



# Ethical Reasoning in Action

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

## APRIL 2020 NEWSLETTER

We would love to hear your stories of how you are using the 8KQ in your classes, programs, work, and daily life.

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*Spring greetings, friends and colleagues of Ethical Reasoning in Action!*

These are challenging times. Below are updates and stories from ERIa that you may find encouraging. We intend this newsletter to bring attention to the good teaching, scholarship, and work being done at JMU and elsewhere. Exceptionally difficult ethical situations are being navigated daily at every level of society, in our places of work and in our homes, but especially by those on the front line in our hospitals and health care facilities. How can the 8KQ help us make the important decisions that we face?

## Ethical Reasoning in Action at JMU

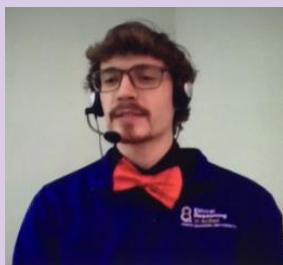
### Staying Connected with Current and Former Students

We recently reached out to students who are going through or have gone through our ethical reasoning program. Several have commented on the relevance of 8KQ ethical reasoning for addressing current issues, big and small. Many report using the 8KQ to discern whether they should go out to be with friends. Others have been struck by the hard choices facing those who work on the front line in health care.

Here are some of their responses:

- "...[C]lass helped me to use critical thinking skills and the 8 key questions have really changed the way I think about difficult situations in my life."
- "We are currently living in the midst of a situation where the 8 Key Questions are very relevant and I am grateful I was able to learn about this (and more) in ...class ...."
- "There has been many a time when I thought about our ethical reasoning class, and some of the lessons I learned from it. Especially with the current situation our world faces, I agree that they are quite relevant."

### Nursing Foundations WebEx – Austin Evans, Ethical Reasoning Educator



Austin Evans, a senior IDLS major, with minors in Middle School Education, Classical Studies, and Music, taught and facilitated 8KQ sessions in two sections of instructor Catherine Brown's Nursing Foundations students via live WebEx the

week of April 7. Together they found a way to continue a

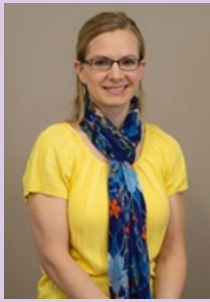
### Looking Back at Teaching Ethical Reasoning to Marketing Students – Dr. Joe Derby, Assistant Professor of Marketing, ERIa Faculty Fellow



The COVID-19 virus hitting this semester resulted in a move out of the classroom to on-line teaching and accelerated COB faculty's move out of their old offices to the new building. While packing my office I came across a stack of papers that in effect

documented the history of the way in which I have incorporated ethical reasoning into my marketing courses over the past five years. I noticed how my teaching had changed over time. Early on I combined off-the-shelf business case studies – "mini-cases" developed at Carnegie Mellon – with our 8KQ strategy as prompts for students. I introduced students to ethical reasoning decision making, the 8KQs strategy, and how to use the 8KQ to analyze an ethical dilemma. Working in teams, students analyzed select mini-cases and arrived at a decision as a group. On exams, students analyzed similar cases, but they did the analysis and decision making on their own. This seemed to be a good approach, but I began to feel that the exam portion was not capturing a key aspect of the process – social deliberation and collaboration. I started noticing that the process of asking the questions and wrestling with alternatives in groups tends to bring out a well-reasoned and nuanced answer, which was a central learning goal. Also, I noticed that the mini-case prompts were not aligned very well with student's knowledge or experience. So I wrote scenarios that were more relevant to their experience and that placed them in the role of an actor in a situation instead

two-year (usually in-person) partnership that connects the 8KQ with nursing students' personal values, future nursing practice, and the nursing Code of Ethics.



**Academic Integrity, Empathy, and Outcomes That Matter – Dr. Audrey Burnett, Associate Professor of Health Sciences, Honor Council Coordinator, ERIa Faculty Fellow**

As news broke of JMU's classes moving online due to Covid-19, I faced some very important questions:

How do I maintain the academic integrity of my courses and express compassion to students who are being told to shelter-in-place during a global pandemic? How could I administer exams online, upholding the JMU Honor Code while also recognizing that students may not all have the same level of access to online resources? After wrestling with how to proceed with online assessments, I realized that the real learning for the semester is about how students process their experience with the pandemic. So in my 400-level ethics course, I am having students write an ethics brief for one of their exams about the pandemic, which will include the application of the 8KQ to such issues as triaged care, prioritizing treatment based on patients' age, lack of sufficient protective medical gear and supplies, and the like. The assignment is not due until finals week, so students with limited online access will not be unduly burdened.

I feel relieved that I can maintain academic integrity in my teaching, but more importantly and thinking even longer term than the end of the semester, students need an assignment that will allow them to process this experience and to apply it to their future health professions. That is a far more important take-away than what an exam could ever give them. Particularly for my students, who have lost loved ones to this virus, this writing assignment may provide them a compassionate context within which to process their experience as future professionals and as humans. Empathy, care, and compassion are the lessons that students need – that we all need – during this global pandemic.

of an analyzer of a case. Now, after the introduction to ethical reasoning and 8KQs, students are presented with an ethical situation they are likely to face at the start of their careers and are asked to collaboratively apply the 8KQ to come to a reasoned decision. Exams are still similar: students analyze and discuss the ethical situation as a group, but individually answer what decision they would make and detail the 8KQ reasoning that supports their decision. I think this hybrid approach results in a much more realistic and useful learning experience.

**Virtual Village and the Question of Responsibility – Dr. Jonathan Stewart, Associate Director, Finance, IT, and Assessment, ERIa Faculty Fellow**



When stay-at-home orders were issued, my first thought was for my friends and family who have young children: how are they going to make it? The Key Question that keeps ringing in my ear is, "What are my *responsibilities* at a time

like this?" Authorities are telling us to stay home, to go out for essential items only, and to wash hands frequently. Those responsibilities are obvious. But what about the less obvious but equally relevant responsibilities and obligations that I have to my friends and family, especially those with young children? Perhaps I could think of virtual programming for the younger kids in our lives in the same way faculty are thinking about virtual programming for college students. I am discovering that playing games such as "I Spy" and "Simon Says" are extremely adaptable to video chats, and I am surprised at how much laughter can come from something so simple as swapping facial expressions while bringing yourself in and out of frame on your phone. Your friends and family might not be asking for help explicitly, which is partly what makes our obligations less obvious, but if they are anything like mine the struggles of the stay-at-home orders are quickly bringing them to their wits end. If you have the time, why not lend a virtual hand? I encourage you to reach out to your friends and family and offer them a story time break, help with homework, or even an Ethical Reasoning scenario.

## Ethical Reasoning in Action Beyond JMU

### Alternative Spring Break – Katrina Libera, ERiA Engagement Fellow



Katrina spent Spring Break with ten JMU students in Nashville, TN, and two student leaders Abby Wallen, a junior Public Policy and

Administration major, and Allahjah Smith, a senior Justice Studies major and Philosophy minor, with a Pre-Law declaration. As part of the Alternative Break Program through JMU's Community Service Learning office, students participated in active volunteering with [Project C.U.R.E.](#), the largest distributor of donated medical supplies in the world. (They donate \$80 million worth of medical supplies every year and operate almost entirely on volunteer work!) The JMU group spent the week helping them sort, label, box, and load their trucks. In the evenings, the group reflected on how the 8KQ showed up in the work they were doing and also in the bigger picture of healthcare inequalities around the world. Part of the Alternative Spring Break model is the "What?, So what?, Now what?" approach through which students identify the ongoing issue, identify why an issue is important to address, and then think critically about their actions going forward. The 8KQ helped the students make progress within this frame, especially when asked to think about the "now what?" step. Several of the students noted how important having a real-life example was for their comprehension of the 8KQ. One student commented that it really "brought it to life."

### Ethical Reasoning in Action Confronts the Global Pandemic



[Everett Ressler](#) was the first UNICEF humanitarian and development director to step foot in Kigali after the Rwandan genocide. This is only one example from a lifetime of service spent all over the world, leading various humanitarian projects. Today he directs a non-profit consultancy firm, Humanitarian and Development Partnership International ([HDPI](#)), composed of seasoned professional humanitarian and development [specialists](#). When Ressler heard a talk about Ethical Reasoning in Action and the 8KQ strategy he immediately showed interest. Since then he has used the 8KQ in a recent fact-finding tour of the United States southern border and refugee settlements in north Mexico. On March 13 he hosted a Zoom conversation with humanitarian workers around the globe, France and Italy under enforced house lockdown at the time, to go over the 8KQ and how asking these questions might better inform humanitarian relief efforts in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. The seasoned professionals immediately latched on to the questions and grasped their practical value. Many important ethical insights were raised and shared. Through Ressler's work, and that of the team of international humanitarian professionals, the 8KQ strategy is playing a role around the world. Two participants in the conversation just published an [op-ed in Geneva Global Magazine](#), which raises many of the issues discussed in the phone conversation. The dominant issues raised are [fairness, outcomes, and responsibility](#).

## Ethical Reasoning in Action Presentations and Publications

**MUDD UNDERGRADUATE CONFERENCE IN ETHICS**  
Saturday, March 7, 2020 • 2–6 p.m.  
Sunday, March 8, 2020 • 9–11:30 a.m.  
Hillel Multipurpose Room

**Keynote Speaker**  
**Dr. Bill Hawk**  
James Madison University  
Professor of Philosophy

"Adopt a Theory, Obey a Code, Follow your Gut,  
or Ask the Right Questions?  
A 'Decision Science' Approach to Ethical Decision Making"

The Conference for The Mudd Journal of Ethics  
This 10th annual conference, which is sponsored by Washington and Lee University's Roger Mudd Center for Ethics and cosponsored by the Philosophy Department, is one of the only undergraduate conferences in the country to bring together students, faculty, and staff from various disciplines to discuss ethical issues.

**8KQ at the  
Roger Mudd  
Center for  
Ethics – Dr.  
Bill Hawk,  
ERiA Chair**

JMU's 8KQ ethical reasoning strategy was the focus at the March 7-8 undergraduate ethics conference hosted by the Roger Mudd Center for Ethics at Washington and Lee University. The conference featured outstanding ethics papers written by top students at Washington and Lee, William and Mary, and Harvard as well as Washington



**National Ethics  
Project Spotlight  
on Ethical  
Reasoning in  
Action**

Residing in the [Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics](#) at Harvard University, the [National Ethics Project](#) is a cross-disciplinary consortium of researchers, educators, and practitioners [studying](#) "where and how ethics is currently taught" as well as identifying and sharing "effective techniques for ethics instruction." On April 1, the NEP



and Lee law and philosophy faculty and members of the public. JMU ('19) alums Scott Ingram (currently W & L Law) and Josh Stick (U.Va. Public Policy) and COB faculty Joe and wife Karen Derby attended and participated. The 8KQ strategy was warmly welcomed with an enthusiastic response in questions and comments. Bill Hawk's keynote was titled "Adopt a Theory, Use Principles, Obey a Code, Nurture Virtues, Obey Divine Authority, Create a Task Force, Follow the Leader, Analyze Costs & Benefits, Design a Nudge, Flip a Coin, Take a Poll, Phone a Friend, Consult a Magic 8 Ball, Go with your Gut, or **Ask the Right Questions?** A Practical 'Decision Science' Approach to Ethical Decision Making." Compared to the other ways that people generally make their decisions, asking the right questions is a much more reliable way to make ethical decisions.

featured a "Spotlight" on JMU's Ethical Reasoning in Action. You can read it [here](#).

### **Can Ethics Be Taught? – Dr. Laura Leduc, Professor and Head, Department of Management**



Laura Leduc and Dr. Matt Rutherford, Professor of Management, with help from student research assistant Leigh Mulligan, recently published an article titled "[Can Ethics Be Taught?](#)" in the *Academy of Management Learning & Education* journal.

The article explores using JMU's 8 Key Questions ethical reasoning strategy as an existing model to examine whether such ethical reasoning training is effective, and what factors might influence outcomes. The three-part approach finds that exposure to ethical training of the type provided at JMU is "significantly related" to improvements in ethical reasoning, and takes into account personal values and personality traits that may also influence the outcome. Here is the short conclusion: JMU's 8KQ ethical reasoning training works!

