

Final Ethics Essay

This course was very interesting in the way it presented topics, however, my own ideas and ethics were often not challenged. Instead, I found it fascinating to view the topics presented through a multitude of different viewpoints and frameworks, which resulted in my ability to better express my own morals. The three topics that were most impactful to me were information warfare, cyberwarfare, and whistleblowing.

Information warfare was the final topic covered in this course and the only one I could not argue in favor of a specific moral conclusion. I found difficulty in even choosing a moral framework to view it through to begin with. In this, I chose my own moral framework of utilitarianism to discuss it. Previous to this course, I had believed that the justifications behind any war were very clear cut, and although things could be messy in the heat of battle, the rules of engagement were generally equally clear cut. However, information warfare presents an entirely new side of war that has no previous equivalent. In my essay, I discussed the fact that the consequences of information war were not only wide reaching, but hard to calculate. As someone that firmly believes in the greatest good for the greatest number, being unable to determine what those numbers are is something that gives me pause. I have realized that there is a much deeper nuance not just for information war, but warfare in general. As such, I no longer feel comfortable taking a firm stance on it and feel that going forward, I need to do a lot more research.

This leads into the second, similar topic of cyber warfare. For that essay, I was able to easily evaluate it under contractarianism for the purpose of the assignment, however, how it fits into my own moral framework is another discussion entirely, particularly with the added context of information warfare. Initially, I believed that cyberwarfare could be completely justified under utilitarianism as it theoretically minimized harm. However, as I read the articles associated with

that module, I came to the understanding that this is far too simple of an idea. I had not considered the fact that cyberwarfare would lead to the blurring of lines between civilian and soldier, or that nations could and would use it to justify restricting privacy and freedom. In this, I feel quite naïve and that my perspective remains shallow in regards to modern warfare altogether. I have come to the realization that through my studies and enjoyment of history, I have focused too much on basing my views on ethics for a world that no longer exists. However, there is also the nuance in that the current rules of war were created and based upon past events that have shaped our current society. In this, I can extend these views and tweak them to fit our modern world. Cyberwarfare does have the possibility to disguise soldiers as civilians, but it does not change the laws of identification. Cyberwarfare does introduce moral panics that lead to more restrictive laws, but it does not change the fact that privacy is a fundamental human right. In this, the old method of ethics still applies, but there needs to be new ways of implementing them.

The final topic that stuck with me was that of whistleblowing. This module was particularly impactful for me because of the video associated with it, in which Americans were filmed committing what are arguably war crimes and laughing about it. This was something that shocked me more than I thought it would, given that I have read numerous reports of these kinds of acts. But, this resulted in the lesson and ethics of whistleblowing being all the more impactful. Previously, I had been a staunch supporter of whistleblowing, but I was not always sure how to word my support or why this particular topic was so important. Now I can see that this is not a neutral topic, but one that is vital for our democracy. I can see that there is not one way to be a whistleblower, but that there are ethical rules for it. There is a way to harm and a way to help through whistleblowing.

While these three topics were the most memorable ones from this course, I found all of them to be vital in helping reshape my worldview or reinforce my own morals. Although I do find frustration in not being able to come to a perfect moral conclusion for some of these arguments, I am glad I learned enough to where I can see that the real world is not as clear cut as textbooks would suggest. What I have taken away from this course most of all is that there are no simple solutions, there is no one way to view the same issues, and I am far more uninformed than I previously thought.