Lesson Title: Professional Military Ethics and Moral Decision Making

Date: 4 Jan – 1 Feb 19
Author: Dr. R.J. Johnson
Revision Date: 15 Nov 18

1. Introduction

This course examines the relationship among ethics, the military profession, and moral and ethical decision-making. The course is designed to address concepts and issues that are particularly relevant for field grade officers attending Command and Staff College.

The first part of the course introduces students to the military as a profession, the professional military ethic, and the relationship between ethical and moral responsibilities. This portion of the course situates the field grade officer’s moral responsibilities within the chain of command by challenging students to contribute to the moral formation of their subordinates as a core aspect of their leadership obligations. It also encourages students to reflect on and contribute to an ethical command climate in their interactions with superiors.

The second part of the course focuses on different developmental and psychological factors that influence moral and ethical decision-making. By understanding the factors that influence our actions, students will be better prepared to maintain moral and ethical behavior themselves and encourage moral and ethical behavior in subordinates.

The final part of the course explores students’ personal commitment to continued growth through an examination of Stoicism and the concept of developing and maintaining ethical fitness. It also challenges students to identify effective means by which they can contribute to the moral and ethical development of those they lead.

2. Student Learning Outcomes

4.1 Recognize the complexity and nature of problems.
6.2 Lead individuals and teams from diverse organizations with our without formal authority.
6.3 Apply techniques for developing ethical and effective leaders.
6.4 Make intellectually and morally sound decisions in response to complex ethical and legal challenges.
6.5 Evaluate different organizational cultures and their effects on performance and ethical behavior.

3. Supporting Educational Objectives

a. Analyze the relation between ethics and the military profession. [CSC 4.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5; JPME 6a, 6c]
b. Examine the implication this relation has on military leadership and the cultivation of subordinates. [CSC 4.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5; JPME 6a, 6b, 6c]
c. Increase moral awareness through the application of moral reasoning in moral decision making case studies. [CSC 4.1, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5; JPME 6a, 6c]

4. Student Requirements / Schedule

a. Class 1, 4 January 2019, *The Professional Military Ethic*
   (1) Required Reading:
(a) Carl Ficarotta, “Are Military Professionals Bound by a Higher Moral Standard?” *Armed Forces and Society* 24, (Fall 1997). **Readings will be shared electronically**

(b) Martin Cook, “Moral Foundations of Military Service,” *Parameters*, Spring 2000, pp. 117-29. **Readings will be shared electronically**

(c) Manuel Davenport, “Professionals or Hired Guns? Loyalties Are the Difference,” *Army*, May 1980. **Readings will be shared electronically**


(2) Issues for Consideration:

(a) On what moral foundation is the profession of arms grounded? Do you find this foundation sufficient, or do you suspect that perhaps – in the end – war is hell?

(b) What happens when an officer fails to meet his or her moral obligations? How does it affect his or her ability to command? Does it influence operations up or down the chain of command? How?

(c) Think of an experience where you witnessed leadership failure. Was that failure tied to a breakdown in the professional military ethic? How might you have approached the situation differently to realize a different outcome?

b. Class 2, 8 January 2019, *The Civil-Military Relationship*

(1) Required Reading:


(b) Ian Bryan, “Know yourself before the enemy: Military professionalism’s civil foundation,” *Joint Force Quarterly* (2011) 63: 32-36. **Readings will be shared electronically**


(2) Issues for Consideration:

(a) As an officer, what is your duty to obey a command from a superior? How does that square with your duty to protect and defend the Constitution? With Davenport’s notion of an officer’s duty being to protect humanity?

(b) How do you prepare your subordinates to accept restraints from higher they may find untenable? In what ways can you hear dissent from your troops while submitting to civilian authority on this matter?

(c) What opportunities do you possess to influence the professional military ethic up the chain of command in your day-to-day interactions with your superiors? What opportunities exist for you to challenge a course of action or decision you find questionable and what opportunities exist for you to assist your CO in laying a strong foundation for ethical conduct within your unit?

c. Class 3, 10 January 2019, *When Moral Conviction and Ethical Obligation Collide*

(1) Required Reading:
(a) Don Snider, *Dissent and Strategic Leadership of the Military Professions*, (Strategic Studies Institute, February 2008). **Readings will be shared electronically**
(b) Martin Cook, “Revolt of the generals: A case study in professional ethics,” *Parameters*, (2008) 38: 4-14. **Readings will be shared electronically**
(d) Should Soldiers Express Their Dissent with the Military in Public? (Sept 2014)

**Online**

(2) Issues for Consideration:
(a) Under what circumstances might your personal convictions and your professional obligations collide?
(b) Milburn is making a strong case for dissent on moral grounds. How does his argument relate to the perspective on military professionalism outlined in our first two classes?
(c) How would you counsel a junior Marine who was facing a moral / ethical divide? How would you respond to tension of this nature yourself?

**d. Class 4, 14 January 2019, Moral and Ethical Development**

(1) Required Reading:
(a) “Moral Agent and Subject of Moral Worth,” *Concepts Unwrapped*, November 11, 2012 **Online**
(c) Lawrence Kohlberg, “Stages of Moral Development” **Online**
(d) Joseph Thomas, “The Four Stages of Moral Development in Military Leaders,” United States Naval Academy. **Readings will be shared electronically**

(2) Issues for Consideration:
(a) As you move from positions of direct to organizational leadership, what opportunities do you have to develop your subordinates morally and ethically?
(b) How do you communicate to subordinates at different stages of moral development? Can you think of examples in your past where you have seen or helped subordinates cultivate their moral understanding?
(c) How do you deal with moral failing within your units? How can you prepare your leadership to prevent, mitigate, and respond to moral failings in a way that strengthens the individual and the unit?

**e. Class 5, 16 January 2019, Moral Psychology**

(1) Required Reading:
(b) “Albert Bandura discusses Moral Disengagement,” October 4, 2011. **Online**
f. Class 6, 22 January 2019, Moral and Ethical Failure

(1) Required Reading:
   (b) C.S. Lewis, “The Inner Ring,” Memorial Lecture at King’s College, University of London (1944). **Readings will be shared electronically**

(2) Issues for Consideration:
   (a) What does Lewis mean by “The Inner Ring?” What is the allure of remaining inside it? How can you resist the power of the inner ring? How can you minimize its influence in your units?
   (b) What can you do to ensure you don’t fall prey to the Bathsheba Syndrome? How can you help prepare your subordinates (and your seniors) to maintain their character as they face an increasing span of moral control?
   (c) What is the role of the Chaplain and Staff Judge Advocate in guarding the CO’s integrity? How does (or can) the command team work together to support the CO ethically?
   (d) CAPT Light makes focused recommendations for how to address ethical lapses in the Navy. At the institutional level, what can the Marine Corps do to minimize ethical failure in senior leaders?

g. Class 7, 24 January 2019, The Stoic Warrior

(1) Required Reading:
   (a) VADM James B. Stockdale, *The Stoic Warrior’s Triad*. **Readings will be shared electronically**
   (c) Read EITHER Epictetus, *The Enchiridion* OR Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, Books 2-3: **Online**
**Online**

(2) Issues for Consideration:
(a) What are the core tenets of Stoicism? How can one be simultaneously Stoic and human?
(b) How do you develop tranquility, fearlessness, and freedom? How do you cultivate these traits in your subordinates?
(c) How does the professional military ethics change during periods of intense, prolonged stress? How do you maintain the integrity of the profession during these periods?
(d) What are some ways you can help develop a sense of commitment, control, and challenge in yourself? In your subordinates?

**h. Class 8, 28 January 2019, Ethical Fitness**

(1) Required Reading:
(a) Rushworth Kidder, *How Good People Make Tough Choices*, Chapter 3. **Issued**
(b) Michael Hallett, “Cultivating Sailor Ethical Fitness,” *Naval War College Review*, Vol 69, No. 4: 93-106. **Online**

(2) Issues for Consideration:
(a) What does it mean to be ethically fit? How might you evaluate your own ethical fitness? The ethical fitness of those in your unit?
(b) What would an ethical fitness training plan look like? How might you recover from any outstanding injuries and develop areas of weakness? How can you ensure that ethical fitness training doesn’t devolve into standard ‘check-a-block’ training?
(c) How do your personal beliefs and convictions relate to your professional ethic? What do you do when these two come in conflict?

**i. Class 9, 30 January 2019, Teaching Ethics**

(1) Required Reading:
(a) Joe Doty and Jeffrey Fenlasen, “Real Lessons Learned for Leaders after Years of War,” *Military Review*, (2012) 92: 81-89. **Readings will be shared electronically**
(d) Traci Thompson, “Effective Ethics Programs Come from the ‘Middle’,” *National Defense* (Dec 2012). **Online**

(2) Issues for Consideration:
(a) What opportunities do you have to teach ethical leadership in your units and organizations?
(b) What necessary and / or sufficient conditions must exist in order to realize ethical change within your units?
(c) What is the relationship between teaching and learning? How can you take your commitment to continued learning and infuse it into your units?
(d) Clear relationships exist between this topic and our discussions of moral development and moral psychology. How are you tying these issues together in your own mind, and how can you help subordinates make the appropriate connections themselves?

j. Class 10, 1 February 2019, Student’s Choice
**Students will select a topic for this final class by 10 January 2019. Readings will be posted on Moodle by 22 January 2019.

5. Additional Student Requirements
Students will be required to: contribute to seminars; read, understand, and think about a selected number of articles and book chapters per session; complete one writing assignment; contribute to on-line discussion boards; and work in groups to present their plan for strengthening the ethical fitness of their unit.

Students will post on the Google Drive’s discussion board before each class session. See the discussion board folder of the course Google Drive for more details.

Students will work in groups to develop a plan for strengthening the ethical fitness of their units. This plan will include ideas for training and educational opportunities targeted for officers and enlisted service members of varying levels of seniority as well as methods for evaluating ethical fitness and progress.

Students will write a 1,500-word essay that reviews an ethical decision the student made or experienced, using the readings and topics covered in the course. Your paper is due via email to Rebecca.johnson@usmcu.edu NLT midnight, 15 February 2019.

6. Assessment
The course grade is weighted as follows:

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<th>Component</th>
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<td>Course Presentation</td>
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7. Relationship to Other Instruction
This elective complements the Warfighting and Leadership courses and electives relating to leadership, ethics, and civil-military relations.

8. Student Course Evaluation Statement
The College is very attentive to what many educators call “Institutional Effectiveness” – that is, how well we are achieving our objectives. At the conclusion of this course students will be asked to complete an online survey. This survey allows the student to register views on readings, lectures, seminars, and issues for consideration for each segment of the course. All participants are urged to contribute their constructive criticisms and suggestions for improvements. It is best to take notes for these evaluations at regular intervals using the survey question sheet provided with the courseware, rather than waiting until the online survey opens at the end of the course. Surveys are electronically tallied, studied by faculty (including members engaged in courseware development).
revision), and eventually archived for use in future institutional research. In order to ensure that students submit surveys without prejudice, surveys are submitted anonymously and faculty members shall not examine the survey results until course grades have been submitted.

Lesson Hours:

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<th>Practical Application</th>
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Submitted by:          Reviewed and Approved:

MATTHEW FLYNN, PH.D.  JONATHAN F. PHILLIPS, PH.D.
ELECTIVES COORDINATOR  DEAN OF ACADEMICS

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