

## **Module # 4: NATURAL LAW IN AMERICAN CULTURE AND GOVERNMENT**

Has our culture lost its awareness of Natural Law? It would appear that it has. Several years ago a Minnesota state senator said as much. He said, “We don’t know what Natural Law is.”

Natural Law is the moral standard that applies to all people and all cultures. It applies to all people the same. For that reason Natural Law is universal. Natural Law includes the Golden Rule—“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” The Golden Rule is also called the Law of Love—“Love you neighbor as yourself.”

Natural Law also includes the values of human life, liberty and the right to own personal property. In our nation we call these values the “inalienable rights” of life, liberty and property. Natural Law additionally includes the values of marriage, honesty, industry, equality and justice.

Because our nation has lost its sense of Natural Law, respected individuals now promote practices that are not only immoral, but are totally barbaric. Princeton University Professor, Peter Singer, for example, says that infants should not be considered “human” until they are two weeks old. That way, says Singer, handicapped infants can be legally killed before the two week threshold. Society will then not be burdened with caring for a less than normal child who had no right to live anyway, says Singer.

Does this view sound over the top? Peter Singer was a guest speaker several years ago at the University of Minnesota, Mankato, where he received a warm reception. *Time* magazine called Singer one of the 100 most influential people of our time.

Not everyone agrees with Singer. Steve Forbes stopped donating to Princeton University in 1999 because of Singer’s appointment to a professorship there. Advocacy groups for the disabled often compare Singer’s views to the ideology and practices of Nazi Germany.

Peter Singer is a man of his times—a man of his postmodern and Darwinian times. Postmodernists believe that right and wrong are determined by the culture. So if a culture decides that it is morally right to kill handicapped babies, then for them that is the end of the matter. Postmodernists reject Natural Law and the real morality it entails.

Many Humanists believe that morality is “self chosen.” Defining morality as a personal choice reduces it to no more than a personal preference—much like deciding which color socks to wear on any given day. Genuine morality evaporates under this ideology. Natural Law, once again, is rejected.

Singer’s views are largely the result of Darwinian evolution. (In his recent documentary, *Expelled*, Ben Stein demonstrated the connection between Darwinism and the Nazi disregard for human life.) Singer and many of his fellow evolutionists believe that

humans are essentially the same as other animals. Singer says that healthy animals have more right to live than handicapped people. If Godless Darwinism is true, then Singer's logical application of Darwin is true, too. Most schools, including most colleges and universities, teach that Darwinian evolution is correct. For that reason we should not be surprised at, but should expect, the breakdown of genuine morality in contemporary culture since Natural Law has been rejected.

Postmodern ideology is closely tied to Darwinian evolution. Darwinism, consistently applied, allows for no real morality, no genuine right and wrong, no Natural Law. In addition, if all life is the result of nature plus time plus chance, then our thoughts are also the result of nature plus time plus chance. If this is the case, there is ultimately no reason for us to believe that such thoughts are true. For that reason Darwinism leads to postmodernism where real truth, along with real morality, is given up..

The author sometimes asks his government class this question: What if the American public came to believe that Singer is correct? Could our elected officials, in our system of government, properly by law declare that it is legally acceptable to kill handicapped babies before they are two weeks old?

Students often have difficulty with this question. Why? Most students have not learned that our nation and its government were founded on the principle of Natural Law. The truth of Natural Law is the corrective force to the relative morality of humanists and postmodernists.

As noted above, Natural Law is the universal moral code—the absolute standard of right and wrong—that is written in the genetic code of all people. Natural Law has exercised a profound influence on the development of English common law, and has been featured in the writings of Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Hobbes, Hugo Grotius, Samuel von Pufendorf, and John Locke.

The American Creed, as stated in the Declaration of Independence, says that the United States and its policies are based on this universal moral code, on Natural Law—what the Declaration refers to as the “Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God.” The entirety of the American Creed—the philosophical foundation of the United States, is also called, “[The Twelve Pillars of Freedom](#).”

The late Harvard psychologist, Lawrence Kohlberg, demonstrated the truth of Natural Law by means of his scientific experimentation. Kohlberg's studies revealed that the moral principles of all cultures are essentially the same. Morality, he determined, is: “universal,” not relative to culture or personal choices, as stated in the State University [Education Encyclopedia](#).

Christians commonly appeal to Romans 2:14 for defining Natural Law. Romans says: “Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required the by the law, they are a law for themselves even though they do not have the law, since they show the requirements of the law are written on the their hearts, their consciences also bearing

witness, and their thoughts, now accusing, now even defending them.” “The requirements of the law are written on their hearts” refers to Natural Law.

Natural Law is the reason a nation cannot properly legalize infanticide (killing of infants) regardless of public opinion. This is the same reason why our country cannot properly make abortion on-demand legal. As Alan Keyes correctly said, “No one has the right to do wrong.”

All our state and national officials, when they take the oath office, swear to uphold the Constitution of the United States. That means they are also swearing to uphold the foundational principles of the Constitution as stated in the Declaration—which includes Natural Law. Do our elected officials realize they have sworn to uphold the universal standard of right and wrong? Do they care? Unfortunately, too often the answer to one or both of those questions is “no.”

The universal moral code can be denied, distorted and rationalized away; but it is still there. It is like the law of gravity—it governs whether people recognize it or not. This moral code is essential for civilized life—we are reduced to mere brutes without it. Is, for example, partial-birth abortion total brutality? Yes, it is. Is the killing of two week-olds infants total brutality? Yes, it is. Civilized life cannot take place without adherence to the universal moral code, the Natural Law.

## Sample Lesson Plan

**Grade levels:** 12, college and graduate level Graduate level students should also study the difference between the Natural Law understanding of human rights as stated in the United States Declaration of Independence and Constitution as compared to the relativistic view of human rights stated in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

### Objectives:

Students will:

1. Learn the three common contemporary approaches to morality—postmodern, humanistic and Natural Law.
2. Understand the methodology, results and conclusions of the scientific experiments on morality conducted by Harvard psychologist and researcher, Lawrence Kohlberg.
3. Recognize that the Kohlberg studies provide empirical verification for Natural Law while refuting the postmodern and humanistic views of morality.
4. Understand the relationship between Natural Law and the American Creed as stated in the Declaration of Independence.
5. Know the Twelve Pillars of Freedom.
6. Understand the relationship between Natural Law and inalienable human rights.

### Materials:

1. Overhead projector and slides or power-point technology.
2. Student access to the internet.
3. Printed resources.

**Procedures:**

1. Teachers may wish to lecture on this information or may assign students to the information and resources included on the CMods webpage.
2. Students may be asked the following questions:
  - a. “How many of you see morality as being universal and absolute?” (Don’t be surprised if few, if any, students answer “yes” to this question because they may have been erroneously taught that morality is determined individually or by the culture.)
  - b. “Do you think that the best guide for right and wrong is ‘What seems right to you?’”
  - c. “Or, do you think that society should decide what is right and wrong?”
3. Students should be shown how Kohlberg’s research caused him to reject the relativistic vies of morality (expressed in questions “b” and “c” just above). That is, “he rejected the relativist view point in favor of the view that certain principles of justice and fairness represent the pinnacle of moral maturity, as he found that these basic moral principles are found in different cultures and subcultures around the world,” as stated in [“Moral Development and Moral Education: An Overview.”](#)
4. Students can also be asked:
  - a. “Lawrence Kohlberg, by his experiments, determined that all cultures view morality essentially the same way. Why did he come to this conclusion?”
  - b. “Was the United States morally in the right by invading Iraq?” (For examples of how people at each of Kohlberg’s six stages of moral reasoning might answer that question, see [“Kohlberg’s Ideas of Moral Reasoning.”](#))
5. Students should be able to list and define the six stages of moral reasoning as outlined by Lawrence Kohlberg. Again, see [“Kohlberg’s Ideas of Moral Reasoning.”](#)
6. Students should be asked to explain why the American Creed, as defined by the Declaration of Independence, is an example of level 6 morality as defined by Kohlberg.
7. Students should be asked to explain why Natural Law forms the basis for civil law. (See *America’s Schools: The Battleground for Freedom*, by Allen Quist, Chaska: EdWatch Publishing, 2005)

**American Creed:** consists of the values and/or beliefs that form the philosophical basis for the United States’ system of law and government including its Constitution. The

American Creed is contained in the United States Declaration of Independence and is accurately summarized as the “Twelve Pillars of Freedom.” The United States of America is perhaps the only major country to be founded on an idea. That idea is the American Creed. The concept of “American Exceptionalism” is largely based on the principles of the American Creed as forming the foundation for freedom for the United States and potentially for all other countries as well.

**Golden Rule:** also called “the Law of Love,” the Golden Rule is stated as: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” and “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Also referred to as “reciprocity,” it is the ethical code which holds that everyone has a right to just treatment and a responsibility to secure justice for others. Reciprocity is essential for human rights. Lawrence Kohlberg observed that the Golden Rule is one way of stating the highest level of moral reasoning. The Golden Rule is an essential part of Natural Law, and as such forms much of the basis for just civil law.

**Humanistic morality:** also called simply “relative morality,” is one common form of moral relativism; postmodern morality being the other. Humanistic morality alleges that moral standards are “self-chosen,” that is, relative to the individual. Common statements illustrating relative morality include:

- "That's true for you but not for me."
- "I am pro-choice on abortion."
- "You choose what is right for you."
- "You can't legislate morality."

Prominent advocates of relative morality include Carl Rogers and Joseph Fletcher.

**Lawrence Kohlberg:** (October 25, 1927 – January 19, 1987) was an American psychologist at Princeton University, the University of Chicago and Harvard University. He has been the Western world's most prominent psychologist in the area of morality. He based his work initially on Jean Piaget's theory while, at the same time creating a new field within psychology known as "moral development." Based on his experimentation, Kohlberg concluded that morality is universal—common to all cultures.

**Natural Law:** or the law of nature (Latin: *lex naturalis*) is the universal moral code contained in the genetic structure of all people and, therefore, has validity for every culture and government. Natural Law is the proper and just standard for governmental law, and thus functions as a criteria for evaluating civil law. The content of Natural Law and of the Ten Commandments (revealed law) is essentially the same, but Natural Law operates by reason based on principles contained in the genetic code of all persons, whereas revealed law is known by written records including the Bible. In part because of the intersection of Natural Law and natural rights, natural law is a prominent component of the United States Declaration of Independence.

**Postmodern morality:** also called “social constructivism,” postmodern morality is one common version of moral relativism; in this case the view that culture dictates what is right or wrong. A common statement reflecting postmodern moral relativism is: “You can't judge other cultures by the standards of your own.” Crimes against humanity and

international law depend for their validity on the universality of the moral law, and, for that reason, contradict postmodern and humanist relativistic morality.