as a facilitator. In small-group discussion, mentors valorized the intrinsic value of the dialogue, modeling a process of respectful discourse about complex issues that raise awareness of values in conflict. The mentors themselves were continually observed by members of the Class of 1970, who provided feedback during end-of-day after-action reviews led by noted ethicist Gus Lee.

On the last day, the students engaged two panels of senior leaders from a variety of fields in open-forum question-and-answer sessions. They then had the opportunity to engage in more focused discussions with two of the senior leaders in the final small-group sessions.

The philosophers found the dialogue interesting and stimulating, at once challenged and energized by the opportunity to engage complex ethical issues using the tools of philosophy with learned and accomplished people from other disciplines, for whom the philosophical lens is foreign. The energy of the students and the members of the Class of 1970 combined to make the conference an intellectually enlightening experience for our department participants—one that they unequivocally agree would be worth repeating.



Lieutenant Colonel Jeff Wilson mentored Discussion Group 20, seen here with guest speaker Dr. Michael Guzmano from the Hastings Center on the final day of the conference.

Future Events

1. On Wednesday, 3 November 3 2010, the LIT UNPLUGGED series will present a talk for cadets by MAJ Maurice Wilson titled "Mythic Flights of Fancy: The Choices We Make." The event will take place in the Haig Room of Jefferson Hall at 1800, and informal discussion and dinner will follow. This is the second of four LIT UNPLUGGED events this year during which a faculty member talks with cadets about a book that has made a great impact on his or her life. The events are organized by Dr. Karin Roffman and the LIT UNPLUGGED committee: MAJ Crystal Hills, Dr. Rebecca Wisor, MAJ Damon Durall, and MAJ David Escobar.
2. MAJ Paul Johnston will conduct a CTE Brownbag presentation on 3 November at 1205 in 121 Jefferson Hall. The title of his presentation is "What Do Our Students Really Think?: Classroom Enhancement Using Blackboard as a Method for Dynamic Assessment." This workshop will demonstrate why dynamic assessment is useful and will also show how an instructor can collect daily student feedback using Blackboard.