

The Game of Thrones as a Teaching Tool: Enhancing Engagement and Student Learning Outcomes

Gulnara Z. Karimova

S P Jain School of Global Management, Dubai, UAE

Email: Gulnara.z.karimova@gmail.com

Abstract

This article presents an approach to illustrate fundamental theories of ethics through the use of the television series Game of Thrones. Fundamental theories of ethics are illustrated by the situations and decisions made by the TV series characters. Each episode has the potential to serve as an effective tool for discussing ethical philosophies, such as utilitarianism, pragmatic egoism, and existentialism. The presentation of each ethical stance is evaluated and includes an analysis of the ethical principles of a character from the perspective of deontological, teleological and subjective ethical theories. A pre-test and post-test of forty-three sophomore students studying in a business school was conducted to assess the instructional value of this teaching tool. The findings indicate this approach had a positive effect on developing an understanding of ethics.

Key Words: *Ethics; Game of Thrones; Deontological; Teleological; Subjective; Student Engagement.*

JEL Classification: I21

PsycINFO Classification: 3530

FoR Code: 1302; 1503

ERA Journal ID#: 35696

Acknowledgements: I would like to give special thanks to Prof. John Lodewijks for editing and significantly improving the manuscript.

Introduction

Business ethics – a set of moral principles – are essential for building a company with repeat customers, loyal employees, and interested investors. Business ethics refers to organizational principles, norms, standards, codes, and values that govern the actions and behavior of an individual in the business organization (Lewis, 1985). As Peter Drucker (1981) observes, “There is neither a separate ethics of business nor is one needed,” suggesting that norms of personal ethics can be applied to the business environment. Building awareness about various moral principles is essential for equipping individuals with means that will help them to make informed and conscious decisions. Building such awareness and teaching business ethics might be a challenging task and educators use different tools to reach their educational objectives. Bringing realism to the issue of ethics and engaging students in an entertaining educational process (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2001) are some of many educational benefits that can be derived from using films to teach business ethics. Many researchers have used films as teaching tools. For example, Biktimirov and Cyr (2013) recommend the film *Inside Job* as a teaching tool for discussing such issues as the revolving door, conflicts of interest, fiduciary duty, executive compensation, and financial regulation (Biktimirov & Cyr, 2013, p. 209). Berger and Pratt (1998) propose the use of *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *House of Games* to observe student reactions to ethically troublesome situations and business communication ethics in the classroom. Shaw (2004) explores popular films, such as *Philadelphia*, *The Death of a Salesman*, and *Wall Street*, in relation to ethical issues and focuses on characters moral dilemma. Harrison (2004) offers two Australian feature films, *The Man Who Sued God* and *The Bank*, as means for stimulating classroom debate.

Although there are many studies addressing the application of films to teaching ethics, the use of a TV series for ethics education has not been tested. Thus, the aim of the current study is to examine the effectiveness of the implementation of a TV series on ethics education.

As one of the most popular HBO’s TV series of all time, “shown in 170 countries and illegally downloaded more times than any other program on the planet” (Runcie, 2017), *Game of Thrones* was selected for testing the effectiveness of the use of TV series in ethics education as it has a great potential to capture the student attention and focus it on ethical questions. *Game of Thrones* is HBO TV series where groups of noble families fight for control over power, Iron Throne and lands of Westeros. The worldwide known series *Game of Thrones* – based on the epic fantasy novel, ‘A Song of Ice and Fire’ written by George R. R. Martin (1991) – takes place in a time of struggles amongst noble families. Morality, dependence, betrayal, love, and intrigues are all portrayed in these fantasy television series arresting the attention of viewers from various countries. The series involves many characters, whose destinies are intricately weaved into the complex plot. Each noble house has its history, motto, and coat of armor, each resembling the members of the family and the land in Westeros. Each house and their members follow certain moral principles in their fight for control and achievement of their goals. The actions and choices made by the characters can be analyzed from the ethical perspective to understand the theories of business ethics and the fundamental classes of ethical theories – deontological, teleological, and subjective.

The article is structured in the following way: after describing the adopted methodology, the study presents a brief overview of the major classes of ethical theories. Next, the most prominent houses in the series are examined – House Stark, House Lannister, House Targaryen, and House Baratheon – in terms of their geographical locations, aspirations, and mottos. Fundamental ethical theories are further illustrated through the actions and decisions of specific members belonging to various houses. In this section, the development of such characters as Eddard Stark, Aria Stark, Tywin Lannister, Tyrion

Lannister, Cersai Lannister, Daenaerys Targaryen and Stannis Baratheon is traced. Next, the results stemmed from the implementation of the tool are examined, and discussion is deployed to interpret the empirical results of the analysis. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the results of the study.

Methodology

A personally administered questionnaires were distributed among forty-three participants to examine the effect of the teaching tool on understanding ethics. A questionnaire is "a preformulated set of questions to which respondents record their answers, usually within rather closely defined alternatives" (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010, p. 197).

The test (pre-test) administered before the lecture containing three questions and the test (post-test) administered after the lecture containing six questions aimed at establishing if the progress was made after the application of the tool. The first three questions in both tests were the same and these were the ones, the results of which were compared later to establish the effect of the tool on understanding ethical theories. There were three additional questions in the post-test added to identify students' estimation of whether the tool was helpful in understanding ethical theories.

Table 1:
Pre-Test and Post-Test Questions

Pre-Test Questions	Post-Test Questions
1. Define ethics in one sentence.	1. Define ethics in one sentence.
2. Name two main ethical emphases according to Kant.	2. Name two main ethical emphases according to Kant.
3. Name three classes (categories) of ethics.	3. Name three classes (categories) of ethics.
	4. What questions do you have as we end the session?
	5. Have you watched the TV series Game of Thrones?
	6. Have the examples from the TV series Game of Thrones helped you understand the ethical theories?

Sample Selection

The lecture on ethics was offered to the SP Jain School of Global Management bachelor students enrolled in a tri-city business education program in March of the 2018 academic year. The selected sample comprised forty-three students. The composition of the group was quite homogeneous consisting of the students with the similar demographic characteristics: average age (twenty years) and years of education (sophomores).

Strategies for the Classroom

Three Classes of Ethical Theories

Deontological theories of ethics are those "that base ethical actions on *a priori* principles or maxims that are accepted as guides for such actions" (emphasis in original) (Gordon, et al., 2011, p. 10). Deontology is an ethic based on principles, duty, and obligations as it is derived from the Greek word *deontos* meaning duty. Deontologists "base their decision making on universal principles and values that transcend time or cultural

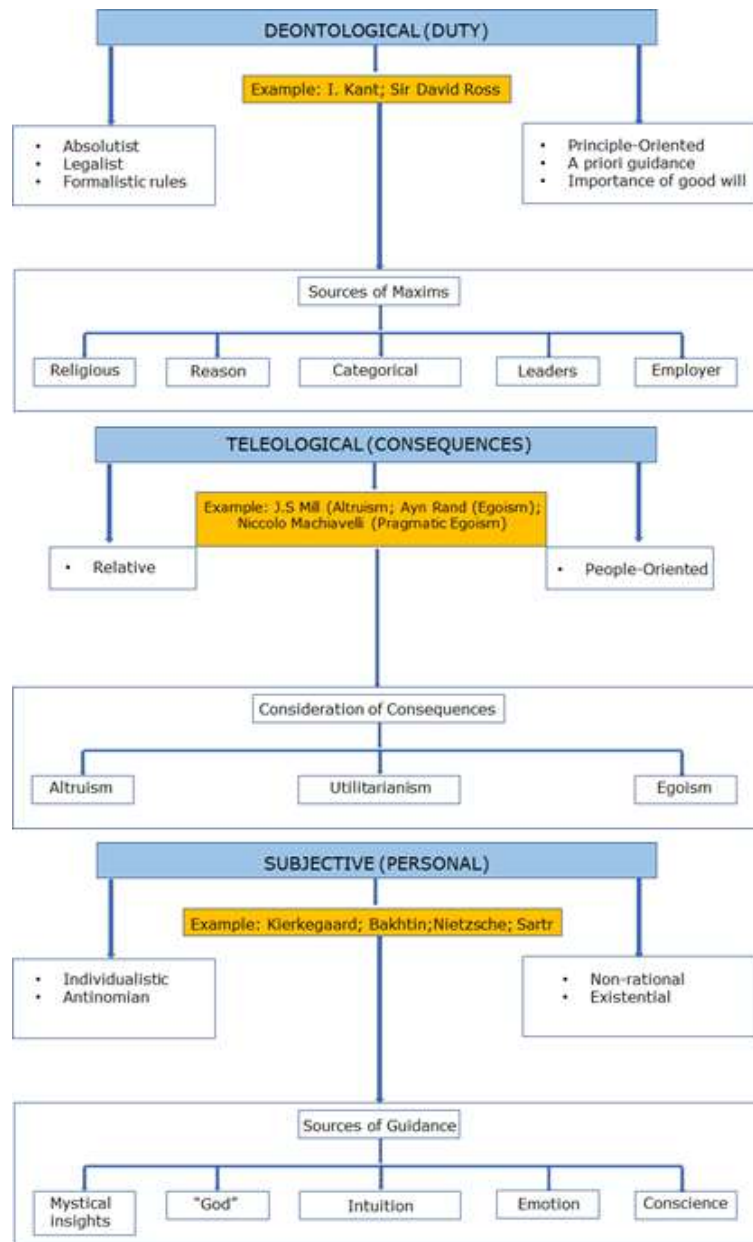
perspectives” (Gregory, 2009, p. 278). These theories include Aristotelianism, Confucianism, and Kantianism among others. The most prominent philosopher associated with the deontological theory of ethics is Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) who “provided the fullest argument for a duty-bound system of ethical behavior. He believed that only an action taken out of self-imposed duty could be ethical. The two formulations – categorical imperative and the principle that no person should be treated as means to an end, but only as an end – construct the core of Kant’s duty to principle ethics” (Gordon, et al., 2011, p. 11).

Teleological or consequence-related theories of ethics are those “that base ethical actions on a consideration of their consequences” (Gordon, et al., 2011, p. 10). Teleology is the study of ends as it is derived from the Greek words *telos* (end) and *logos* (the study of). “The object is to choose the action that will bring the most good to the party the actor deems most important. The altruists think of good to others; the egoist considers good to the self, with perhaps some benefits spinning off to others.” (Gordon, et al., 2011, p. 11). These theories include utilitarianism, altruism, egoism, the social contract theory, and the pragmatic or Machiavellian among other theories. The theorist most frequently associated with the teleological stance is John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), who formulated the theory of utilitarianism the core concept of which is presented in the phrase “the greatest happiness to the greatest number.” Mill, Bentham and Hume contributed to the development of the teleological line of thinking. Egoistic teleologists consider consequences to oneself rather than to others. Ayn Rand is a good example of an egoistic teleologist.

Personalist/subjective theories “provide more instinctive guidance theories” (Gordon, et al., 2011, p. 10). These theories are comprised of such theories as instinctual, intuitive, emotive, spiritual, antinomian and existential. “The person has a kind of moral sense that nudges him or her toward right action – call it conscience, instinct, or spiritual guidance.” (Gordon, et al., 2011, p. 12). For example, for the Christian moralist, this ethical sense may be directed by a concern often called *agape* or God-centered love. Such spiritual-religious perspective is taken by Kierkegaard, who considers faith the highest level of moral progression. According to Kierkegaard (2005), the distinction between good and evil is dependent not on social norms but on God.

A summary of the three major ethical strands is schematically presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1:
Ethical Strands Representation



Next, the most prominent houses are examined – House Stark, House Lannister, House Targaryen, and House Baratheon – in terms of their geographical locations, aspirations, and mottos. Fundamental ethical theories are further illustrated through the actions and decisions of the characters belonging to each house.

Houses

House Stark

House Stark is considered the most honorable house in all Westeros as it values morals of justice and truth. The Starks are strict when it comes to making decisions and they insist on doing what is "right" even if it is not in their favor, even if it leads to the tragedy, even if they are losing the games in the world of ice and fire.

The ethical approach that House Stark adopts is the deontological approach. The deontological approach to ethics is mainly focusing on the rightness and wrongness of actions themselves (Mastin, 2008). The argument is that an action is good or bad regardless of its consequences. "What makes a choice right is its conformity with a moral norm. Such norms are to be simply obeyed by each moral agent" (Larry & Moore, 2016).

House Stark mainly follows Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative – "an objective, rationally necessary and unconditional principle that we must always follow despite any natural desires or inclinations we may have to the contrary" (Johnson & Cureton, 2017). Most of the members of the House Stark base their decisions on universal principles and values. Josephson (1993) identifies ten universal principles: honesty, integrity, promise-keeping, fidelity, fairness, caring for others, respect for others, responsible citizenship, the pursuit of excellence, and accountability. Let us trace some of these universal principles at work by analyzing the words and decisions made by characters Eddard and Aria Stark.

Eddard Stark (also known as Ned Stark), the Lord of Winterfell, is a man of his word, a man of honor, loyalty, and justice. We see that the principle of honor is held high by Eddard Stark, "Do you think my life is some precious thing to me that I would trade my honor for a few more years...of what?" and "It was the only honorable thing to do."

Eddard Stark's obedience to the established principles is reminiscent of Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative. "If you would take a man's life, you owe it to him to look into his eyes and hear his final words. And if you cannot do that, then perhaps the man does not deserve to die." You should be that certain when you pass the judgment that you should carry the sentence yourself. If you cannot do it, then maybe you made the wrong judgment.

The "presence of this self-governing reason" (Johnson & Cureton, 2017) can be tracked in the action of Torrhen Stark, an unseen character in the series, known as the King Who Knelt. Torrhen Stark chose to kneel and surrender his crown to save his people and his lands from devastation. His conqueror, Aegon Targaryen, not only granted him the title Lord Paramount and Warden of the North but also allowed him to keep their own local customs of beheading the condemned men personally. Although some sarcastically named Torrhen the King Who Knelt for surrendering his act exemplifies courage and adherence to the principle of accountability as he places duty above pride.

Aria Stark, the youngest daughter of the Lord of Winterfell, Eddard Stark, and his wife Catelyn Stark, seems to be torn between the deontological and the teleological approaches. She does not always follow the duty. While training with the Faceless Men, she faces a moral dilemma after she receives her eyesight back. When she gets to know her mark – poisoning Lady Crane to redeem herself – she is overwhelmed with doubt. She decides to save her victim and avoid negative – as she thinks at the time – consequences. Yet, her decision takes a darker turn. By avoiding poisoning Lady Crane – performing as Aria thought an act of mercy – lead to delay and aggravated death of Lady Crane, and the death of Waif, who was killed in the act of self-defense. Her actions demonstrate the weakness of the consequentialist theories – one cannot predict all possible consequences of one's action and its ripple effect.

From the discussion above it appears that House Stark predominantly follows the deontological approach, "duty"-, "obligation" or "rule"- based ethic. If House Stark follows Kantian principles of the categorical imperative, House Lannister goes against them using people as means to an end.

House Lannister

House Lannister established itself as one of the wealthiest houses in Westeros. Most of its members use people to reach to the top and thus negating the second aspect of Kantian categorical imperative: people should not be means to an end. The ethical approach that House Lannister mainly follows is the teleological approach. Teleological theories of ethics focus on the results or consequences of behavior. The Lannister's often exhibit the principles of utilitarianism in their decisions and actions. According to utilitarianism, actions must be judged by the effects they have on others or/and yourself or their utility. The right action is one "that causes more benefit (or happiness) than harm." (Gregory, 2009, p. 277). In their desire to achieve power and happiness, the Lannisters reflect the philosophy of Ayn Rand (1905-1982) and Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527). Ayn Rand's metaethical view mainly revolves around the idea that, "the ultimate goal is the individual's own survival; the only way to survive long-term, i.e., over a complete life-span, is to live by the standard of man's life as a rational being, which means: to live morally; and happiness is the psychological result [...] of living thus." (Badhwar & Long, 2016). Hence, the goal is linked mainly to survival and happiness. Such selfish goals may lead to good outcomes for all. This is where Rand's ethics intersects with the Machiavellian framework of utilitarianism. Machiavelli is notoriously known for the idea that the end justifies the means. Yet, the phrase can be interpreted in relation to the phenomenon known as 'the problem of dirty hands,' implying "rulers are often forced to choose between two evils, rather than between two goods." (Garrard, 2013). In these situations, "choosing the lesser evil over the greater evil [...] is the ethically right thing to do." (ibid.).

Tywin Lannister, the lord of Casterly Rock in the Westernland, the iron-fisted leader of the Lannister House, and the wealthiest man in the Seven Kingdoms, focus on gaining power and at the same time on building his own historical legacy. Machiavellian principles are clearly reflected in the ideas held by Tywin Lannister. With his writing, *The Prince*, originally published in 1532, Machiavelli offered guidance for rulers, which is often associated with untruthful, dishonest and "evil courses" (Butler-Bowdon, 2013, p. 190). Tywin Lannister exceeds at this: As his forces enter the King's Landing gates, they start killing people in the city before murdering and slaughtering the grandchildren of King Aerys II Targaryen to whom Tywin pledged his loyalty. He does not view killing as a murder but rather as a rational decision. He asks a question, "explain to me why it is nobler to kill ten thousand men in battle than a dozen at dinner?" Tywin takes a utilitarian approach – how to maximize benefits and minimize harm – when analyzing any given situation. As a ruler, Tywin Lannister must protect and preserve his kingdom, but it might involve undertaking drastic measures. The distinction should be drawn between "violence that is committed for the reason of creating or preserving a good state, and wanton cruelty that is performed merely to preserve an individual ruler's power" (Butler-Bowdon, 2013, p. 193). With Tywin, the borderline between the intention to preserve 'peace and prosperity' and the intention to preserve his own power is quite blurred.

The same event – the sack of King's Landing – reflects another Machiavellian principle: "The usurper should be quick to inflict what injuries he must, at a stroke, that he may not have to renew them daily." Tywin Lannister realizes the plan that brings him to the quick and decisive conclusion. In the words of Tywin Lannister, "The plan was clear: crush Aerys's remaining bannerman and remove the remnants of the royal family as quickly as possible. Any alternative means years of further war and a fragmented Seven Kingdoms. Our means were bloody, but the results spoke for themselves" (*The Sack of King's Landing*, n.d.). The reason behind swift, "bloody" and decisive measures is paradoxically in reducing further harm. "If you are going to take or attack something, do it as quickly as possible and with maximum force, so that your foes give up early and, paradoxically, violence can be minimized" (Butler-Bowdon, 2013, p. 193).

Cersai Lannister is the Queen Regent of the Seven Kingdoms. Her calculations of the outcomes of her actions make her a consequentialist who integrates both Machiavelli's and Rand's ethical principles. As thirsty for power as she may appear to be, she does not want Ned Stark to be executed, and that is not because she is merciful towards the enemy, rather, she understands the consequences of killing Lord Stark to her and House of Lannister. Her decisions are often based on the well-being of her own self that reflects the moral principle of Ayn Rand's philosophical stance and egoistic ethics. Ayn Rand (1905–1982) holds that the pursuit of happiness is inseparable from the activity of maintaining one's life through the rational pursuit of rational goals. A virtuous life is, thus, essential to happiness (Badhwar & Long, 2016). She says, "Achievement of your happiness is the only moral purpose of your life, and that happiness, not pain or mindless self-indulgence, is the proof of your moral integrity since it is the proof and the result of your loyalty to the achievement of your values." (Rand, 1961, p. 27). Cersai uses all means necessary to ensure her happiness going so far as killing her husband. As the plot develops, one can notice that she will not sacrifice herself or her happiness even for those whom she holds dear for herself – her three kids and her brother Jamie. That is in line with Ayn Rand's perspective on sacrifice, who believes that making sacrifices is not morally appropriate, that is "surrendering something of value to oneself for the sake of something of less or no value to oneself." (Badhwar & Long, 2016).

Cersai's idea that, "The only way to keep your people loyal is to make certain they fear you more than they do the enemy," reminiscent of Machiavellian thought that, "It is better to be *feared* than *loved*, if you cannot be both" (The Municipal Machiavelli, n.d.).

Tywin Lannister and Cersai Lannister appear to share similar views on ethics following consequentialists stance. The only character that seems going against the dominant philosophy of House Lannister is Tyrion Lannister, the youngest son of Tywin Lannister. He constantly feels like an outcast, but that does not stop him from being a proud person. Overcoming challenges that he faces and taking responsibility for his actions aligns him with the thoughts of a Russian philosopher, Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) and his view on answerability. "I have to answer with my own life for what I have experienced and understood in art so that everything I have experienced and understood would not remain ineffectual in my life. [...] Art and life are not one, but they must become united in myself—in the unity of my answerability" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 2). Answerability implies responsibility of the creator for the creation. Only creators are responsible for their lives – that is their creation. They must take the blame and answer for their life and deeds. Tyrion Lannister – intelligent, witty, and well versed – can be perceived as a philosopher who realizes that he is the creator of his life. Even though Tyrion lost everything in his life – he has lost his position in House Lannister, his reputation in court, his wealth, he has been betrayed by those he loved, and he has faced death repeatedly – he remains critical to his deeds and character. He continues creating his life discovering its possibilities. His phrase "Death is so final, yet life is full of possibilities" entwined with the Bakhtinian notion of 'unfinalizability.' The 'self' is of an unfinished nature. The time of 'self' is constantly open and has no beginning and no end. "Beginnings and ends lie in the objective (an object-like) world for others, but not for the conscious person himself" (Bakhtin, 2003, p. 290). Thus, death is final for others only, for the 'self' life is full of possibilities.

The carnivalesque theme runs in the scene of the show called *The War of the Five Kings* presented for Joffrey in the celebration of his victory in the war. He makes Tyrion join the show, but what Tyrion did instead is mock the king in a way where he switched roles with him. Crowning and de-crowning of the king are one of the characteristics of medieval carnival highlighted by Mikhail Bakhtin, alone with universal participation, bringing opposites together, festive ambivalent laughter, and grotesque realism (Bakhtin, 1984). Festive ambivalent laughter reveals itself in the Tyrion's jokes, which often refer to bodily functions such as drinking and sexual intercourse. For example, by saying, "I am the god of tits and wine. I shall build a shrine to myself at the next

brothel that I visit," he brings together the opposite – the divine and the profane. His jokes refer mainly to the lower bodily stratum and the zone of genital organs and therefore, have not only destructive and degrading powers but also regenerative and reconstructing ones. With laughter, Tyrion helps to overcome the fear of death, mortality and, the absurdity of life.

House Targaryen

House Targaryen is mainly represented by one member of the family, Daenerys Targaryen, the only daughter of King Aerys II Targaryen, also known as the Mad King, and the youngest child after her brother's death. Daenerys Targaryen's ethical thoughts can be related to all three strands of ethical theories: deontological, teleological, and subjective. Daenerys follows an absolutist Kantian approach, under the deontological strand of ethics. In addition, her decisions exhibit the characteristics of egoism – in line with the thoughts of both Machiavelli and Ayn Rand – in her aspiration to nourish herself with knowledge and power to reach her goal of being in control with absolute monarchy of government. At the same time, she follows the subjective ethical strand, particularly Sartre's existentialism by choosing the meaning for her being. Thus, Daenerys Targaryen can be viewed as a complex character that wants to do what is right and at the same time, she wants to remain a free and independent character who creates her own meaning for her existence.

Machiavelli states that one needs exceptional skill to succeed. Those who wish to use their skills to get in control of a throne must have an army. Daenerys tries to build an army and reduce her dependency on others. Daenerys deploys her conquering strategy, forming a great army, to take what is hers by right – the throne and the power over seven kingdoms. Daenerys follows the Machiavellian advice, "The best fortress which a prince can possess is the affection of his people." Daenerys Targaryen acquires people's love and association with freedom and protection as she gets the titles of Breaker of Chains and Mother of Dragons. The act of crucifixion of the masters for their injustice towards the slaves exemplifies moral absolutism as Daenerys Targaryen frees the slaves, or 'breaks their chains.' When Ser Barristan Selmy advises her to "answer injustice with mercy". Targaryen replies, "I will answer injustice with justice," showing that she does what is right and just, no matter the circumstances. She frees herself from those who are loyal to her to develop the ability to take her own decision. She works on developing herself with a complete strive for success and happiness. Daenerys' moral principles reminiscent of Ayn Rand's philosophical position on happiness and ethical egoism. It should be noticed that most of the quotes of Daenerys start with the pronoun "I" that denotes the egocentric position of her moral paradigm.

Daenerys realizes that she is responsible for herself and for her world. She is responsible for choosing the meaning for her being and that, what allows us to relate her to existentialists, particularly the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). To be free is to make a choice. "Only by truly choosing for ourselves what we will be every minute, creating our life like it is a work of art arising from this total freedom, do we realize our potential as a human being" (Butler-Bowdon, 2013, p. 268). Daenerys creates her life and the world. She chooses her own path, "Lannister, Targaryen, Baratheon, Stark, Tyrell they're all just spokes on a wheel. This one's on top, then that one's on top, and on and on it spins crushing those on the ground. I'm not going to stop the wheel, I'm going to break the wheel."

House Baratheon

House Baratheon is the house where we can consider each Baratheon character different, with a different personality and a different perception of what is right or wrong. The only thing that may be considered common between the characters though, is their striving for authenticity, responsibility, and freedom. Each one of them knows

himself very well and knows what he is and what he capable of and each one uses these things wisely. Each Baratheon character has a complete realization of their own potential and this is what makes them content with who they are.

Stannis Baratheon, the head of the House Baratheon and the Lord of Dragonstone, adopts both a deontological approach and a subjective approach. The ethical stance of Stannis Baratheon can be linked to the perception of duty introduced by Sir David Ross and the perception of God advanced by Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). Stannis Baratheon believes that his duty is to be the king. His throne is his duty, "I never asked for this. No more than I asked to be king, we do not choose our destiny, but we must do our duty." He has obligation to be king to serve people and responsibility to serve the God of Fire, and his actual duties revolve around balancing these responsibilities. Stannis acts according to what his duty is, regardless of any of the consequences he may get in return. When he really wants to bend the rules, he does not. When he needs help from Robb and Renly, he refuses to join their army, with their failure of recognizing his kingship. Stannis tells Renly, "The Iron Throne is mine by right. All those that deny that are my foes."

The act of sacrificing his daughter to the God of Fire probably seemed cruel and inhuman for some viewers. Yet, Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), reminding us the story of Abraham and sacrifice of his only son in Old Testament, argues, "his actions represent the height of being human" (Butler-Bowdon, 2013, p. 163). Stannis Baratheon says, "I never asked for this crown. Gold is cold and heavy on the head, but so long as I am the king, I have a duty ... If I must sacrifice one child to the flames to save a million from the dark ..." And so, he sacrifices his only daughter to the God of Flames. "Because all rationality had been suspended, Abraham had to believe in the absurd" (Butler-Bowdon, 2013, p. 165) performing a leap of faith. This leap of faith unites us with what is timeless and limitless. Stannis Baratheon is a "knight of faith."

Yet, one should not forget, that Abraham suffers and so does Stannis Baratheon, "Sacrifice ... is never easy [...]. Or it is no true sacrifice." "He is great not because he transcends fear, anguish, and agony, but because he lives through them. In doing so, he becomes a master of life," (ibid.). In this sense, Stannis Baratheon is a master of life who lives his pain firmly and dauntlessly.

The analysis addresses the question of the effectiveness of the application of TV series to teaching ethics. In the process of conducting the lecture, it was discovered that disclosing the results of the study to the students and revealing their participation in the research enhanced student engagement. To assess students understanding of the ethical theories a group or individual test can be administered. Students are asked to fill out the answers in the column with the missing information. For example, the name of the philosophers or the name of the characters can be left blank.

Example of the Group/Individual Exercise

Students were asked to complete a questionnaire with the instruction that they were to insert (in the last column) the name of the character whose values best match the principles of the indicated ethical theory. The example with the correct answers is presented in Table 3.

Table 3:
Example of the Group/Individual Exercise

Ethical Theory	Value	Quote	Representative	Character
Deontological	An objective unconditional principle	"the right is said to have priority over the good"	Kant	Eddard Stark
Utilitarianism (Teleological)	To maximize benefits and minimize harm	the right action is one "that causes more benefit than harm"	Machiavelli	Tywin Lannister
Subjective	Leap of faith	"to have faith is precisely to lose one's mind."	Kierkegaard	Stannis Baratheon
Practical Egoism (Teleological)	The pursuit of happiness	"Achievement of your happiness is the only moral purpose of your life."	Ayn Rand	Cersei Lannister

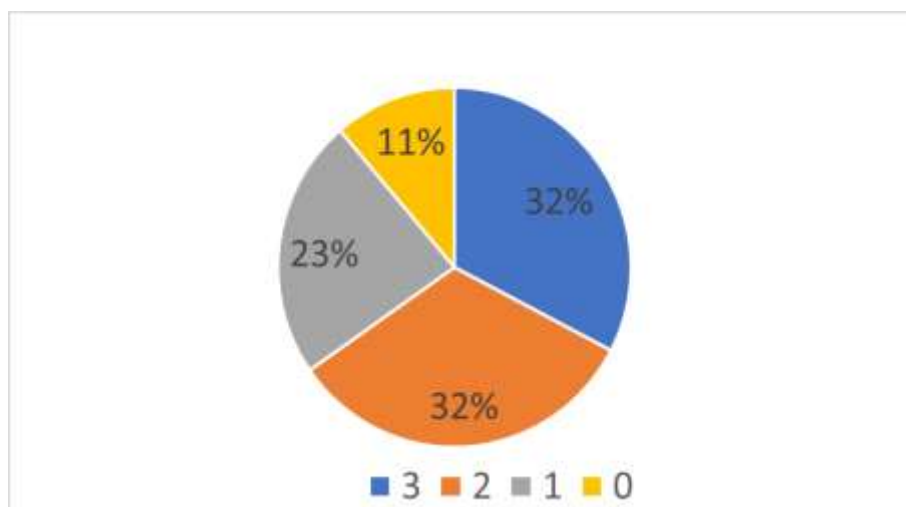
The test may also include multiple choice questions as the results can be summarized easier in the visually appealing form such as bars and pie charts. These diagrammatical representations of the test results should be displayed to the students.

Empirical Analysis and Interpretation of Results

To analyze the data, an established technique – the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet – was used. The analysis of the pre-test results derived from forty-three students shows that only 10% of respondents could answer one out of three questions. None of the participants was able to respond to all three questions.

The results of the post-test indicate that 32% of participants answered all three questions, 32% answered correctly two questions, 23% gave correct responses to one question and 11% could not answer any question (Figure 2).

Figure 2:
 The *Game of Thrones* Group Post-Test and Learning Outcome Results



The use of examples from the TV series *Game of Thrones* positively affects student learning outcome as evidenced by the post-test results in comparison to the pre-test results. However, it became apparent from the analysis of the questions raised by

students at the end of the lecture that the use of the examples from the TV series *Game of Thrones* had taken the attention of participants away from the discussion of ethics. This was evident in the questions asked by students that focused more on the TV series.

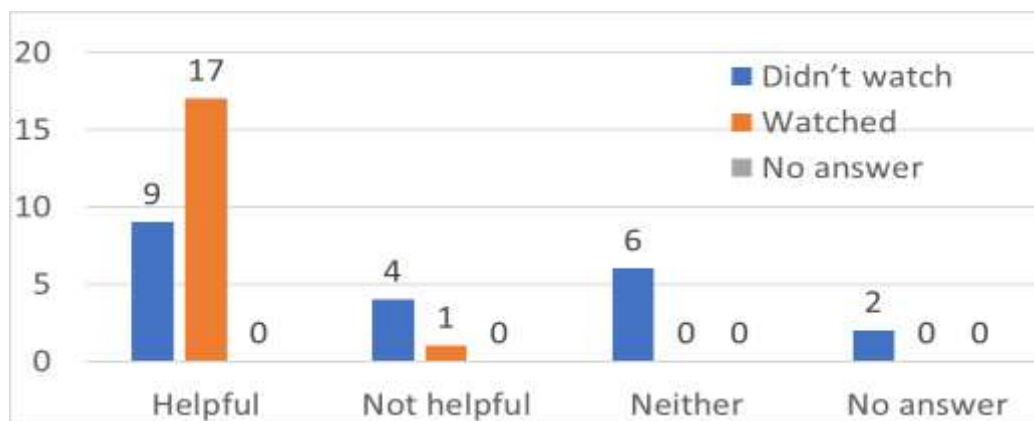
Table 2:
List of Questions Asked by the Participants

Questions Asked in the Game of Thrones Group
Does personal ethics always differ from business ethics?
Does the series production house follow business ethics?
Why only <i>Game of Thrones</i> ?
Does <i>Game of Thrones</i> represent other types of ethical theories?
Is production of <i>Game of Thrones</i> ethical (as it shows various sorts of violations)?
How do these ethics relate to the business world? Does Wall Street work on ethics or the plain idea of making money?
Universal ethic is still a question to me ...

Out of forty-three participants, twenty-one had not watched the series. From these twenty-one participants nine believed that they still could learn ethics from the examples of the *Game of Thrones* characters' behavior although they did not watch the series, six students responded that the TV series was neither helpful or unhelpful, and only four replied that *Game of Thrones* was not helpful in learning ethics.

Out of forty-three participants in the *Game of Thrones* group, eighteen of had viewed the series. From these eighteen students seventeen indicated the positive effect of the series on learning outcomes. Only one student said that the series was not helpful in learning ethics.

Figure 3:
Participants' Estimation of the Effect of the Teaching Tool on Learning Ethics



Discussion

From the short review above, some key findings emerge: the in-depth discussion of major ethical strands from the perspective of the TV series *Game of Thrones* characters was engaging and fruitful. From the comparison of the pre-test and post-test results and from the students' estimation the positive effect of the suggested teaching tool on learning outcomes is evident.

One of the major limitations of this approach to using the TV series *Game of Thrones* to teach ethics – is that despite the assumed popularity of the television series, 54% of participants (twenty-one) had not watched all of the episodes.

Of the students who had watched the TV series almost all of them (95%) agreed that using television series *Game of Thrones* was helpful to their understanding of ethics.

Summary

The use of the *Game of Thrones*, to encourage student participation can provide an effective tool to engage discussion on the topics of ethical philosophies such as utilitarianism, pragmatic egoism, existentialism and answerability. Using the various houses from the Game of Thrones in the lecture provides a link to the ethical principles such as deontological, teleological, and subjective, as they occur in each house and are exemplified by the actions of various characters within those houses. The results obtained from this study suggest that the examination of the behavior of the various characters' was helpful in establishing an understanding of ethics.

References

- Badhwar, N. K. & Long, R. T. (2016). Ayn Rand, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Retrieved June 28 & July 22, 2017, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/ayn-rand/>.
- Bakhtin, M. (1984). *Rabelais and His World* (Iswolsky H., Trans.), Indiana University Press, Bloomington, USA
- Bakhtin, M. (1990). *Art and Answerability*. Vadim Liapunov (Trans.), Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov (Eds.). Austin, University of Texas Press, 1990.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (2003). *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*. (C. Emerson, Trans.). London, UK: University of Minnesota Press
- Berger, J., & Pratt, C. B. (1998). Teaching business-communication ethics with controversial films. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 17(6), 1817–1823.
- Biktimirov, E. & Cyr, D. (2013). Using Inside Job to Teach Business Ethics, *Journal of Business Ethics*, Springer, Vol. 117(1), 209-219
- Butler-Bowdon, T. (2013). *Fifty philosophy classics*. London, UK: Nicholas Brealey Publishing
- Drucker, P. (1981). What is business ethics? In *The Public Interest*, Spring (63): 18–36.
- Duty-based ethics, (2014). In *BBC Ethics guide*. Retrieved June 30, 2017, from http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/introduction/duty_1.shtml
- Friedman, M. (1970-09-13). The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Its Profits. *The New York Times Magazine*. Retrieved March 11, 2011.
- Harrison, J. (2004). Film review: Screening classic dilemmas in the classroom. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 49(1), 105.
- Hibberd, J. (June 16, 2014). *Game of Thrones*: George R.R. Martin explains that murderous finale scene. *Entertainment Weekly*. Retrieved July 23, 2014. Retrieved July 11, 2017 from <http://ew.com/article/2014/06/16/game-of-thrones-finale-martin/>
- Garrard, G. (2013). Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527). In *Philosophy Now*. Retrieved from https://philosophynow.org/issues/97/Niccolo_Machiavelli_1469-1527
- Giacalone, R. A., & Jurkiewicz, C. L. (2001). Lights, camera, action: Teaching ethical decision making through the cinematic experience. *Teaching Business Ethics*, 5(1), 79–87.
- Gregory, A. (2009). Ethics and professionalism in public relations. In R. Tench and L. Yeomans (eds), *Exploring Public Relations* (2nd edition), London: FT/Prentice Hal

- Gordon, D.A., Kittross, J.M. & Reuss, C. (2011). *Controversies in media ethics*. New York: Routledge
- Johnson, R. & Cureton, A. (2017). "Kant's Moral Philosophy", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Retrieved June 22, 2017, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/kant-moral>
- Josephson, M. (1993). Teaching ethical decision making and principled reasoning. *Business Ethics*, Annual edition 1993-1994. Guilford, CN: Daskin Publishing Group
- Kernohan, A. (2012). *Business Ethics: An Interactive Introduction*, Canada: Broadview Press Inc
- Kierkegaard, S. (2005). *Fear and trembling*, Trans. Alastair Nannay, London: Penguin
- Larry, A. & Moore, M. (2016). Deontological Ethics. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter, 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Retrieved July 22, 2017, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/ethics-deontological>
- Lewis, P.V. (1985), Defining 'business ethics': like nailing jelly to a wall', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 4: 377–85
- Mastin, L. (2008). *Deontology - By Branch/Doctrine - The Basics of Philosophy*. Retrieved March 19, 2017, from http://www.philosophybasics.com/branch_deontology.html
- Morreall, J. (2012). *Philosophy of Humor*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Stanford University, 20 Nov. 2012. Web. 17 Mar. 2017.
- Phillip V. L. (1985). *Defining 'Business Ethics': Like Nailing Jello to a Wall*. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 4 (5): 377 – 383
- Rand, A. (1961). *For the New Intellectual: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand*, New York: New American Library.
- Runcie, C. (12 April, 2015). Why Game of Thrones is taking over the world. *The Telegraph*, Retrieved July 22, 2017, from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/game-of-thrones/11525133/Why-Game-of-Thrones-is-taking-over-the-world.html>
- Shaw, B. (2004). Hollywood ethics: Developing ethical issues... Hollywood style. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 49(2), 167–177
- Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2010). *Research methods for business: A skill-building approach* (5th ed.). Haddington: John Wiley & Sons
- The Municipal Machiavelli, (n.d.). Machiavelli's The Prince Rewritten for Municipal Politicians, Chapter 17. Retrieved July 22, 2017, from <http://ianchadwick.com/machiavelli/chapters-15-21/chapter-17-better-to-be-feared-than-loved/>