

Instructor's Guide to *Ethics for the Information Age*
Seventh Edition

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Preface

This booklet has supplementary information for instructors using the seventh edition of *Ethics for the Information Age*. It gives practical suggestions for running a successful class, points out other resources available via the Web, and contains solutions to all of the book's review questions. If you identify any errors in this manual, or if you have any ideas for additional exercises, I would appreciate hearing from you.

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Teaching Computer Ethics

Introduction

Teaching a computers, ethics, and society course for the first time can be intimidating. Unlike the typical computer science class, which focuses on technical content, a computers and society class focuses on people and the decisions they make. Doing ethics is not like finding the maximum element on a list. The moral problems discussed in this book are complicated, and there are no algorithms that enable you to “solve” a moral problem as neatly as you can construct a binary search tree. If you have little or no formal training in ethics, you may feel uncomfortable teaching an ethics class.

Fortunately, your job is *not* to preach to the students or tell them how they ought to behave (outside of class, anyway!). Rather, your role as the teacher is to raise questions, give students the opportunity to formulate answers, and then gently, but firmly insist that the students justify their answers by explaining their reasoning. If you are successful, the students will complete the course with a greater understanding of the social and ethical implications of computer use and abuse, an improved ability to think critically and defend their decisions logically, and a greater appreciation for alternate points of view.

As C. Dianne Martin and Hilary J. Holz put it:

Our belief is that ethics cannot be taught; rather what can be taught is a framework for evaluating ethical dilemmas and making decisions. In accepting the premise that technology is value-laden, we stress the need to teach a methodology of explicit ethical analysis in all decision-making related to technology... The role of ethics education should be to provide students with at least a minimal theoretical background essential for their understanding of the role that values and ethics play in all decision-making, whether it be technical, economic, political, social, or personal.¹

¹“Non-Apologetic Computer Ethics Education: A Strategy for Integrating Social Impact and Ethics into the Computer Science Curriculum,” C. Dianne Martin and Hillary J. Holz, The Research Center on Computing & Society (web site), www.southernct.edu/organizations/rccs.