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news

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Computer ✓

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

COMPUTERS LINK ETHICS COURSE AT EASTERN

CHARLESTON, IL--Eastern Illinois University's new Computer Ethics senior seminar is being taught from 13 locations, from California to Ireland.

However, students have not been commuting beyond the Eastern campus in Charleston, Illinois. Instead, the class is being conducted from terminals throughout campus via Eastern's computer network. One of the school's three computer mainframes is located in Edwardsville, where it can be linked with other systems all over the world.

Computer-related ethical issues are communicated using keyboards and monitors, rather than conventional classroom discussion and chalkboard lectures. Students choose topics from a pool of resources stored in the system's memory by Dr. Robert N. Barger, Eastern Professor of Secondary Education and Foundations, who initiated and instructs the seminar, and by the other resource "instructors" linked by the network.

The students then post their discussions on the system's electronic "bulletin board," where they are subject to feedback from Barger, fellow classmates and resource instructors, linked to the network. The class applies the computer's resource pool and its vast communication abilities to help solve computer-related ethical problems.

Barger has taught both philosophy and computer programming courses at Eastern. He feels the appeal for the seminar is two-fold: computer ethics is a growing concern and computer networking is a valuable skill. Both aspects, he says, are applied to the course and will prove useful in nearly every career pursuit.

About a year ago, when Barger began developing ideas for the class, he sent a message to network users seeking further inputs.

"I asked anyone who happened to be listening to respond with some ideas for the class," he explained. "Instead, I got people who were not only willing to provide primary resource material, but who also expressed an interest in offering the class regular feedback on its work throughout the seminar."

There are currently seven students enrolled in the class, but Barger hopes there will be more in future classes.

"The course was approved too late to be included in the current catalog or in last Spring's pre-enrollment schedule," said Barger. "The only way students could learn about it this semester was through central registration or in add/drops."