


Book Review: Military Ethics: What Everyone Needs to Know by George Lucas

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Lucas, George. *Military Ethics: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. xx + 253 pages. Paperback, \$16.95.

In the United States of America, the military is arguably one of the most appreciated and heralded professions. It is not uncommon for citizens, politicians, businesses, and charities to routinely thank the personnel who serve in the military, and to truly and deeply express their gratitude in a variety of ways. However, the military is often overlooked as a profession where ethics are paramount and are relied upon heavily for the success of its missions. Some occupations that require a commitment to ethical behavior, such as the legal and medical fields, come to mind more readily than the military. Nevertheless, make no mistake, a system of moral principles is crucial to the military in its ongoing quest to achieve its many goals.

No one understands the significance of ethics in the military more so than renowned Professor Emeritus George Lucas. Lucas formerly held the Distinguished Chair in Ethics at the U.S. Naval Academy, and continues to contribute to the ethics discussion as the current President of the International Society for Military Ethics. In this, his latest work, *Military Ethics: What Everyone Needs to Know*, Lucas uses his own firsthand knowledge from many years of working alongside military personnel, as well as his own research and that of other distinguished ethics scholars, to create a book that is intended to increase the basic understanding of military ethics. Not only designed for active duty personnel, Lucas' overall goal is to broaden the knowledge of every member of society on the complex and challenging field of military ethics and how deeply its personnel rely on ethics to make decisions that will benefit the organization.

Using an interesting question and answer format for the book, Lucas progresses from the moral foundations of the military profession to more recent challenges such as private security contracting, and the use of drones and military robots. In Part One of the book, Lucas spends a great deal of time discussing the history of ethics in the military, from ancient customs, through just war theory, and into international law. While this section of the book gets bogged down in specifics, it impresses upon the reader the great significance that the subject has played in the profession. The great success of the book is in Part Two as Lucas dives into more contemporary topics. The discussions on the use of force in aid of humanitarian crises, on unmanned systems, and on cyber warfare, are all very interesting as they currently pose serious and unresolved dilemmas for the leaders in the armed forces.

Every decision made by a military professional is based on established ethical principles, and when these core values are not upheld, the military takes swift action to

correct the situation and ensure that the mistake is not repeated. George Lucas understands that the military is successful as a profession because of the reliance and adherence to a strict set of ethics. Overall, George Lucas' *Military Ethics: What Everyone Needs to Know* is a great contribution to the general public and active duty military personnel alike, as the need to reflect on the ethics of the military has never been greater.

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