last year said, "The Naval War College was hands down the best professional experience of my career."

As a recently promoted FS-01 officer, I was admitted to the Naval War College's "senior course" in the College of Naval Warfare. Unique among the war colleges, Newport also offers a similar curriculum in an "intermediate course" when they are FS-03s or FS-02s at the College of Naval Command and Staff. The senior course is the more strategic, but both have a fairly rigid curriculum mixing the study of security, strategy and operations. Graduates in the senior and intermediate classes receive a master's degree in national security and strategic studies.

Foreign Service officers and specialists attending the college during academic year 2014-2015 pose for a photo.
Photo by Usha Pitts

Students also get their pick of three electives during the year. These electives are the college's true gems, with topics that include China policy, Abraham Lincoln, poetry and literature, Winston Churchill and cyber warfare. Kim Kelly, a consular officer, took "Self Awareness for Leaders," a course that provides a series of tests, exercises and coaching to hone senior leadership skills. For my part, I most enjoyed "Leadership and Ethics in the Peloponnesian War," a course on the legendary, 30-year confrontation between Athens and Sparta.

The college's academic year is broken into three trimesters. Each trimester, students participate in seminars with an average of 15 other classmates that include about a dozen military officers. Military counterparts range in rank