

# Writing in PME

3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter, 2019

## Faculty Spotlight



COL Kristian Smith joined the JAWS Faculty at the Joint Forces Staff College in 2017 and currently serves as the Chair of the Strategy Field of Study. A career Special Forces Officer, he became a Strategist in 2008 and has served in OSD Policy, the US Department of State's Bureau of Political Military Affairs, the Army Staff, and most recently as the Chief of Strategy and Policy for US Pacific Command.

In conversation, COL Smith noted that “strategy is often misunderstood. People attempt to simplify strategy into ends, ways, means, and risk, which is a useful framework, but is ultimately misleading for teaching students because the framework suggests a static environment. Rather, strategy is a process of constant revision because the environment is dynamic. Said another way, strategy—the pursuit of strategy—is a perpetual search for advantage.”

“In revising the writing assignments for the strategy curriculum the faculty employed writing as a tool for encouraging greater levels of dynamic thinking. The writing process simulates the constant but unachievable perfection of strategic thought and inquiry necessary to find the benefits of successful strategy. Most fundamentally, writing assignments in the strategy curriculum ask students to make connections and ask why a strategy did or did not work by applying all the topics of discussion through a series of scaffolded writing assignments deployed at key moments in the curriculum.”

COL Smith is this quarter’s faculty spotlight recipient for his willingness to think deeply about developing a writing assignment best suited to helping his students achieve course goals rather than considering writing as simply an assessment instrument.

PME classes ask students to read—a lot. In fact, there is so much reading that students have problems retaining and transferring that knowledge into discussions, exams, and the workplace. Concurrently, faculty often believe that writing assignments must be time consuming, painstaking, and graded to be effective.

Writing assignments, however brief, can be excellent for helping students acquire knowledge, articulate complex thoughts, and make connections between readings without consuming inordinate amounts of class and faculty time, making discussions more profitable.

At the beginning of class, have students respond to questions in writing, such as: How does the article by author X connect to the essay by author Y? What was one concept you found difficult or confusing in the reading? Inserting these questions upfront takes only a few minutes, encourages explication, and can serve as the basis for focused, fruitful discussion, and deep learning.

## Tip for Teaching Writing

Presented by the:

