



AT THE PENTAGON In addition to teaching classes on security at SFS, Mastro advises the Pentagon on Asia-Pacific strategy.

became fascinated by the country. When she returned, she joined an honors program called the Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC).

Even then, she didn't plan to join the military. In fact, when an Air Force General approached her during a conference her first year of graduate school, she thought his suggestion that she join up was crazy. "I thought that people joined when they were 18 or they didn't join at all," she says.

But she soon realized that she could do some real good in the military, so she joined. "I knew it would be challenging in ways that I hadn't been challenged before," she explains, "and make me a better person, if not a better academic and teacher." She finds that her service has helped her other work and vice versa.

Her academic training and methodology come into play everyday at the Pentagon. And her military career helps her know which questions are worth asking in her research and provides practical examples for her time in the classroom.

She says her on-the-ground expertise helps students get what she calls "operational knowledge"—they learn things like the differences between cruise missiles and ballistic missiles, which they might not know if not for their teacher being an expert.

"You teach them these theories about how to understand the world, but they don't have the basic operational knowledge to know when there are strategic-level changes happening," she explains. "We teach them how to bring those two together."

In her forthcoming class on the Chinese military, for example, students will demonstrate their understanding of both theory and practical details by running briefings. Teaching her students to write a brief, she says, will give them another skill for their post-college toolkit.

"Being a good writer means very different things depending on what world you operate in," Mastro says. "We focus a lot on academic writing, which is really important, but many of our students go out and work for the government, where the ways they need to communicate are completely different."

A BALANCING ACT

Professor ***Oriana Skylar Mastro*** is a member of the SFS faculty, an Air Force reservist, and a strategy advisor to the Pentagon. She says each of her jobs helps her excel in the others. *by* NICHOLAS HUNT

Balancing the responsibilities of a professor and a military officer may seem all but impossible, but new SFS assistant professor Oriana Skylar Mastro—who's also a lieutenant in the Air Force Reserve—makes it work with military precision.

"When people see the planning that occurs in my life," she says, "it seems a little insane." There are the systems that track her daily responsibilities as a professor of security studies and a strategist at the Pentagon. Then there are the big-picture plans for her year.

"Being a good defense planner involves listing out strategies, lines of effort, and priorities to help me decide, for example, which projects should come first. When I get opportunities to speak or travel, under what conditions do I say 'yes' and under what conditions do I say 'no?'"

Mastro has been learning to prioritize since graduate school. She joined the Air Force Reserve halfway through her PhD at Princeton and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant about a year later.

But what has become a defining part of her life almost didn't happen. Growing up in Chicago, she had no real exposure to the military. She attended Stanford—which has no ROTC program—to pursue piano and drama, not foreign policy. But after taking a year off to live in China, she

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