

Memorandum

To: Curriculum Committee and Dean
From: Peter W. Martin
Date: December 29, 1995
Subject: Proposed Experimental Course -- Copyright Law and Digital Works

I. An Experimental Distributed Course

The proposed course I shall offer next year will use basic Internet communication technology to link students at several participating institutions, including the LII's own, Cornell Law School. Overall enrollment will be limited to 48 -- up to eight students each at six institutions. The course will meet both locally and collectively via the Net. Its basic elements will be

- Digital course materials (distributed in advance but also supplemented from time to time)
- E-mail and threaded list as means of teacher-student, student-student, and student-teacher exchange
- One Internet-based CUSeeMe video conference meeting a week for fourteen weeks (with a telephone conference call back-up arrangement) (CUSeeMe allows video/audio conferencing of up to 8 sites via the Internet using consumer grade sound cards and digital cameras -- all told <\$500.)
- Several non-exam written assignments exchanged with all members of the class
- A final exam

II. Role of Participating Schools

Each participating school will need to approve and list the course as one of its own, select students, administer the exam, determine how to credit performance as reported by the instructor toward its degree, provide the local meeting room, technology support, and a contact faculty member. The other participating schools will need to help defray the costs of offering the course by paying Cornell Law School a modest lump sum (comparable to the stipend paid adjunct faculty members). In addition, all participating schools will have to cover the travel expenses of one on-site visit by the instructor during the early portion of the course. All will be entitled to a second visit, also at their expense, toward the end of the year for a full report on the experiment to the faculty or a relevant faculty committee. A principal aim of the venture is to construct a model that others can use and adapt.

III. Requirements of the Students (and Their Schools)

The students enrolled in the course at all participating schools will need to have computers and full Internet access, including not only individual e-mail accounts but also WWW at reasonable speeds (dial-up SLIP or PPP will suffice). The school will have to have a meeting room with an Internet connection of sufficient bandwidth to support CUSeeMe (dial-up will not suffice). While the course materials will be delivered free via the Internet, optimal use of them locally may require students to buy commercial software (e.g., the LEXIS-NEXIS Student Office). Materials will be offered in at least one alternate format so that individual students (and schools) will not be locked into a particular software platform (other than the ubiquitous WWW standard of HTML). The formats for course material distribution will be determined after consultation with all participating schools.

The course will be taught with the understanding that all students in it have a basic command of copyright law. Where feasible in a participating school, that can be implemented most simply through a course pre-requisite. But schools where a pre-requisite would be too limiting can instead impose a pre-course reading requirement -- from a list furnished by the instructor.

IV. Schedule

A distributed course must contend with diverse academic calendars. To deal with that challenge, this course will be offered with a schedule that drapes across multiple semesters or quarters. It won't begin until the last participant school is under way -- most likely in late September -- and will continue meeting until sometime in April, skirting holidays and term breaks, as observed by all participating institutions.

V. How to Follow-Up

A description of course content will be furnished the curriculum committee and dean of any law school seriously interested in participating. For that or clarification of any of the institutional arrangements sketched above contact: Peter W. Martin, martin@lii.law.cornell.edu (phone: 212-998-6717). For clarification of any of the technical requirements, including the demands of CUSeeME, contact: Thomas R. Bruce, trb2@cornell.edu (phone: 607-255-1221).