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## Professor Clement Brings Central Asia to Life at NPS

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By Kate Lamar

Posted February 8, 2010

A petite woman with a soft voice sits in her office surrounded by boxes of books patiently helping an international student locate a digital edition of a textbook he unhappily discovered was on back order. The text is one he needs for his upcoming mid-term in Modern Turkish History. The woman helping him is his professor, Victoria Clement, the newest faculty member in the National Security Affairs department.

Clement's patience and thoughtful demeanor have served her well throughout her academic career - not only in assisting students, but in allowing her entry to former soviet-bloc countries to conduct research when others were denied access. Her research has taken her across Central Asia, but her main focus has been on Turkmenistan and Turkey.

Clement has visited the region yearly for close to two decades and even had the chance to live in Turkmenistan for two years beginning in 2001. While there, Clement was able to work extensively on her research into how the politics of Turkmenistan impact civil society and specifically state-sponsored and private education.

"I'm interested in how citizens supplement state-sponsored programs, such as education, through private initiatives," said Clement. "These are countries where civil society is new – they've only been independent since 1991 – so these are new, grassroots initiatives."

Clement is also working on a research project that examines the success of a private network of Islamist schools within Turkey.

"It turns out parents like schools that have high standards, strict rules and instill discipline in their children," Clement said. "They really appreciate the ethical component, something the state-sponsored schools don't include."

Clement was excited to accept the position at the Naval Postgraduate School where she will have an opportunity to continue her research throughout Central Asia.

"NPS encourages research and travel, which is great because not every university does," said Clement, who has plans to return to Turkey and Turkmenistan in the fall quarter.

"I'm doing the kind of research where you have to go to the country every year to talk to the people and see what has changed. You just can't do this type of research over the Internet," she said.

Despite the boxes spread across her office – she's still waiting for her bookshelves to arrive – she is quite comfortable at NPS. "I've felt really welcomed here and the people have been supportive. The campus as a whole has such a nice collegial feel about it," Clement explained.

Clement, who began teaching her first course at NPS in January, is thoroughly enjoying the teaching component of her job. While she has taught both graduate and undergraduate students at other universities, she has found the students at NPS uniquely engaging.

"The students work incredibly hard without much pushing from the professor," Clement said. "They are so highly motivated that it allows for unbelievably interesting discussions."

Clement hopes to further engage students in the coming semesters. She is particularly looking forward to one of the courses she will be teaching next quarter – Great Power Rivalries in Eurasia.

"The Great Power Rivalries is going to be a very exciting class," enthused Clement. "It's going to focus not only on the history of the imperial powers who fought over their spheres of influence in Central Asia, but also on issues that are critical today – pipelines and energy issues. These things are relevant to our students and to security questions."

Clement will also be teaching a course on modern Central Asian history next semester. This course will study the countries known today as Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and parts of Afghanistan.

Clement, while not having served in the military herself, grew up on a military base and comes from a strong military family. "Practically my whole family was in the military - my grandfathers, my dad and most of my cousins – they all are," said Clement. "My dad served in Vietnam - in the Marines, and then retired from the Army as a Command Sergeant Major."