

Class Activity 1 (Intellectual Property – from Week #10)

A plane makes an emergency crash landing on a deserted tropical island. Two dozen survivors must fend for themselves until help arrives. All of them are from large cities, and none of them has camping experience. The survivors find it impossible to gather enough food, and everyone begins losing weight. One person spends a lot of time by himself and figures out how to catch fish. He brings fish back to camp. Others ask him to teach them how to catch fish. He refuses, but offers to share the fish he has caught with the other passengers as long as they take care of the other camp chores, such as hauling fresh water, gathering firewood, and cooking.

Debate the morality of the bargain proposed by the fisherman, from the perspective of intellectual property rights. One side of the debate concerns why the fisherman’s position is morally wrong. The other side explains why the fisherman’s position is morally acceptable. Pair with a student next to you for this debate exercise, taking opposite stances. Use the chart below to outline your ideas.

Fisherman’s position is morally wrong	Fisherman’s position is morally acceptable

Class Activity 2 – Private right to freedom of speech versus public good:

In July 2011, activists shut down a San Francisco subway station as a way of protesting the death of a drunk man shot by a Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) police officer. A month later, the subway system blocked cell phone service at several stations in an effort to prevent another protest. According to BART officials, protesters have said they “would use mobile devices to coordinate their disruptive activities and communicate about the location and number of BART Police”. The agency said, “A civil disturbance during commute times at busy downtown San Francisco stations could lead to platform overcrowding and unsafe conditions for BART commuters, employees, and demonstrators.”

Was BART justified in blocking cell phone service?