

Commercial Internet Sites for Course Materials

Cornell students are being approached by commercial vendors and encouraged to sell course materials, including exams, lecture notes, problem sets, homework, and student papers, which are then posted for resale on Internet sites. Some Cornell students have removed materials, even exams, from course Blackboard sites and sold them to commercial vendors. Some commercial vendors falsely convey that the instructor has approved the sale of course materials. Cornell's Blackboard site contains a notice: "Course materials posted on Blackboard are intellectual property belonging to the author. Students are not permitted to buy or sell any course materials without the express permission of the instructor. Such unauthorized behavior constitutes academic misconduct."

If you wish to discourage your students from engaging in such behavior, you are strongly encouraged to include in your syllabus an explicit prohibition against buying and selling course materials and indicate that such behavior constitutes academic misconduct. While course materials produced by a student, such as lecture notes, might belong to the student as the owner of that material, a faculty member may nonetheless impose conditions on students' use of such derived works, such as prohibiting distribution on commercial sites of notes derived from the faculty member's lectures.

You are also encouraged to include a copyright notice on any course materials (including class notes and exams) that you author and post on Blackboard or distribute in hard copy. By including such a copyright notice [(C)[author's name][year], you put students on notice that the material is intellectual property belonging to you and not the students' property to do with as they wish. If students were to remove a copyright notice, that behavior would create a higher level of culpability. Such a notice would also make it easier for you to take down materials from commercial sites. Under the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA), to have materials removed from a web site, the copyright holder must personally request the removal. For instructions on how to locate and request removal of copyrighted course materials sold on Internet sites, go to <http://copyright.cornell.edu/policies/course-materials.cfm>.