

02-02 Computers and Technology Class Lecture and Workshop on Research and Ethics

Technology Class Lecture and Workshop on Research and Ethics

The teacher leads a technology class, starting with an ethical thought experiment comparing a controversial art exhibit with goldfish in blenders to the common practice of feeding live fish to pets. Following the discussion, students are given in-class time to work on their research papers and a new daily exercise, during which the teacher provides extensive one-on-one guidance on assignments, formatting, and technical issues.

Class Introduction and Administrative Updates

The teacher began the 44-minute technology class by calling for the students' attention and outlining the day's agenda. The plan included a discussion of the daily exercise, followed by a dedicated work period for students to continue their research papers. Before proceeding, the teacher addressed an administrative point, informing the class that emails had been sent to the parents of students with failing grades the previous night. He explained that this was a mandatory action dictated by his superior and advised any students with issues to direct their concerns to Mr. Naughton rather than to him.

Ethical Dilemma: The Goldfish Thought Experiment

The teacher initiated a thought experiment centered on an image of goldfish in blenders, which he revealed was related to a real-life art installation. He explained that the piece, created by artist Marco Evaristti in an Italian museum, featured 10 blenders, each containing a live goldfish. The blenders were plugged in, and the artist's intent was to observe if any museum patrons would push the button. The teacher posed that the artwork's purpose was to make a point about humanity's capacity for cruelty and power over animals. During the exhibit, two fish were ultimately killed.

To create an ethical comparison, the teacher introduced the Oscar cichlid, a smart but aggressive fish from South America that is often kept as a pet. He then described “feeder goldfish,” which cost about 20 cents each and are commonly purchased to be fed live to Oscars. In this scenario, the goldfish is swallowed whole and takes three to four hours to die and decompose in the Oscar’s acidic stomach. The teacher challenged the students to decide which scenario was worse: a four-second death in a blender for an art exhibit that resulted in animal cruelty charges, or the prolonged death in a fish’s stomach, a common practice that goes largely unremarked upon. When posed with the hypothetical choice of being the goldfish, students were asked whether they would prefer to “melt in acid for four hours or be whisked into frappe in four seconds.”

Assignment Instructions and Website Updates

The teacher detailed the assignments for the day. The primary task was for students to continue working on their research papers, which are due at the end of class on Thursday. He also introduced the next daily exercise, titled “Mr. B’s Garage,” which features a genuine picture of his garage. For this task, students simply need to describe what they see in the image, with the explicit instruction not to use reverse image search tools.

Additionally, the teacher announced significant changes to his class website. Due to a law passed eight months ago requiring new accessibility features, the site’s layout has been updated. He demonstrated the new navigation, which includes links across the top for daily exercises and current assignments. For students who are missing work from the previous month, such as the graphing assignment, a link is available to access and submit those tasks. The teacher concluded by noting that the class’s performance on the recently graded graphing assignment could have been better before allocating the remaining 35 minutes for in-class work.

Student Work Period and Individualized Instruction

During the extended work period, the teacher circulated the room to provide one-on-one assistance. He set a benchmark for students to have at least two paragraphs of their research paper completed by the end of the session, noting that many had only finished the first paragraph from the previous class. His guidance included:

- **Formatting:** Enforcing the use of Times New Roman 12-point font and instructing students to separate paragraphs with a blank line instead of indenting.
- **Content:** Reminding students of the paper’s structure, which should cover the company’s origin, three major historical changes in

chronological order, its current activities, and a conclusion. He suggested using AI tools to find historical information and sources.

- **Past Assignments:** He addressed issues with prior work, instructing one student to add a second flowchart to their project and another to provide more specific labels on their graphing assignment.
- **Technical Support:** The teacher helped students navigate the newly redesigned class website, provided the Wi-Fi password (TECHNOLOGY1!), and helped locate missing files in their Google Drive.

Throughout these interactions, the teacher engaged students on their specific paper topics, which included Porsche, Hershey's, Sprite, Red Bull, and Ugg, offering targeted feedback and maintaining a productive work environment.
