

Class Activity 1 (Computer Reliability):

Amazon.com shut down its British Web site on March 13, 2003, after a software error led it to offer iPAQ handheld computers for 7 pounds instead of the correct price of about 275 pounds. Before Amazon.com shut down the site, electronic bargain hunters had flocked to Amazon.com's Web site, some of them ordering as many as 10 iPAQs. Amazon said that customers who ordered at the mistaken price should not expect delivery unless they paid the difference between the advertised price and the actual price. An Amazon.com spokesperson said, "In our Pricing and Availability Policy, we state that where an item's correct price is higher than our stated price, we contact the customer before dispatching. Customers will be offered the opportunity either to cancel their order or to place new orders for the item at the correct price".

Was Amazon.com wrong to refuse to fill the orders of the people who bought iPAQs for 7 pounds? Analyze from a utilitarian and a Kantian point of view.

Class Activity 2 (Computer Reliability)

Many companies provide “shrinkwrap warranties” on their softwares. That is, you accept the software or service “as-is”; in some cases, a 60- or 90-day replacement/warranty is provided. None accept liability for harm caused by use of software.

According to the above, when someone is bullied on Facebook (by a person they don’t know in the offline world) and this person then dies by suicide, is Facebook responsible for having somehow “caused harm”? Should Facebook refuse any liability based on the above shrinkwrap warranty argument?

Class Activity 3 (Intellectual Property)

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