The Digital Storytelling/8 Key Questions Assignment

Introduction
The Digital Storytelling/8 Key Questions assignment is a culmination of the skills you have developed and the knowledge you have gained over the semester. For the first part of the assignment you will use digital software and hardware to communicate with your audience. It will require that you:

- Collaborate as a team to conduct research on one of the four topics your group chooses to explore;
- Post the sources you assemble to your website during the semester;
- Learn how to effectively use software and digital cameras, microphones, and other equipment in order to produce digital files;
- Tell the audience the story behind your topic;
- Record digital video clips that explain the advantages/disadvantages of the options to the audience and posting them on your website.

Why Digital Storytelling?
There are many channels through which speakers communicate a message or share meaning with an audience. You can communicate face-to-face, with a text message or email, or through digital channels. You will use a free and open source blogging tool and a content management system which includes a plugin architecture and a template system. Through this tool you can add images, audio, and video to tell your story to the audience by dragging and dropping multiple images into pages you create.

The 8 Key Questions
The Eight Key Questions reflect the best of humanity’s ethical reasoning traditions that have been operationalized these into a flexible and open framework to be used as prompts at the point of decision making. Each question names a distinctive ethical consideration:

- **Fairness** - How can I act equitably and balance legitimate interests?
- **Outcomes** - What achieves the best short- and long-term outcomes for me and all others?
- **Responsibilities** - What duties and/or obligations apply?
- **Character** - What action best reflects who I am and the person I want to become?
- **Liberty** - How does respect for freedom, personal autonomy, or consent apply?
- **Empathy** - What would I do if I cared deeply about those involved?
- **Authority** - What do legitimate authorities (e.g. experts, law, my religion/god) expect of me?
- **Rights** - What rights (e.g. innate, legal, social) apply?

Message Construction
Group members will construct messages as you conduct research on the topic, post your sources to Storify, tell the story behind the topic, and explain the advantages/disadvantages of the options you developed. These SCOM basic course learning objectives will be important because you will:

A. Recognize the need for information appropriate for a communication context, audience, or purpose.
   1. Distinguish between different ways of knowing.
   2. Determine which kind of information is needed.

B. Locate information appropriate for a communication context, audience, or purpose.
1. Recognize differences between library databases and online search engines.
2. Employ appropriate research strategies for locating information.
C. Evaluate information sources appropriate for a communication context, audience, or purpose.
   1. Recognize the elements of source credibility.
   2. Understand the role and appropriateness of source recency.
   3. Justify the appropriateness of an information source.
D. Ethically utilize texts, images and media.
   1. Define the elements of plagiarism.
   2. Describe how to avoid plagiarism.
   3. Cite sources appropriately.
E. Construct a message according to the purpose, audience, and context.
   1. Identify a subject that is relevant to the communicator’s role, knowledge, concerns, and interests.
   2. Adapt the message to the characteristics of the communication context.
   3. Adapt the message to the characteristics of the audience.
   4. Identify ethical concerns related to message construction.
F. Design an effective presentation appropriate for a communication context, audience, or purpose.
   1. Construct a specific purpose relevant to the context when given a general purpose.
   2. Formulate a thesis statement consistent with the communication purpose.
   3. Provide adequate support material that is appropriate for topic, audience, setting, and purpose.
   4. Determine a suitable organizational pattern that is appropriate for the topic and the communication purpose.
   5. Provide effective transitions.
   6. Construct an effective introduction, body, and conclusion.
G. Deliver an effective presentation appropriate for a communication context, audience, or purpose.
   1. Use a mode of delivery appropriate for a communication purpose.
   2. Practice nonverbal behaviors that promote audience engagement.
   3. Utilize an effective visual aid to support the communication purpose.
   4. Deliver an effective presentation.

Critical Thinking
As audience members you will go to the groups’ websites and use your critical thinking skills to evaluate the arguments made by the presenting group in the form of options and their advantages and disadvantages. This SCOM basic course learning objective will be important because as audience members you will:

Respond to messages consistent with the diversity of communication purpose, audience, context, and ethics. You will:
A. Comprehend messages.
   1. Attend to messages with an open mind.
   2. Perceive a communicator’s purpose.
   3. Recognize discrepancies between the communicator’s verbal and nonverbal messages.
   4. Anticipate potential communication barriers.
B. Analyze messages.
   1. Distinguish between main points and support.
2. Discriminate between statements of fact and statements of opinion.
3. Detect bias and prejudice.
4. Draw logical inferences and conclusions from presented messages.
C. Respond to messages.
   1. Recall important points or thesis from orally presented messages.
   2. Respond appropriately to feedback.
   3. Recognize appropriate strategies for responding to different communication goals.

**Topic Choices**

**Topic 1:** How can we stop mass shootings in our communities?
The tragic attack at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, has raised concerns among many people across the nation. Other violent episodes, such as the killing of a teenager who was gunned down after returning home from the president’s inauguration, have also drawn attention. While mass shootings are infrequent, they may be increasing. Each has devastating effects on a whole community. Overall, the United States has become safer in recent years. Yet mass shooters target innocent people indiscriminately, often in locales where people ordinarily (and rightly) feel safe—movie theaters, college campuses, schools. How can we stop such violent acts and ensure that people feel safe in their homes and communities?

**Topic 2:** Shaping our future: How should higher education help us create the society we want?
Higher education’s benefits for the students who attend the nation’s 4,643 colleges and universities are well known. People with two-year and four-year college degrees earn more and are less likely to lose their jobs during an economic downturn. Nearly 9 in 10 Americans say that young people are better off going to college after high school than they would be going directly to work. This issue guide asks: What should we expect of higher education today when it comes to the nation? What could colleges and universities, including community colleges, trade and vocational schools, and other such institutions do to help us create the society we want? For most people, three areas seem especially troubling.

**Topic 3:** What does national security mean in the 21st century?
When the Cold War ended in 1991, the United States became the world’s single most powerful nation. But that moment has passed and we live in a very different place. How shall we approach the world, now, in an environment of diminished power, increased volatility, more competition, and global threats?

**Topic 4:** What should we do to help our youngest children thrive?
The most critical time in a child’s life is the first four years. Brain development in infants and toddlers is more rapid and far-reaching than at any other time. A child’s experiences during these early years have lasting effects on their ability to learn, interact and succeed. Yet our youngest children are largely an “invisible population” in terms of public attention and priorities. By the time they enter school and the public’s eye, many have fallen far behind—physically, intellectually, socially and emotionally. How can we give the best start to our youngest children?

For this assignment, each group will develop three options for the audience to consider. For each option you are to research and list the actions that we could take and the potential drawbacks for each action.
**Topic 1**

**How Can We Stop Mass Shootings in Our Communities?**

Note: This assignment was adapted from an issue advisory that was prepared for the National Issues Forums Institute (NIFI) in collaboration with the Kettering Foundation, which is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research institute that studies the public’s role in democracy. National Issues Forums issue guides are used by civic and educational organizations interested in addressing public issues.

The tragic attack at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, has raised concerns among many people across the nation. Other violent episodes, such as the killing of a teenager who was gunned down after returning home from the president’s inauguration, have also drawn attention. While mass shootings are infrequent, they may be increasing. Each has devastating effects on a whole community.

The horrific events in Newtown, Connecticut, and elsewhere have touched a deep chord in many of us. Deliberative discussions on this issue will not be easy. It will be important to remind participants that the objective of these discussions is to begin to work through the tensions between security, freedom, and a healthy society.

Mass violence evokes raw emotions. Participants in these discussions may become angry, and those with strong feelings may feel attacked by those who hold other points of view. This may sidetrack the deliberation. In productive deliberation, people examine the advantages and disadvantages of different options for addressing a difficult public problem, weighing these against the things they hold deeply valuable. This framing is designed to help people work through their emotions to recognize the trade-offs that each of us must wrestle with in deciding how to move forward.

Overall, the United States has become safer in recent years. Yet mass shooters target innocent people indiscriminately, often in locales where people ordinarily (and rightly) feel safe—movie theaters, college campuses, schools. How can we stop such violent acts and ensure that people feel safe in their homes and communities?

**Student Learning Outcomes**

1. Students will be able to provide the specific considerations raised or rationale implied when applying every KQ to an ethical situation or dilemma.
2. For a specific ethical situation or dilemma, students will evaluate courses of action by applying (weighing and, if necessary, balancing) the considerations raised by the KQs.

The framework outlined in this document should encompass several options and provide an alternative means of moving forward in order to avoid the polarizing rhetoric now growing around the major policy options. Each option should be rooted in a shared concern and propose a distinct strategy for addressing the problem that includes roles for citizens to play. Equally important, each option should present the drawbacks inherent in each action. Recognizing these drawbacks will allow people to see the trade-offs that they must consider in pursuing any action. It is these drawbacks, in large part, that make coming to shared judgment so difficult—but ultimately, so productive.

One effective way to begin deliberative forums on this issue is to ask people to describe how the issue of mass violence has affected them or their families. Some will have had direct experience; many more will
say they are affected by the fear of such acts. They are likely to mention the concerns identified in the framework.

The goal of this framework should be to assist people in moving from initial reactions to more reflective judgment. That requires serious deliberation or weighing options for action against the things people value.

For this assignment, you will be presented with three options. For each option you are to research and list the actions that you could take and the advantages and disadvantages for each action.

**Option One: Reduce the Threat of Mass Shooting**
Communities and homes should be places where people are safe. The means for carrying out mass shootings are all around, and those who might perpetrate them are free among us.

A. Based on your research on this topic, list **Actions** people in American society could take to reduce the threat of mass shootings and decide which key questions most apply to each action.
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

B. Based on your research on this topic, list the **Drawbacks** to each of the actions listed above and decide which key questions most apply to each action.
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

**Option Two: Equip People to Defend Themselves**
There will always be some who are a threat to those around them. In such situations, we cannot afford to rely on someone else to rescue us. We need to be prepared for violence and have the means to defend against it. The Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees this right.

A. Based on your research on this topic, list **Actions** people in American society could take to equip people to defend themselves and decide which key questions most apply to each action.
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 
B. Based on your research on this topic, list the **Drawbacks** to each of the actions listed above and decide which key questions most apply to each action.

1. 
2. 
3. 

**Option Three: Root Out Violence in Society**

Violence and criminality are pervasive in popular music, films, television, video games, and sports. Mass murderers gain notoriety through nonstop media portrayals. This results in a culture in which stories of mass shootings circulate and gain momentum—so further shootings become a greater possibility. How can we root out and stop the glorification of violence and break this cycle?

A. Based on your research on this topic, list **Actions** people in American society could take to root out violence in society and decide which key questions most apply to each action.

1. 
2. 
3. 

B. Based on your research on this topic, list the **Drawbacks** to each of the actions listed above and decide which key questions most apply to each action.

1. 
2. 
3.


**Topic 2**

**How Should Higher Education Help Us Create the Society We Want?**

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Higher education’s benefits for the students who attend the nation’s 4,643 colleges and universities are well known. People with two-year and four-year college degrees earn more and are less likely to lose their jobs during an economic downturn. Nearly 9 in 10 Americans say that young people are better off going to college after high school than they would be going directly to work.

But beyond its individual benefits, we have looked to higher education throughout our history to help us collectively create the kind of society we want and to advance the country’s economic, political, and social progress. For example, when soldiers returned home from World War II, Congress passed the GI bill, providing money for them to attend college. The GI bill helped individual soldiers build good lives for themselves, but it also gave the United States the best-educated workforce in the world—one that propelled the country’s astonishing post-war economic growth.

Now the United States is facing serious challenges on a number of fronts. Our economy faces tough economic competition from countries like China and India, and our standard of living is at risk. We’ve become a divided nation and a “me-first” society. Many people worry that crucial values like responsibility, integrity, and respect for others are fading. What’s more, too many Americans who work hard and play by the rules are slipping out of the middle class, and too many poor youngsters never get a fair chance at a good future in the first place.

Higher education has historically enjoyed broad public support. Until recently, most state legislatures regularly increased support for public colleges and universities. Most students and families believed their own investment in higher education was bound to pay off. But now, as concerns about higher education and the country’s future mushroom, there are considerably more questions about those payoffs.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

1. Students will be able to provide the specific considerations raised or rationale implied when applying every KQ to an ethical situation or dilemma.

2. For a specific ethical situation or dilemma, students will evaluate courses of action by applying (weighing and, if necessary, balancing) the considerations raised by the KQs.

For this assignment, you will be presented with three options. For each option you are to research and list the actions that you could take and the advantages and disadvantages for each action.

**Option One:** Focus on Staying Competitive in the Global Economy

The chief mission for American colleges and universities—including our community colleges—is to ensure that the U.S. economy remains competitive in an increasingly tough global marketplace, and that means recapturing our lead in science and technology. The countries that will flourish in the world economy will be the ones that lead the way in science, technology, engineering, and math. This is not a new idea. This country’s broad middle class and rising standard of living were built on the genius of
inventors and entrepreneurs like Henry Ford and Thomas Edison and, more recently, Bill Gates and Steve Jobs.

A. Based on your research on this topic, list **Actions** that colleges and universities could take to help the United States stay competitive in the global economy and decide which key questions most apply to each action.
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

B. Based on your research on this topic, list the **Drawbacks** to each of the actions listed above and decide which key questions most apply to each action.
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

**Option Two:** Work Together and Repair an Ailing Society
It’s time for colleges and universities to take a stand and act forcefully to help us address this epidemic of division, declining ethics, and mistrust. Higher education helps shape students’ views about the larger society, and it can do much more to reinforce bedrock values like responsibility, integrity, and concern for others. Higher education may not be able to fix the social and political ills of today, but it can help improve the society and politics of tomorrow.

A. Based on your research on this topic, list **Actions** colleges and universities could take to work together to repair our ailing society and decide which key questions most apply to each action.
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

B. Based on your research on this topic, list the **Drawbacks** to each of the actions listed above and decide which key questions most apply to each action.
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

**Option Three:** Ensure that Everyone Gets a Fair Chance
Because graduating from college can unlock the door to advancement and prosperity, higher education, along with government at all levels, needs to do much more to ensure that all Americans have a genuine shot at getting a college degree. Unfortunately, rising costs, tough economic times, and inadequate public schools in some communities have put college out of reach for far too many Americans.
A. Based on your research on this topic, list **Actions** colleges and universities could take to ensure that everyone gets a fair chance and decide which key questions most apply to each action.
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 

B. Based on your research on this topic, list the **Drawbacks** to each of the actions listed above and decide which key questions most apply to each action.
   1. 
   2. 
   3.
Topic 3
What Does National Security Mean in the 21st Century?

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The world bears little resemblance to the way it was in 1991, when the Soviet Union fell and the Cold War ended. Where the world was once dominated by two “superpowers”—the Soviet Union and the United States—the end of the Cold War created what many observers called a “unipolar” world in which the United States was the clear leader, able to bend most events to its will. That moment has passed.

The U.S. Director of National Intelligence issued a report in late 2012 that assessed where things stood and where they are likely to go over the next two decades. One conclusion of this comprehensive study is that the United States “will remain the ‘first among equals’ alongside the other great powers. . . . [But] the era of unrivalled American ascendency . . . is fast winding down.”

Evidence of challenges to U.S. dominance are everywhere. China has gone from being just a very large nation to becoming an economic powerhouse. India’s economy, as well as its influence on the world stage, has grown rapidly. Pakistan is now strategically vital.

Problems are becoming more global in nature, too. Climate change (global warming), pandemics, and resource depletion threaten countries without regard to superpower status or military strength. Many of these threats require response, but no one nation can effectively deal with them alone.

How shall we approach the world, now, in an environment of diminished power, increased volatility, more competition, and global threats?

Student Learning Outcomes
1. Students will be able to provide the specific considerations raised or rationale implied when applying every KQ to an ethical situation or dilemma.
2. For a specific ethical situation or dilemma, students will evaluate courses of action by applying (weighing and, if necessary, balancing) the considerations raised by the KQs.

For this assignment, you will be presented with three options. For each option you are to research and list the actions that you could take and the advantages and disadvantages for each action.

Option One: National Security Means Safeguarding the United States
As the war in Afghanistan winds down, we continue to face the threats posed by terrorist organizations and by nations like Iran and North Korea. At the same time, traditional adversaries like Russia and China are gaining power. How can we safeguard the people of the United States?
A. Based on your research on this topic, list **Actions** people in American society could take to safeguard the United States and decide which key questions most apply to each action.

1.

2.

3.

B. Based on your research on this topic, list the **Drawbacks** to each of the actions listed above and decide which key questions most apply to each action.

1.

2.

3.

**Option Two: National Security Depends on Putting Our Economic House in Order**

The United States cannot long remain a superpower if it is the world’s largest debtor nation. Security experts believe we need to focus on increasing employment, eliminating our staggering public debt, and improving the balance of trade. How can we ensure our national security while at the same time spending less on the military and reducing the amount of money that flows overseas?

A. Based on your research on this topic, list **Actions** people in American society could take to ensure our national security while spending less on the military and reducing the amount of money sent overseas and decide which key questions most apply to each action.

1.

2.

3.

B. Based on your research on this topic, list the **Drawbacks** to each of the actions listed above and decide which key questions most apply to each action.

1.

2.

3.

**Option Three: National Security Means Recognizing That Global Threats Are Our Greatest Challenge**

The greatest threats facing the United States—environmental devastation, pandemics, the depletion of natural resources, and the possibility of nuclear war—know no boundaries and threaten us all. They demand international solutions. The United States should take the lead in addressing these urgent challenges.
A. Based on your research on this topic, list **Actions** people in American society could take to ensure our national security while recognizing that global threats are the greatest challenge and decide which key questions most apply to each action.
   1.
   2.
   3.

B. Based on your research on this topic, list the **Drawbacks** to each of the actions listed above and decide which key questions most apply to each action.
   1.
   2.
   3.
Topic 4
What Should We Do to Help Our Youngest Children Thrive?

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This issue guide was designed for people who are concerned about the development of our youngest children, as well as its ripple effects on our communities and nation. The guide focuses on the first four years, before most children begin their formal education.

The most critical time in a child’s life is the first four years. Brain development in infants and toddlers is more rapid and far-reaching than at any other time. A child’s experiences during these early years have lasting effects on their ability to learn, interact and succeed. Yet our youngest children are largely an “invisible population” in terms of public attention and priorities. By the time they enter school and the public’s eye, many have fallen far behind – physically, intellectually, socially and emotionally.

Student Learning Outcomes
1. Students will be able to provide the specific considerations raised or rationale implied when applying every KQ to an ethical situation or dilemma.
2. For a specific ethical situation or dilemma, students will evaluate courses of action by applying (weighing and, if necessary, balancing) the considerations raised by the KQs.

For this assignment, you will be presented with three options. For each option you are to research and list the actions that you could take and the potential drawbacks for each action.

Option One: Share the Responsibility for Early Child Development
From this perspective, we all have a stake in – and responsibility for – how children develop during their earliest years. The rapid growth of body and mind during this period sets the stage for later success in school and adult life. How can we as individuals and as a society invest the time and resources necessary for high-quality early care and education in order to protect our collective future?

A. Based on your research on this topic, list Actions that people could do to share the responsibility for early child development and decide which key questions most apply to each action.
   1.
   2.
   3.
B. Based on your research on this topic, list the **Drawbacks** to each of the actions listed above and decide which key questions most apply to each action.

1. 

2. 

3. 

**Option Two:** Uphold the Rights and Responsibilities of Families

Parents are the first and most important caregivers in their children’s lives. Nothing affects early development more than the bond between parent and child. How can we respect the role of parents to raise their children in accordance with their values and beliefs and encourage the kind of natural support provided by their personal networks of other parents, relatives, and friends?

A. Based on your research on this topic, list **Actions** people could take to uphold the rights and responsibilities of families and decide which key questions most apply to each action.

1. 

2. 

3. 

B. Based on your research on this topic, list the **Drawbacks** to each of the actions listed above and decide which key questions most apply to each action.

1. 

2. 

3. 

**Option Three:** Ensure Equal Opportunity So All Children Thrive

Reducing inequality is essential to helping young children develop their full potential. Social, economic, and racial disparities undermine healthy development and cause many children to enter school unprepared to learn. While remedial programs help, what is the best way to help all young children succeed and ensure equal opportunity for their families in education, jobs, housing, and public life?

A. Based on your research on this topic, list **Actions** people could take to reduce inequality in order to ensure that all children thrive and decide which key questions most apply to each action.

1. 

2. 

3.
B. Based on your research on this topic, list the **Drawbacks** to each of the actions listed above and decide which key questions most apply to each action.

1. 

2. 

3. 
**What Is a Pecha Kucha?**

Pecha Kucha is Japanese for “chatter” or “chit chat” and consists of a 20-slide multimedia presentation delivered by your group using a timeframe of 20 seconds per slide for a total of a 6-minute, 40-second presentation. The presentation format was devised by Astrid Klein and Mark Dytham of [Klein Dytham architecture](http://www.pechakucha.org/watch). The first Pecha Kucha Night was held in Tokyo in their gallery/lounge/bar/club/creative kitchen, [SuperDeluxe](http://www.pechakucha.org/watch), in February, 2003. Originally created as an outlet for artists to showcase their work and share ideas, the Pecha Kucha presentation method has increased in popularity since then.

**What Does This Mean to You?**

In class, each group of 5 students will tell the story behind their Digital Storytelling/8 Key Questions topic, and explain the advantages/disadvantages of the options you have developed. You will then create a presentation that explains to the audience what these options are and the advantages and disadvantages of each option. To gain the most from your use of **advantage and disadvantage** you need to:

1. establish a clear basis for comparison;
2. make a thorough and specific thematic statement; and
3. provide an effective arrangement for the material.

Here are some tips to help you prepare an awesome Pecha Kucha presentation:

1. **Tell a story.** The best presentations are often good stories instead of just a bunch of facts or portfolio pieces strung together. Take the audience on a journey (albeit a short one) that has an intro, development, and conclusion. Think about how your story will combine with the images you’ve chosen to solidify your message and give the audience a rich experience. Be sure to share with the audience why your presentation topic is important to you and why they should care about it too.
2. **What is most the important thing you want your audience remember?** If the audience could remember just one thing from your presentation, what would you want that to be? Once you figure that out, your talking points and images will revolve around that theme.
3. **Use powerful, relevant images.** The images you choose should reinforce your ideas. Make sure your images are high quality and that you have permission to use them.
4. **Don’t cram too much into your presentation.** Even though Pecha Kucha presentations are always exactly 6 minutes and 40 seconds (20 images, 20 seconds each), presenters often try to cram too much information into that short window and then have to talk rapidly to fit everything in. Less is more. Carefully edit out anything that isn’t vital to some aspect of your piece.
5. Download a practice Pecha Kucha presentation PowerPoint presentation ([http://www.pechakucha.org/watch](http://www.pechakucha.org/watch)) to help you get the timing of your script just right before
investing too much time finding images (you must be in slideshow mode in order for the slides to automatically advance).

6. Keep your presentation simple, limited to a single theme/topic, and tell us a story. Here’s an example of a Pecha Kucha presentation: http://www.pechakucha.org/presentations/taking-architecture-beyond

7. Practice. Practice. Practice! The best way to stave off nerves and build confidence for speaking in front of a group is to practice your presentation several times. I encourage speakers to practice short pieces like this at least 10 times. Having many rehearsals under your belt will allow you to be comfortable and have fun during your presentation.

Presentation Ground Rules
1. Your final presentation must include 20 images. Notice that I said "images" and not "slides." Successful Pecha Kucha presentations usually have images that complement what the speakers are saying and not a bunch of bullets and text on the slide.
2. Use a copyright friendly image source like Creative Commons (creativecommons.org)
3. Each image will be displayed for exactly 20 seconds. The images automatically progress during the presentation. Speakers have no control over the advancement of the slides.
4. Do not use inappropriate images or language. Remember, you will be presenting in a public space. Simply put, if you wouldn’t say it in front of your mom, don’t say it in front of this audience.
Discussion Facilitation Assignment

Each group will facilitate a discussion with the audience about your topic using at least three of the 8 Key Questions. These two learning outcomes will be important because you should be able to:

1. Provide the specific considerations raised or rationale implied when applying every key question to an ethical situation or dilemma;
2. For a specific ethical situation or dilemma, students will evaluate courses of action by applying (weighing and, if necessary, balancing) the considerations raised by the key questions.

Although not one of the learning outcomes listed above, a goal of facilitating discussions like these is to foster a commitment to openness and to an exchange of thoughts and ideas.