Using drama to introduce ethics to technology students and practitioners

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INTRODUCTION

The poster describes the use of Joe Penhall’s play Landscape with Weapon because of its practical and ethical use of the play in technology. Landscape with Weapon is a play in three acts that revolves around issues confronting an engineer who works in the weapons industry. The play is a number of broad questions concerning intellectual property rights, duty and responsibility in professional ethics. Crucially, although the play raises big questions concerning technological development, the portrayal of relationships between individual characters each with their own personal ethical stance, and in the development of these relationships through conversations and outcomes that vital ethical questions arise.

INTRODUCING ETHICS IN ICS

Unit overview

Ethics is an established area of academic interest, but it is only fairly recently that the relevance of ethics to ICS started to emerge clearly outside philosophical studies. Professional bodies in Engineering and ICS have begun to realise, as a condition for accreditation, the study of ethics-related topics, and, partially in response to these requirements, new pedagogies for teaching and learning these topics are gradually emerging. Introducing Ethics in Computer Science and Ethics explores the idea that drama and dialogue provide powerful tools to help students and professionals to identify, discuss and understand ethical issues in their professional practice. The core of the Unit is based upon discussion and the selection of plays and dialogues that raise ethical concerns. The examples also represent different styles of argumentation and, hence, illustrate the relevance of philosophical tools from a variety of ICS perspectives. The Unit introduces some ideas taken from academic texts in the area of ethics, it does so to provide teachers with a vocabulary that can be used for practical analysis and discussion of real problems.

The Unit development has capitalised on the lessons and feedback gathered during a trial course run by the authors in 2008 with a small group of ICS students. The play Landscape with Weapon has been developed and, on occasion, answered. Accordingly, such dialogues influence audience and guide context. Rather than focusing on the formulation of a coherent play text, the authors allow the audience to place alongside one another. Also, another focus, the play encourages the reader to the play’s own audience with characters themselves. They examine their own ethical positions through their reactions to the dialogue, posture and movement set out in the play script. In short, a suitable play such as Landscape with Weapon can function as an allegory representing issues and questions of relevance to an audience of practitioners in a variety of areas of technology development.

REFERENCES


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