

Ethics films for AS/A2 student to watch

Ethical themes are hugely popular in film and TV because they pose dilemmas and cause the audience to consider what they feel is and isn't 'good' 'bad', 'appropriate' etc. All of the films on this list can be categorized as ethically themed and you would benefit from watching them.

Some of them deal with very sensitive issues and you should read the blurb and the 'warning' section on the back so that you know what you are likely to come across. Some of these DVDs can be lent out by the department and some by individual teachers – we do not expect you to buy any/all of them. If you do buy any we would appreciate it if others could borrow them. If you watch any other films which you think are of an ethical nature/theme please let me know so we can add them to the list.

Films About Real Lawyers

Both these films are based on true stories and, as with all ethically based films, cover a wide range of topics.

1. **"Erin Brockovich"** "Erin Brockovich" stars Julia Roberts as a paralegal taking on lawyers representing Pacific Gas and Electric Company. The plot involves a small town where many of the residents have been poisoned by chemicals put into the water by the Pacific Gas and Electric Company. The film even features a cameo by the real Erin Brockovich (she appears as a waitress).
2. **"North Country"** "North Country" is a lawyer movie about real lawyers which focuses on the Jenson v. Eveleth Taconite Co. case. The case was the first class-action sexual harassment lawsuit in the United States and was filed on behalf of Lois Jenson, played by Charlize Theron, who was sexually harassed in the male-dominated company. The case was led by real-life attorney Paul Sprenger, played in the movie by Woody Harrelson.

Films About War

These films try to uncover the boundaries that all military must endure when they engage the enemy. Ethics are the foundation for all war movies, as soldiers go out to the battlefield and encounter unimaginable cruelty. Highlight the difficulty involved in winning the battle while holding onto their compassion and humanity.

1. **"Rules of Engagement" (2000)**. Samuel L. Jackson stars in this war drama about an officer, Col. Terry L. Childers, who orders his troops to open fire on civilians during a rescue of Ben Kingsley's Ambassador Mourain. His attorney, Tommy Lee Jones as Col. Hayes Hodges, must investigate the incident while also confronting the ethics of battle after his experience with the defendant in Vietnam. This focuses on the shocking toll war had on both men as well as the cover up to hang Col. Childers out to dry due to the negative media publicity.
2. **"A Few Good Men" (1992)**. A young military lawyer, Tom Cruise as Lt. Daniel Kaffee, defends two Marines up for murder committed in a marine base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. His investigation leads to Col. Nathan Jesse, played by Jack Nicholson, who rules the installation with an iron fist and a sadistic sense of duty. Focusing on the code of conduct as the Marines contend that they were ordered to discipline their fellow soldier, which led to his death.

3. **"Hotel Rwanda" (2004)** Set in the war-torn country of Rwanda. Tutsi refugees flee the Hutu militia. A hotel manager, Don Cheadle at Paul Rusesabagina, makes a courageous decision to house and hide them from the genocidal squads in search of them. The film is based on the real life events of these people plight and the atrocities that occurred during the period of violence in the country of Rwanda.

A mix of films with ethical themes

These films cross a number of genres, ranging from science fiction to drama. They raise some very complicated questions about ethics, morality, and how we go about living in the world.

1. **"Minority Report"**-This film, which takes place in a world where crime has been virtually eliminated as a result of prescient (psychic) beings, asks the tough question: if crime can be prevented, should it be so, despite the reasons that crime should be done? It also raises some very troubling questions about corruption and challenges everything that we think about the morality of crime.
2. **"Sophie's Choice"**-Perhaps no ethics film is more touching and troubling than "Sophie's Choice," which stars Meryl Streep in the role of a mother who, confronted with the choice (inflicted on her by the Nazis) of which of her children should live and which should die, has to make a choice that no mother should ever have to make. This film challenges us to think about the choices that we may have to make and is both troubling and thought-provoking.
3. **"Dances With Wolves"**-This film, which follows the adventures of a Civil War officer who befriends and is eventually brought into the life of a Native American tribe, raises the question of the ethics of the white settlement of the West and the plight of the natives during that period. At times both touching and exciting, this is an ethics movie that also happens to be one of the finest films made in recent years.
4. **"The Matrix"**-Although it is cleverly disguised as an action film, "The Matrix," which tells the story of a young man who must confront the choice of whether he should enter into the world of enlightenment (with all of the responsibilities that entails) or undertake the fight against the Matrix. With its puzzling questions about the nature of free will and the power one has to choose one's destiny, this is an ethics film that will have you thinking for several hours.
5. **"Wall Street"**-If the business world is more to your liking, then be sure to watch this iconic film, which raises some powerful and challenging questions about the ethics involved in the way that Wall Street operates. This is a chilling reminder of the power that Wall Street often wields and the questions about the ethics that sometimes get overlooked.
6. **"The Dark Knight"**-Although this film appears to simply be about the crime-fighting hero of Gotham City, it does raise some very unsettling questions about the nature of evil and the lengths to which even those who are good should go in order to challenge and overcome that evil. And you thought it was simply about the Batman's attempts to overcome the Joker.
7. **"A Short Stay in Switzerland"** - Julie Walters stars. A BBC One, one-off drama inspired by the true story of Dr Anne Turner by award-winning writer Frank McGuinness. Having just witnessed the death of her husband Jack from an incurable neurological disease, Anne Turner (Julie Walters) is diagnosed with a near-identical illness. Anne's answer is that once her illness has reached a critical point, she will take her own life. And she needs her children's support.

8. **"Vera Drake"** - The brilliant writer-director Mike Leigh has crafted an utterly compelling movie about one of the most controversial of topics. An irrepressibly hopeful housecleaner in 1950s London, named Vera Drake, mothers everyone around her. None of these people know that Vera also helps young women get rid of unwanted pregnancies, until the police appear and tear her world apart.
9. **"Changing Lanes"** Do the ends justify the means? Two men get into a car accident and spend the day trying to ruin one another's lives through more and more reprehensible actions, based on a belief that they are blameless because they feel that they are in the right. How far will it go before one realizes that what he is doing is wrong in this uncomfortable but ultimately inspiring ethics movie? (Ben Affleck)
10. **"Rain Man"** A selfish man kidnaps his autistic brother in a greedy bid to get his brother's inheritance. However, over the course of this inspiring ethics movie, he comes to value his brother and want a relationship with him. In the end, he allows his brother to go back to the group home where he lived, not because his brother was a burden, but because it was the best place for his brother to live.
11. **"Saved!"** How do you decide what's right when what you hear from those in authority just doesn't stand up to scrutiny? A devoutly religious teenager becomes pregnant after trying to cure her boyfriend of homosexuality by having sex with him. When she begins struggling with her new situation, it forces her to reexamine her faith.
12. **"Machine Gun Preacher"** - Sam Childs is released from prison and learns that his wife has converted to Christianity. Sam is involved in all sorts of criminal behaviour but one particular incident affects him. Sam finds religion and a job in construction. He meets a preacher from Africa and travels to Northern Uganda and South Sudan many times working on a project. This true story highlights the issue of what classifies an action as 'right' or 'wrong'. (Gerard Butler)

Medical Themes

A selection of medically themed films – both realistic and futuristic. They deal with current and ongoing debates about the role of science in today's world and question what rights we have over our own lives and bodies.

1. **"Flatliners"** Featuring powerful early performances by an amazing ensemble cast of actors including Kiefer Sutherland, Julia Roberts and Kevin Bacon, this film about a group of medical students who attempt to find out what happens after death has become a cult classic.
2. **"Shutter Island"** One of the ten best medical thrillers in recent years, this 2010 film by acclaimed director Martin Scorsese about two U.S. Marshals investigating a psychiatric facility features mind-bending plot twists and excellent performances by character actors.
3. **"Extreme Measures"** A strange medical thriller about a doctor who experiments on the homeless in an effort to find a cure for paralysis, this stirring film delivers excellent performances by actors Hugh Grant and screen veteran Gene Hackman. The film is highlight by powerful cameo performances by character actors David Morse and J. K. Simmons.
4. **"Jacob's Ladder"** One of the ten best medical thrillers about the Vietnam War, this bizarre and nightmarish film about experimental treatments performed on former veterans features one

of the best twist endings in film. Career-defining performances by actors Tim Robbins and Danny Aiello highlight this disturbing thriller.

5. **"Medicine Man"** One of the ten best medical thrillers of the 1990's, this film features an amazing performance by Sean Connery as Dr. Robert Campbell, a scientist in the Amazon Rainforest racing against the clock to find a cure for cancer before a logging company destroys the village he has sworn to save.
6. **"Awake"** A strange film about a man who experiences anesthesia awareness and remains awake during surgery only to uncover a plot to kill him, "Awake" features impeccable dialogue written by writer-director Toby Harold. This face-paced thriller is highlighted by dramatic performances by actors Haden Christiansen and Jessica Alba.
7. **"Frankenstein"** One of the ten best medical thrillers of all time, this classic by director James Whale about a mad scientist who pieces together a human body and reanimates the corpse through electricity remains one of Universal Pictures and actor Boris Karloff's most famous and enduring films.
8. **"Outbreak"** A critically acclaimed film about the outbreak of a fictional virus and the doctors who race to contain it. "Outbreak" features career-defining performances by actors Dustin Hoffman, Rene Russo, Kevin Spacey and Morgan Freeman.
9. **"The 6th Day"** - In a future world where cloned plants, pets and human organs are freely available, the cloning of entire humans remains illegal. However, this is not enough to prevent an elite corporation from performing sinister cloning experiments along those lines. When Gibson (Schwarzenegger) returns home one day to find his family infiltrated by a perfect replica of himself, he struggles to get his life back. But with a team of deadly assassins on his trail, desperate to erase all evidence of the illegal operation, how can Gibson hope to succeed?
10. **"The Island"** - An intriguing action adventure set in the near future, *The Island* finds those who survived a mass global contamination living in a contained and highly controlled world, the only hope is to win lottery and be sent to a mysterious island. Naturally enough, things are quite what they initially seem, at least in the eyes of Johnny Two Alpha (Ewan McGregor). Along with Jordan Two Delta (Scarlet Johansen), they soon find out what happens when you don't fully comply with the rules of this deeply controlled world.
11. **"My Sister's Keeper"** - Eleven year old Anna Fitzgerald seeks a successful lawyer to hire him to earn medical emancipation from her mother Sara. She tells the lawyer the story of her family after the discovery that her older sister Kate has had leukaemia; how she was conceived by in vitro fertilization to become a donor; and the medical procedures she has been submitted since she was five years old to donate to her sister. Full of ethical issues this focuses on the rights we have over our own bodies.
12. **"Million Dollar Baby"** - Frankie Dunn has trained and managed some incredible fighters during a lifetime spent in the ring. The most important lesson he teaches his boxers is the one that rules life: above all, always protect yourself. In the wake of a painful estrangement from his daughter, Frankie has been unwilling to let himself get close to anyone for a very long time. Then Maggie Fitzgerald walks into his gym... This film deals with issues of a very sensitive nature, particularly issues regarding assisted-suicide.