

**Marine Corps University / Command and Staff College**  
*Leadership in the Profession of Arms I*

**Lesson Title: Moral Decision Making**

**Lesson: 2110 (AY-21)**  
**Author: Dr. R. J. Johnson**  
**Revision Date: 3 Aug 20**

**Lesson Hours:**

Lecture	Guest Lecturer	Seminar	Film	Prac App/ Exercise	Staff Ride	Exam	PSPT	Total Scheduled Hours	Total Contact Hours	Total Hours
1.0							4.2	1.0	1.0	5.2

*\*IAW MCU Academic Regulations, Practical Applications and Exercises hours are half-credit when computing Contact Hours.*

**AY20 JPME Data (JPME Phase I):**

Area 1			Area 2			Area 3							Area 4							Area 5			Area 6								
a	b	c	d	a	b	c	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	a	b	c	a	b	c	d	e	f	
																									Co	Co	Co	An			

IAW CJCSI 1800.01E

Kn = Knowledge, Co = Comprehension, Ap = Application, An = Analysis, Sy = Synthesis, Ev = Evaluation, Cr = Creation

**Bold = Main Effort**

No Bold = Supporting Effort

**AY21 Learning Areas (JPME 1 & USMC) and CJCS Special Areas of Emphasis (SAEs)**

Joint Learning Areas (2020)						USMC Learning Areas (2020)						CJCS Special Areas of Emphasis (AY20-21)						MCU CSC Specific	
Strategic Thinking & Communication	Profession of Arms	Continuum of Competition, Conflict, & War	Security Environment	Strategy & Joint Planning	Globally Integrated Ops	Leadership	Warfighting	Joint, Interagency, & Multinational Ops	Regional & Cultural Studies	Communication	Creative & Critical Thinking	Great Power Competition	Information Environment	Strategic Deterrence	Electromagnetic Spectrum	Space Warfighting Domain	Writing Clear / Concise Advice	Case Study	Wargame
X					X	X					X								

IAW: CJCSI 1800.01F dtd, 15 May 2020

IAW USMC OPME Continuum dtd 14 Apr 2020

IAW CJCS Itr dtd 6 May 2019

IAW AY20 CCRB

**1. Introduction**

A main theme in the Leadership Course is the examination of how and why people make the moral choices they do. In this lecture, we will look at specific ways people decide what is ‘right’. First, it is important to situate decision making within the broader category of moral action. According to James Rest, doing the right thing is more than simply knowing the right thing to do. You have to understand the moral significance of your choices for all the morally relevant actors, know how to reason through – instead of rationalize -- your choice for the good of the mission, possess the motivation to do the right thing for the mission, and demonstrate the fortitude to actually do it.<sup>1</sup>

This first step, *moral awareness*, comes from being able to correctly identify what type of choice you face and determine the potential consequences of different choices on those concerned. The second step, *moral judgment*, comes from being able to decide the morally defensible course of action based on your moral awareness. As the readings for today demonstrate, there are different approaches individuals can take to make sound moral judgments,

<sup>1</sup> James Rest, "Background: Theory and Research," in James Rest and Darcia Narváez, *Moral Development in the Professions: Psychology and Applied Ethics*. (Hillsdale: Erlbaum Associates, 1994).

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and these approaches can be compatible with rapid crisis decision making. Still, judgment is not action unless it is implemented. The third step in moral action is *moral motivation*. According to Rest, people rely on both internal motivation (a commitment to certain principles or allegiance to behavior norms) and external motivation (fear of punishment or desire for acceptance) to actually connect moral judgment to moral action. Finally, people require *moral character* – or an ingrained track record of moral action – to fill the gap when motivation is low due to fatigue, temptation, or emotion. Weakness in any of those elements can result in an otherwise good person doing an immoral or unethical thing. Different seminars over the course of the year will examine each of these facets in turn.

Today’s lecture looks specifically at moral decision making. Future seminars will look at moral motivation and character both in terms of identifying how you can develop these strengths in yourself, but also how you can develop them within your units.

**2. Student Learning Outcomes**

Bold = Main Effort; No Bold = Supporting Effort

4.3 Analyze cognitive processes that affect decision making.

6.1 Analyze leadership approaches suitable to the situation and an individual’s personal leadership style.

6.3 Evaluate techniques for developing ethical and effective leaders.

**6.4 Make sound and morally courageous decisions in response to complex ethical and legal challenges.**

**3. Supporting Educational Objectives**

a. Increase moral awareness through the application of moral reasoning to cases of moral decision making. [CSC 4.3, 6.1, 6.3, 6.4; JPME 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d]

b. Analyze the differences between moral temptation and moral dilemma. [CSC 6.3, 6.4; JPME 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d]

c. Develop the ability to communicate moral responsibilities to subordinates. [CSC, 6.3, 6.4; JPME 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d]

d. Apply moral reasoning to cases of moral decision making. [CSC 4.3, 6.1, 6.3, 6.4; JPME 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d]

e. Identify strategies to assist subordinates in identifying and engaging moral different types of moral choices. [6.1, 6.3, 6.4; JPME 6b, 6c]

**4. Student Requirements**

Event	Prep
Preparation for Seminar: ● Bill Rhodes, <i>An Introduction to Military Ethics</i> , (Denver, CO: Praeger Security International, 2009), ch. 1. <b>CSC website / Moodle</b> ● David Fisher, “Virtues and Consequences,” <i>Morality and War</i> , (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), ch. 3. <b>CSC website / Moodle</b> ● Read Rushworth Kidder, “Right Versus Right: The Nature of Dilemma Paradigms,” and “Three More Dilemma Paradigms,” <i>How Good People Make Tough Choices</i> (New York: Harper, 2003): Ch. 5-6. (43 pgs) <b>Reading to be completed upon book issue</b>	82 pp  7 min video

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● Watch, “Moral Decision Making,” <a href="https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/video/best-self-part-2-moral-decision-making">https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/video/best-self-part-2-moral-decision-making</a>	
View Lecture (1 hr) <b>CSC website / Moodle</b>	

**5. Issues for Discussion**

- a. What are the different approaches to moral reasoning? How do they influence moral decision making?
- b. What are the defining characteristics of a true moral dilemma? What different approaches exist for choosing a course of action in the face of a moral dilemma?
- c. The readings for today detail different processes to reach moral judgment. How does this judgment translate into moral action?
- d. What are some of the behavioral factors that impede moral decision making? Have you experienced them in your own moral choices? How can you prepare a unit to avoid these traps?
- e. What virtues do you identify as central to a moral military character? In what ways do you cultivate those virtues in yourself? In those subordinate to you?
- f. When assessing the consequences of a decision, how far in the future should you look? How do you identify which people or groups should be included in your analysis (the consequences for whom should matter to you)? Which people or groups should be excluded from your assessment because the consequences to them don't matter?
- g. What are some ways you can familiarize your Marines to the elements of moral decision making?
- h. Are there opportunities in the MCPP to evaluate the moral dimensions of combat operations? Where and how? How might the various approaches to moral reasoning be applied when fulfilling Commander's Intent in different instances?

**6. References**

In addition to the required and supplemental preparation materials, the following references apply:

- a. Audi, Robert (2008). “Intuition, Inference, and Rational Disagreement in Ethics,” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 11 (5): 475-492.
- b. Fine, Cornelia (2006). “Is the Emotional Dog Wagging its Rational Tail, or Chasing it? Reason in Moral Judgment,” *Philosophical Explorations*, 9 (1): 83-98.
- c. Haidt, Jonathan and Craig Joseph (2004). “Intuitive Ethics: How Innately Prepared Intuitions Generate Culturally Variable Virtues,” *Daedalus* 133 (4): 55-66.
- d. Jordan, Jennifer (2007). “Taking the First Step Toward a Moral Action: A Review of Moral Sensitivity Measurement Across Domains,” *The Journal of Genetic Psychology* 168 (3): 323-359.
- e. Kennett, Jeanette and Cordelia Fine (2009). “Will the Real Moral Judgment Please Stand Up? The Implications of Social Intuitionist Models of Cognition for Meta-ethics and Moral Psychology,” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 12 (1), 77-96.
- f. Robinson, Paul (2007). “Ethics Training and Development in the Military,” *Parameters* 37 (1), 23-36.

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**7. Relationship to Other Instruction**

This lesson is linked to 2111 *Moral Universalism and Relativism* and also builds upon other Leadership lessons. The ability to identify the types of moral decision-making will help leaders understand how and why they (and others) make the decisions they do, and have solid reasoning behind them. Leadership is ingrained across the Command and Staff College curriculum, and this lesson can and should be referred to throughout Warfighting, War Studies, and Security Studies lessons.