

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

LESSON GUIDE: 9

HOURS 1.5

TITLE: VIRTUE ETHICS/ARISTOTLE

I. Learning Objectives

A. Reading Objectives:

1. The student will comprehend the nature of "the good for man" as determined by Aristotle.
2. The student will comprehend the importance of cultivation, throughout life, of appropriate excellences or "virtues" as the means by which we strive to attain the Good (*eudaimonia* or human flourishing).
3. The student will comprehend and be able to distinguish moral virtues or excellences (such as courage or truthfulness) from the virtues or excellences associated with intellectual pursuits (wisdom, intelligence, knowledge) and virtues associated with other practical activities (skill and craftsmanship, physical strength, athletic prowess).
4. The student will comprehend Aristotle's famous theory of the "Mean" as a method of determining the excellence or virtue appropriate to many (but not all) activities or pursuits.
5. The student will comprehend the special status accorded to friendship in the pursuit of a good life, according to Aristotle, as well as the different kinds of friendship one can enjoy.

B. Discussion Objectives:

1. The student will apply Aristotelian principles to the demands and activities of military service (particularly to the profession of a Naval Officer) and identify the virtues most closely associated with this profession.
2. The student will comprehend the importance of virtues in the development and cultivation of good moral character, both as a military professional and as a human being.
3. The student will apply these lessons to practical cases. This application will help them recognize situations that require adherence to particular virtues and those in which conflict between virtues creates a moral dilemma.

II. References and Texts

A. Instructor References:

1. Ethics and the Military Profession, Chapter 3C
 2. Case Studies in Military Ethics, Chapter 3
 3. USNA Blackboard at <http://www.blackboard.usna.edu>
- B. Student Texts:
1. Ethics and the Military Profession, Chapter 3C
 2. "Hugh Thompson: Moral Courage," Case Studies in Military Ethics, pp. 77-80
- C. Instructional Aids
1. VCR/Monitor or projection system
 2. PowerPoint slides and projection system
 3. Video Segments (optional):
 - a. Band of Brothers (USNA video clip)
 - b. Black Hawk Down (USNA video clip)
 - c. A Bridge too Far (USNA video clip)
 - d. Hugh Thompson: Moral Courage (USNA video clip)

III. Instructor Notes

- A. Utilitarianism and Kantian ethics are primarily concerned with the evaluation of actions. Which actions are morally prohibited? Which are permissible or desirable? Which are obligatory?
- B. In contrast, virtue ethics focuses on the character of the moral agent. The virtue ethicist claims that character is primary in moral assessment.
1. We do not value people merely because they do the right thing. Rather, we value people who do the right thing for the right reasons with the right desires and attitudes.
 2. Furthermore, character is prior to action. Figuring out which action is correct often requires having a wise and virtuous character.
 3. Arguably, virtue ethics has many affinities with military ethics, as illustrated by the fact that the virtues of courage, honor, and commitment serve as the foundation for training midshipmen.
- C. Virtue theory is enjoying renewed popularity among philosophers. However, in this unit, we go back to