

**NAVAL RESERVE OFFICERS TRAINING CORPS  
LEADERSHIP AND ETHICS**

**LESSON GUIDE: 2**

**HOURS: 1.0**

**TITLE: INTRODUCTION TO MORAL REASONING/RELATIVISM**

I. Learning Objectives

A. Reading Objectives:

1. The student will know the difference between cultural relativism in social science and relativism as a normative theory of ethics.
2. The student will comprehend the pervasiveness of the psychological motivation of self-interest.
3. The student will understand why ethics is so hard to discuss and understand.

B. Discussion Objectives

1. The student will comprehend the basic purpose and objective behind understanding moral reasoning.
2. The student will comprehend theories of relativism and apply them to right and wrong conduct.
3. The student will comprehend that psychological pursuit of self-interest is not necessarily inimical to establishing principles of morality or the rule of law.
4. The student will comprehend the difference between narrow, short-term self-interest and more enlightened or long-term self-interest.

II. References and Texts

A. Instructor References:

1. Ethics and the Military Profession, Chapters 1 and 2A
2. Case Studies in Military Ethics, Introduction, Chapters 1 and 5
3. "Selective Unmasking" Exercise (attached)
4. "USS San Jacinto Responds to Yemeni Vessel's Distress Call," U.S. Press Release, 11 Jan 01 (attached)

5. USNA Blackboard at <http://www.blackboard.usna.edu/>

B. Student Texts:

1. Ethics and the Military Profession, Chapters 1 and 2A
2. "Introduction," Case Studies in Military Ethics, pp. xiii-vi
3. "Rescuing the Boat People," Case Studies in Military Ethics, pp. 13-16

I. Instructional Aids

- A. VCR/Monitor or projection system
- B. PowerPoint slides/projection system
- C. Videos:
  1. Rules of Engagement
  2. The Boat People (USNA video clip)
  3. Ethical Challenges in the Military (USNA video clip)
  4. Kidder: Are There Moral Rules for Everyone (USNA video clip)

II. Instructor Notes

A. This is a seminar and group discussion-oriented lesson designed to be a one-hour block of learning. The instructor may choose to incorporate a variety of contemporary articles and current events to facilitate this discussion.

B. Ensure students comprehend the difference between law, regulations, and rules and fundamental ethical decision-making.

C. Ensure students understand the necessity of moral and ethical decision-making and how it will impact their role as decision-makers and leaders in the armed forces.

D. In preparation for the follow-on class, the instructor should determine a "lead in" to Constitutional Ethics, as the last item discussed in class.

E. Recommend the use of a five-minute film clip from the movie, Rules of Engagement, at the beginning of the class. In the beginning of the movie, Samuel L. Jackson must choose between saving the lives of his men