

Feedback from the 2014 Turin Satellite

By

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Logistics – The 2014 Turin satellite was led by Giancarlo Frosio and met online through Adobe Connect on Friday mornings from 9 to 11 am UTC. The Satellite was affiliated with the Nexa Center for Internet and Society and the University of Turin Law School. Giancarlo led and coordinated the Turin Satellite under the supervision of Professor Marco Ricolfi.

Participants – The satellite was a diverse group, both geographically and professionally. It gathered students from the Law School of Turin and former participants in the LLM program in Intellectual Property Law jointly organized by the University of Turin and the World Intellectual Property Organization. The majority of participants were Italian nationals attending the Turin University Law School and having previously taken an IP class as part of their law school curriculum. Almost half of the participants were chosen among WIPO-Turin LLMs alumni. Five continents were represented in the class. This has assured diversity in class discussion, especially looking at copyright law from an international perspective and allowing to better ponder the necessary balancing of interests that copyright policy and theory should entail. Most participants had a legal background, being practicing attorneys, law students, PhD students, academics or governmental officials. Some participants had a part-time or amateur creative background as musicians and performers. No participants had special ties with the creative industry, except one.

[SUGGESTION: For future editions, we should thrive to add diversity in that regard as well. However, this is challenging since our participants are taken from a pool of LLM and JD students.]

Materials – A combination of the Harvard copyright course's syllabus, and the online sections' syllabus made up the course's syllabus. In addition, Giancarlo customized the syllabus with materials about the European Union, with special emphasis on the most relevant ECJ cases that were mentioned during the discussion seminars. The syllabus included also a limited amount of additional readings, with special emphasis on EU-US comparative analysis, public domain issues, copyright theories and historical perspectives of copyright and creativity. Focusing on copyright topics from an international perspective helped to improve the discussions.

[SUGGESTION: For future editions, we should build on this finding, also improving EU-US comparative analysis.]

Most students seem to have done most of the readings and watched the video lectures every week. However, this is hard to be assessed with any certainty. The online discussions gave the impression that the video lectures were regularly watched by most participants. Readings may have been overwhelming sometimes and only a portion of the class may have completed them each class.

[SUGGESTION: For future edition it may be helpful to have anonymous online polls, so that the participants may state their feeling regarding the workload each week and the amount of reading that they were finally able to process.]

In addition, most students were not able to watch the Special Events live, due to their schedules and different time zones. However, many students watched the recorded versions of the live events.

The online discussion forums were scarcely used by the students.

[SUGGESTION: Actually, they have preferred to set up a Facebook group where they discussed and shared notes, materials, news and other information. The Facebook group has been heavily used in preparation of the exam and has been updated with new comments even after the end of the program. It may be an option to add social networking features, such as FB or twitter to the online discussion forum, envisioning a way to embed those features in the forum, so that the participants may interact through an interface that is familiar to them. We plan to set up a general FB group for the satellite next year.]

Attendance – Turin Satellite had a strict attendance policy, so that participants qualified for taking the final exam if attended at least 10 online seminars out of the 12 that were finally offered. Out of 30 initial participants, 6 did not meet the attendance requirements.

[SUGGESTION: In the future, it would be advisable to consider issuing attendance certificates to students meeting the attendance requirements but unwilling to take the final exam. The certificates should, however, be issued directly by Harvard. Any other option is of limited appeal to the participants.]

Exam – The Turin Satellite exam window opened on Thursday, May 8 at 000 UCT and closed on Tuesday, May 13 at 000 UTC. I have noticed that the exam itself is a splendid learning opportunity. I am happy to allocate even longer time for the exam as the students have truly taken the exam as an opportunity to organize and review all the materials they have processed up to that point and use them to answer the questions. Among the 24 participants in good attendance, 4 did not submit the final exam, 2 failed the final exam, and 18 passed the final exam. Overall, the participants have done extremely well in their final exam. A few among them exceeded any expectations, writing perfect exams. Six participants scored 5/5 in all the three questions. Four participants deserved, in the view of the examiner, a special mention “cum laude”.

[SUGGESTION: For future editions, we should envision some tool to reward those students performing exceptionally well in the final exam. One option may be to mention “cum laude” or “with distinction” on the certificates of those students scoring 5/5 in all the three questions.]

Length and Structure of the Course – The 12 week course worked pretty well for our participants, with a slight decrease in attendance in the last three weeks.

[SUGGESTION: However, an interruption of one week each three weeks, starting 2 weeks earlier may be taken into consideration. This would allow the participants to catch up with readings and hopefully increase class preparation and participation.]

As far as the structure of the course is concerned, the participants have greatly enjoyed the time dedicated to studying copyright theories, as well as discussion related to the historical underpinnings of copyright theories and notions of creativity. The clear understanding rationale and theoretical background leading to the implementation of copyright norms have constantly forced the student to challenge present policy arrangements in light of alternative supporting theories for promoting creativity. At times, the review of some specific issues as copyright and parentalism or notions of probative and substantial similarity proved to be confusing for the average participant. Also, coupling together the presentation of the different subject matters of protection with the discussion of useful articles and copyright protection of software was a tough cookie to bite. Finally, the discussion of remedies under US law turned out to be rather uninteresting for international copyright scholars, which will hardly ever deal with those aspects of US copyright law.

[SUGGESTION: These findings may usefully put at use in the next editions in order to reallocate better the time dedicated to each relevant topic during the online discussion seminars.]

Still, this is a difficult call as we always thrive to have the maximum number of participants passing the final exam and the hardest – or the less exciting – cookies to bite may later prove to be the most nutrient for performing well during the exam.