

Copyright Issues in the Classroom

Case 1:

Professor *X*'s personal website contains a section devoted to the courses he teaches. On this page he posts a large amount of course material. For instance, when it comes to some of his courses, Dr. *X* makes all of the required readings available online. These readings consist of PDFs of newspaper articles, journal articles, and book chapters that he personally scanned (from his personal library and the university library). Professor *X* also posts several photos, as well as video and audio clips (ranging from thirty seconds to thirty minutes in length) that are related to the course content. Some of these media clips come from internet news sources, others come from YouTube and similar sources, yet others he personally copied from his own DVD collection.

Case 2:

Several graduate students have decided to compile sample instructional materials to help new graduate assistants in their department design courses that they commonly required to teach. In addition to sharing their own past syllabi, reading schedules, lecture notes, and handouts, the students download syllabi and other materials for similar courses from the personal websites of philosophy instructors at different universities. In addition to these sample materials, the group also decides to gather together many of the readings that are commonly used in these introductory courses. Some of these essays are in the public domain, but others are not. They make physical and digital copies of all of this material, and make it available in the department's physical library and common lab computers.

Case 3:

In their final project for Professor *Y*'s music history course, students are required to put together a website representing some major movement in popular music. Professor *Y* encouraged the students to "be creative" and to "incorporate various types of media" into the website.

- As the due date nears, one of the students in the class expresses her concern about this project. She is worried that putting together the type of multimedia project that Professor *Y* is asking for and putting it online would be breaking copyright laws—she has heard horror stories of students being sued for illegally copying music and movies, and is afraid of being sued herself.
- Another student in the class has a different worry. This student is a DJ, and wants to include some of his own mixes into his project. However, given that this is for a class assignment, he is worried that he will lose his individual rights over anything that he incorporates into the project.

Case 4:

Dr. Z, an adjunct in the sociology department, generally prohibits the use of recording devices during his lectures. His policy—which makes room for exceptional circumstances and in order to accommodate students with disabilities—is laid out on his course syllabus. Dr. Z instituted this policy for three reasons: (i) to protect his rights over his intellectual property, (ii) to protect the privacy of students who choose to speak up about some of the controversial subjects covered in the course, and (iii) to protect himself from the possibility that a disgruntled student could take a clip out of context and post it online, which could interfere with his current position and future employment prospects.

At the halfway point in the semester, Dr. Z comes to find out that a student has recorded a number of his lectures without his consent. He calls her into his office to discuss the matter. The student tells Dr. Z that she was only doing this for a classmate who sometimes misses class. Not satisfied, Dr. Z scolds her for recording his lectures and passing them on to her friend without his permission. Moreover, he tells her that she cannot continue recording his lectures, and that she must delete all of the copies of the previous lectures still in existence.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What constitutes intellectual property (IP)?
2. How should academics think about the *ethics* of IP as it pertains to teaching? For instance, should we think about IP as a set of (arbitrary?) legal rules/university policies that we need to obey out of fear of repercussions? Or, should we think about it in terms of respecting an individual's rights to protect the fruits of her intellectual labor?
3. What educational materials is it (in)appropriate for an instructor to post on his or her personal website? Why? What about on a secure course page (for instance, a course page on *Blackboard*)? Why? What about on a computer or network that one's colleagues will have access to? Why?
4. What IP issues should instructors consider when designing non-traditional assessments, such as multi-media projects, blogs, or web pages?
5. How should instructors talk to their students about IP issues in the classroom? How should instructors find answers to students' questions or concerns about IP?