

PHIL-0092 Spring 22

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Ethics Lesson: “Do Not Cheat” and Absolute Rules

End Goal of Lesson:

- Have students be able to interrogate what we consider “core principles” and see what is underlying them.
- Have students consider the ethical dimensions of various situations
- Have students make an amendment/restatement of “Do Not Cheat” that is more applicable but still an absolute

Learning Materials:

- 2-3 decks of cards
- Lesson Plan

I. Opening Activity (~5 mins)

- Take 2-3 decks of cards
 - Split deck in two, with each subdeck containing cards in the following ranges (except for perhaps one or two cards):
 - Values 2-7 (“disadvantageous”)
 - Values 8-Ace (“advantageous”)
- Split students into pairs.
- Give each student a skewed deck (one advantageous, one disadvantageous in each pair)
- Have students break into pairs to play “War.” Don’t let them look at or shuffle their decks.
- See if they will say anything about the game being “fixed.” Will the person being cheated make a fuss, or will the cheater?

II. Post-Activity Discussion on Cheating: (~7 minutes)

- Pose the following questions about the game to begin to introduce the concept of cheating
- If you had known the game was fixed, what would you have done?
 - What if you knew you had the good deck?
 - What if you knew you had the bad deck?
- If you had the good deck and didn’t say anything, were you cheating? Since you did have an unfair advantage
- (If they spoke up) We told you not to talk, and you did, so that means you broke the rules. Were you cheating? Does breaking the rules = cheating? Why or why not?

- Have students name some situations where breaking the rules *is* cheating and some situations where breaking the rules *is not* cheating

III. Ethical Discussion

- **Task: Define cheating** (~2 Minutes)
 - Have all students quietly write their definition of cheating (1 minute)
 - Students share their answers
- Once cheating is defined, hold a brief discussion on cheating and rules generally. Write responses on the board. (3 minutes)
 - Why is cheating wrong?
 - What beliefs underlie the idea that we should not cheat?
 - Why do we have rules?
- Begin hypotheticals. Pose various situations from the following categories/qualities. Remind students to keep in mind what exceptions to the absolute rule might be suggested by the situations (~ 20 minutes)
 - **Cheating in school**, who is more “allowed” to cheat?
 - Cheating in compulsory education (K-12) vs. voluntary (college)
 - Cheating in public vs private schools
 - Cheating on a math test vs. essay
 - Plagiarism (Stealing intellectual property)
 - Why do schools care? What is the benefit in *not* cheating?
 - **Cheating as “advantage”**
 - Cheating normally defined as breaking the rules to get an advantage
 - But what happens when you are *disadvantaged* and need to cheat to level the playing field?
 - Example (scenario A): You get sick and are out of class for 2 weeks. Your teacher tells you that you need to take a test the day you come back. You have missed all the necessary classes and your teacher has not helped you catch-up. You are at a disadvantage to your classmates since you were not present for the lessons containing the content on the test. So you decide you’re going to sneak an index card in with definitions, formulas, etc. Is this cheating by the traditional definition? Why or why not? (Have students discuss in pairs)
 - -Broader Context: Standardized tests do favor economically advantaged people who can afford prep classes, tutors, etc. If you are from a lower socioeconomic standing, is cheating on the SAT/ACT/AP Tests, justified?
 - **Accessory?**
 - Revisit Scenario A, but this time it’s not you who was out sick, it was your friend. Your friend asks you to help them

cheat on the test. Would you do it? (Have students discuss in pairs)

- If you witness someone cheating, are you obligated to report it?
- **Other cases of justified cheating?**
 - Draft dodging
 - Government benefits (e.g., fudging numbers on a welfare application)
 - Election rigging

Task: Come up with cases in which cheating is justified (can include above examples or new ones from students).

- What is an example where it is *absolutely justifiable* to cheat (consequences outweigh the rule)
- Discuss how we can draw out abstract qualifications to the rule

IV. Rule (~10 minutes)

- Is there an absolute rule we can say about cheating?
- **Task: Collectively write a rule on cheating with any applicable qualifications.**