

Ethics Post Mortem

DATE: Saturday, December 6th, 2008

SUBJECT: Post Mortem CS301

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TO: Dr. Dieter Otte, CS

DUE DATE: Monday, December 8th 2008, 10 p.m.

Expectations:

In Ethics, I expected to only put 1 credit hour worth of effort in to the class. This means, I spent a few hours before the test preparing, and a few hours now, writing this essay. If the amount of required work were to ever change for the class, I would expect the number of credit hours for the class to change. I also expected there to be a lot more discussion on what being ethical is and what being unethical is. I expected being able to defend the reasons for pirating software. Unfortunately, there was minimal discussion.

What I Got Out of the Class:

I did learn more than I thought I would. I learned some definitions, and names of organizations relating to Computer Ethics, and then proceeded to look them up during class or on my own time to get details. I did learn how the industry view ethics and what it meant to be ethical. However, this did not really affect my views on Computer Ethics; mostly because of the last of discussion.

What I Didn't Get Out of the Class:

I did not get a bad grade out of the class, and I did not get a lot of answers to questions.

The Way It Was Taught:

I think that increasing the amount of work AND the number of credit hours of the class will prevent people from having the misconception that it is a pointless class that everyone has to take for some arbitrary reason. Increasing the amount of discussion that happens in the class may also change people's opinion of it. During class information was very bland and just kind of presented to us, it didn't seem to be very meaningful to people's lives.

Some of the teachers made the class more interesting than others. But showing slides on a projector of a bunch of statistics and information, it not interesting. It would be much more interesting to know more about how the industry actually views ethics. How do companies treat employees that use pirated software? How do companies handle software licensing? These are just two examples of questions that

should have been discussed during class. These questions are very related to the industry and examples were never really provided for them.

Topics Covered:

This class could have been much more meaningful if real world examples were used. Despite what the teachers in the class may believe, people don't actually care about random statistics and arbitrary moral values. Let's consider the details of a topic described below:

By conscientious moral commitment we mean a sensitivity to the full range of moral values and responsibilities relevant to a given situation, and the willingness to develop the skill and expend the effort needed to reach the best balance possible among those considerations.

What does that statement actually mean? Is it some over explanation of moral commitment? How is it even relevant to the real world? This is an example of a topic where time was wasted just by saying it. This statement alone has absolutely no meaning. Contrary to this, there were statements that had a lot of meaning, for example:

Sexism and racism still permeate our society today, and to counterbalance their insidious impact, reverse preferential treatment is warranted in order to ensure equal opportunity for minorities and women.

This statement introduces a lot of topics to support it. However affirmative action and equal opportunity was never actually discussed, again making the entire statement completely pointless. No thanks to ethics, but I already knew that the local government of a city requires companies to hire a certain number of men and women of certain races in order to reflect the population of the community. The above statement relates to this, but it was never actually discussed.

Other Thoughts:

The point I am trying to get at is, more than HALF of the information presented in class are arbitrary statements that are completely meaningless without further elaborating on. Most of these slides seem to be the first few sentences that introduce sections in the book. Why put them on slides when they would be meaningless to take down?

This class could vastly improve if the teachers responsible for presenting this information spent more time on actually preparing the information. How is it helpful to learn things when statistics are read off during the slides, or the introductory sentences are used in presentations and then never discussed? The more effort that the instructors put in to the class, the more the students will get out of the class. I saw a minimal amount of effort put in to preparing the material. Professors like Georges and Palmer put more effort in to their content, and I felt like I learned the most from them. Most of the information presented by the other instructors was meaningless to my life, or consisted of ridiculous realizations and over explanations of morals learned in kindergarten just from being raised as a good person.

The book should be removed from the class.