Embedded Ethics Module - Gaming and Addiction

*Teaching Notes*

This module is composed of two parts: a part about video game design techniques led by the computer science instructor, and a part about the ethics of addictive products led by the philosophy instructor.

We encourage you to insert your own examples, screenshots, and video clips in the computer science slides. We had to remove many of our own examples in order to make the slides publicly available – this section is more effective with concrete, vivid examples drawn from actual computer games.

To transition between the two parts, we found it effective to secretly “plant” the philosophy instructor in the audience and have them grow increasingly agitated as the computer science instructor is listing increasingly addictive-sounding techniques for video game design. We transition between the two parts with roughly the following dialogue:

*Philosophy instructor: \*puts up hand\**

*Computer science instructor:* Yes?

*Philosophy instructor:* At the beginning of class, it seemed like you’re talking about fun, but now I’m worried you’re talking about addiction!

*Computer science instructor*: Oh? Could you say a little more?

*Ethics instructor*: I’m worried it is unethical to get people to play games when they’re only playing out of habit. I’ve actually made up a few slides.. and group activities.. just on the spot.. to try and explain what I’m worried about. Would you mind if I shared them?

Computer science instructor: No, not at all – go right ahead.

[Sometimes a student will beat the ethics instructor to voicing a concern, though!]