Computer Science Ethics Essay, Research Paper

The purpose of this article is to state the issues in computer ethics and the integration of these into the Information Technology curriculum. This article states the facts in an unbiased manner. It brings up points from both sides; the advocation of the ethics course and the probability that many of these issues won?t even be relevant to your job.

? A systems analyst becomes aware of illegal activity- fraud, money laundering, tax evasion- at his company. After a late night of work, the analyst breaks the network?s security code and examines confidential. A few days later, an envelope containing several thousand dollars appears on his desk?(Pliagas, p.39 et seq.). This is one of the many scenarios that can be rationalized by computer ethics. Is it morally morally right to let these activities continue without someone stepping in? Is it right for the analyst for the analyst to break the security codes and find this information? Should he be prosecuted as well for hacking into the system? These are some of the questions rising up in computer ethics courses at universities and campuses during the course.

Many people don?t understand how ethics can be incorporated on the job. The issue that rises is, ?can certain people be trusted?? (Pliagas, p.39 et seq) Nobody wants to work with a person that could hack into their personal files. Yet at the same, anyone could do this. That is why it ethics is important in society. It helps you to rationalize.

Michael Cohen, a software architect, took the computer ethics course and believes that ethics is not needed. He has not encountered any ethical issues with his current job, however, he has only been working for a short time. His boss believes the opposite. In an attempt to keep track of certain individuals e-mail habits, he had to come up with a solution that wouldn?t infringe on privacy. ?The company installed a system to warn management when an employee sends or receives a certain amount of e-mail to or from the same address? (Pliagas, p.39, et seq). This was due to employees suspected of goofing off on company time. Ethically speaking, not working when you are supposed to is the same as stealing money from the company.

Many universities are beginning to implement the ethics course into the into the computer science curriculum. ?George Mason University requires all computer science students to take a computer ethics course? (Pliagas, p.39, et seq). I know this first hand, because it is a requirement for my degree. The argument for this change is ?they won?t be aware how to handle these issues if they have never thought of them before? (Pliagas, p.39, et seq). However, common sense will tell you how to handle most of these situations when they are encountered.

The quality of software developed is also an issue. The Y2k bug is an example of a software problem. It was not properly thought out and given the amount of time there was to prepare for it, an issue that should have been resolved 5-10 years earlier. ?Years ago, developers thought little about the future of their work: Would airplanes be able to fly? What would the financial ramifications be? This lack of foresight brought problems of global significance? (Pliagas, p.39, et seq).

Computer ethics courses have had to change with the times. The main issues used to be ?equity, hacking, and security? (Pliagas, p.39, et seq). It has to go further than that today. The idea in the classroom is that, ?students arrive with their own standards and ethics, this sparks discussion, and then the computer professionals? code of ethics is introduced? (Pliagras, p.39, et seq). Ethics should be a class taught in every class, to every major. I took an ethics course at a community college that I attended and it really affected my thought process. I became more open-minded and opinionated. One of the main points of the ethics class, is that hopefully ?errors will be self-caught before they turn into moral catastrophes? (Pliagras, p.39, et seq). No matter what is done or taught, there will always be people who ?cross the line and disregard such boundaries? (Pliagras, p.39, et seq). There will always be hackers and people who do lucrative activities on computers, which is greatly enhanced by the internet and accessibility of computers.

This article fulfilled its purpose according to the abstract, which states: ?Colleges and universities are offering their computer science students courses in computer ethics. Now it is mandatory to teach such courses if the institution wants to earn the Computer Science Accreditation Board seal of approval? (Pliagras, p.39, et seq). The title is a bit inconclusive though. Learning IT right from wrong: As universities add computer ethics to the curriculum, observers want to know how the new ethically CS graduates change the industry. It never states how it has changed the industry or done anything. I don?t think a class that is a requirement will make some do the right thing.