Feed-back from the 2014 CopyrightX IViR satellite course

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The CopyrightX - IViR satellite has been offered to IViR's students for the first time during spring 2014. IViR was approached by prof. Terry Fischer and set up the course as described below. The project was coordinated by Dr. Thomas Margoni (taking the role of Teaching Fellow, TF) under the supervision of prof. Nico van Eijk.

IViR already offers a number of courses in EU and international copyright. The interest in the CopyrightX course, therefore, focused on offering students the possibility to learn the specificities of US copyright law. Accordingly, IViR's satellite syllabus closely reflected the syllabus used for the main course offered by the Berkman Center at Harvard Law School (HLS).
Student meetings were held every two weeks for 1.5 to 2 hours in the documentation center of the Institute. A total of 6 meetings were held, each consisting of two sets of recorded lectures. During the meetings, students were invited to discuss the content of the recorded lectures and to ask questions and raise issues about aspects for which they wanted further clarification. The role of the TF was to steer the debate and guide it towards a general discussion of all the topics analyzed during the recorded classes. The TF further helped students to understand specific concepts that were new, or that differed substantially between the US legal system and the one in which they received their legal education. Additionally, students were invited to develop a comparative analysis with Dutch and EU copyright elements on the one side and the newly acquired knowledge of US copyright on the other. Students were also stimulated to read and discuss the readings listed in the course's standard syllabus, some of which were the objects of specific discussions in class. Nonetheless, readings were not a mandatory element of the course.

Furthermore, students were assigned to a group project. They were separated in 5 groups and each group had to prepare a short presentation on a very specific aspect of the theme "originality in EU copyright law: the author's own intellectual creation concept". The five identified aspects were: (1) origins of the concept of "author's own intellectual creation (AOIC)"; (2) AOIC in software; (3) AOIC in databases; (4) AOIC in photographs; and (5) horizontal application of the concept of AOIC. The results of the presentations will be organized in a teaching module on "originality in the EU" by the TF.

The 2014 IViR's satellite did not offer credits to students. The short time available to set up the course and a number of bureaucratic hurdles made the recognition of credits for students unfeasible. The course therefore was offered as an "extracurricular activity". In spite of the lack of official accreditation, student responses were very positive. The number of registered students was 18, much beyond the organizers' expectations (originally we envisaged a small "experiment" with 6-8 students) and while attendance to the physical meetings was mandatory, the number of drop-outs was limited to 2, in both cases caused by "conflicting schedules".

Students' appreciation of the course was generally high, as confirmed by the evaluation questionnaire results (attached and below). Students seemed to particularly like the recorded lectures and the clarity with which topics were dealt with in the lectures. They also showed a particular interest in comparing legal education and legal argumentation as well as how law is taught in continental Europe and North America. Students evaluated the physical meetings positively or very positively, and especially appreciated the TF's ability to further explain and clarify some of the most complex topics dealt with in the recorded lectures (as mentioned, the

satellite taught US copyright law to students that did not study law in the US). For a complete overview of the students' evaluation of the course please refer to the attached document.

Lessons learned.
While the experience was highly positive and the assistance provided during the entire course by the Berkman staff (especially prof. Terry Fisher and Ana Enriquez) extremely valuable, a few elements should be considered toward the 2015 IViR's satellite.

The maximum number of registered students should be reduced to 10-14 students. The main reason lies in the scope of the physical meetings, i.e. to offer all students the possibility to fully participate in the discussion. During this first year, it was noticed that, while the most outspoken students participated in and fully benefited from the discussion, some other students did not (a conclusion that is supported by the high variance of some of the questionnaire results). In order to secure that all students will fully participate in the discussion, a reduction to the reported number should be considered.

The frequency of physical meetings should be increased. Biweekly meetings, although largely justified by the students' heavy course load, often resulted in a fragmented teaching experience. In light of the 2015 course, meetings should be held on a weekly basis, and focus on only one set of recorded lectures, rather than two. The length of the meeting can be slightly reduced to 1-1.5h.
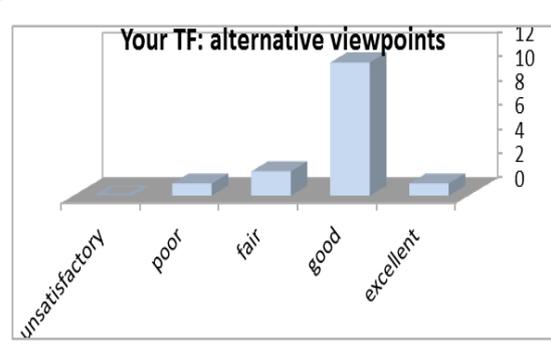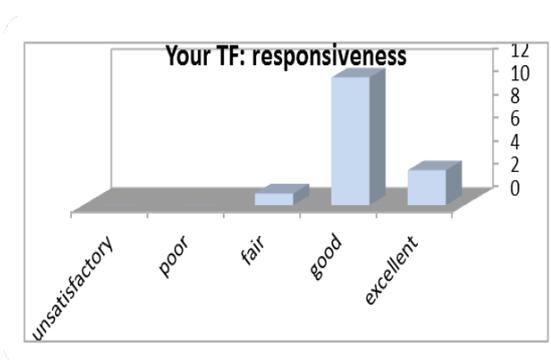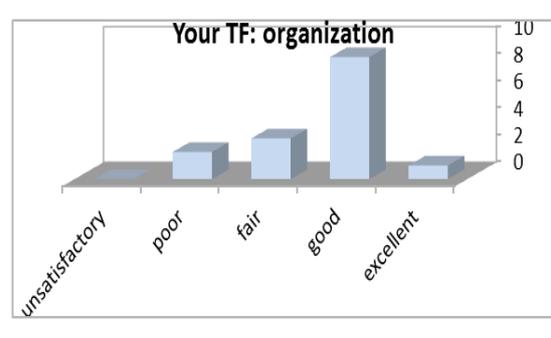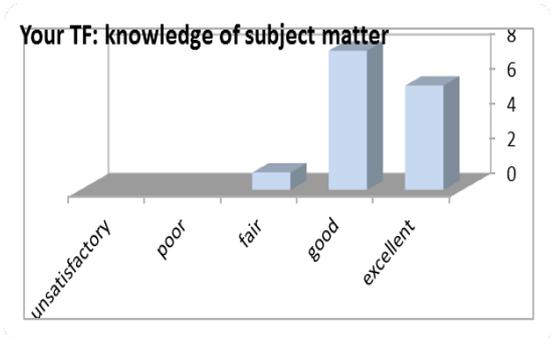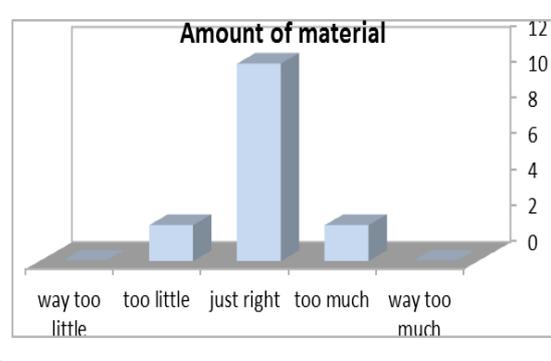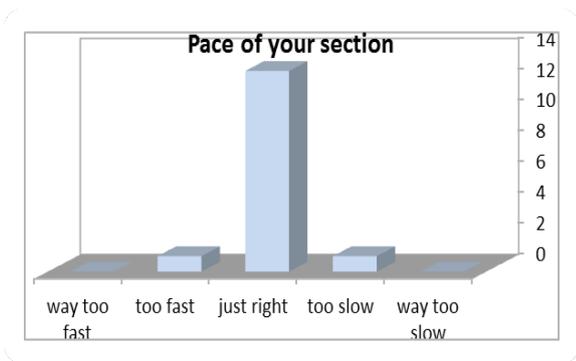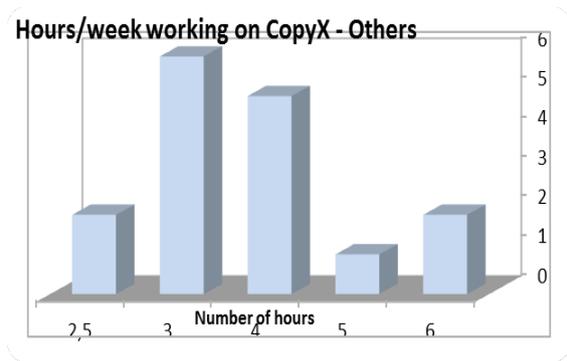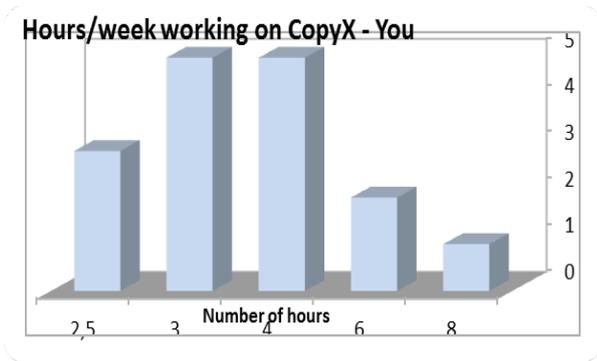
While readings are a key component of the course, students were not – and will not – be able to cover all of them, because they are following the IViR master program in Information Law at the same time. As already discussed during a virtual meeting with prof. Fisher, an indication of which readings – among those recommended – should be considered "essential" towards the achievement of the course objectives will be beneficial for students.
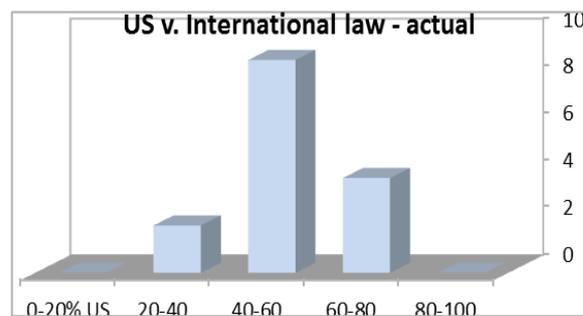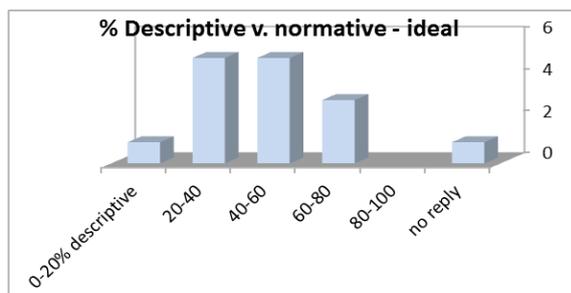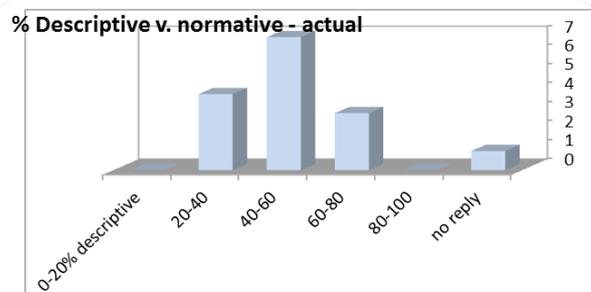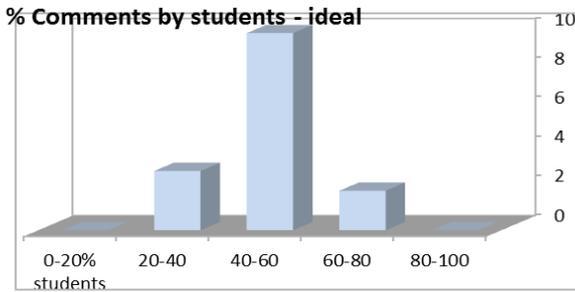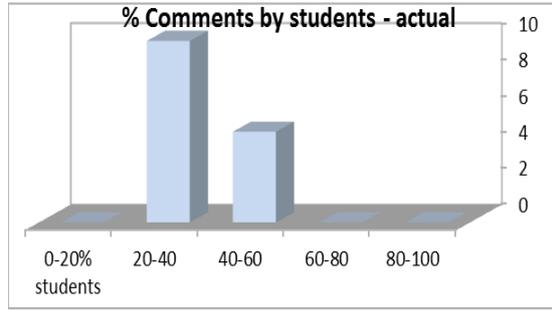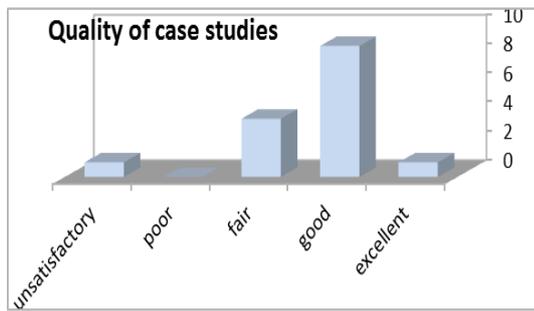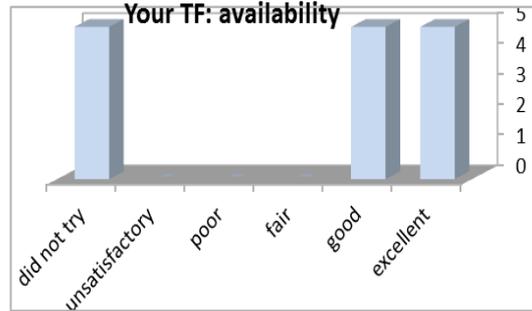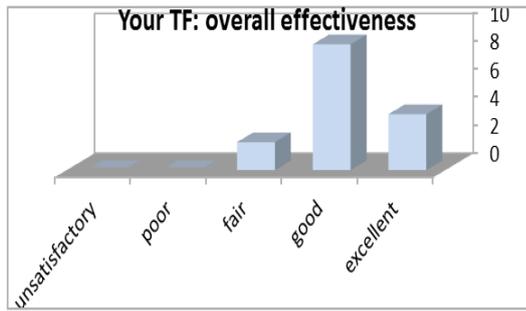
Students did not use online forums. While they agreed with the usefulness of a tool intended to facilitate synchronous and asynchronous discussion, they did not seem to end up using them (if not only passively). Students said that they prefer to use other tools (emails, social media) to collaborate among themselves. That being said, the availability of the tool, at least the "forest", is appreciated, and some of the most motivated students reported finding stimulating discussions in the "forest", which, however, they only followed passively.

Providing students with a certificate was highly appreciated. It seems to compensate for not getting credits, and some students even expressed preference for the "extracurricular" element instead of receiving credits.

Based on these first experiences we recommend to continue the project while taking into account the suggestions made in this memo.

Student evaluation (for a full overview please refer to the attached document).

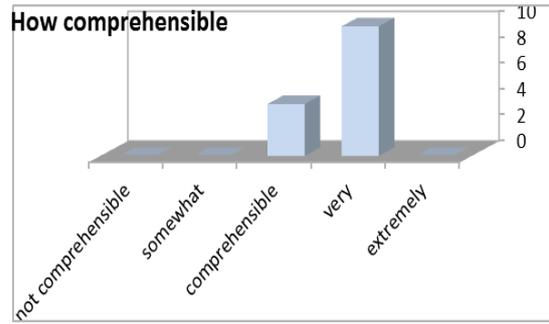
Hours/week working on CopyX - You

Hours/week working on CopyX - Others

Pace of your section

Amount of material

Your TF: knowledge of subject matter

Your TF: organization

Your TF: responsiveness

Your TF: alternative viewpoints

Your TF: overall effectiveness

(bar chart with x-axis labels: unsatisfactory, poor, fair, good, excellent; y-axis 0–10)

Your TF: availability

(bar chart with x-axis labels: did not try, unsatisfactory, poor, fair, good, excellent; y-axis 0–5)

Quality of case studies

(bar chart with x-axis labels: unsatisfactory, poor, fair, good, excellent; y-axis 0–10)

% Comments by students - actual

(bar chart with x-axis labels: 0-20% students, 20-40, 40-60, 60-80, 80-100; y-axis 0–10)

% Comments by students - ideal

(bar chart with x-axis labels: 0-20% students, 20-40, 40-60, 60-80, 80-100; y-axis 0–10)

% Descriptive v. normative - actual

(bar chart with x-axis labels: 0-20% descriptive, 20-40, 40-60, 60-80, 80-100, no reply; y-axis 0–7)

% Descriptive v. normative - ideal

(bar chart with x-axis labels: 0-20% descriptive, 20-40, 40-60, 60-80, 80-100, no reply; y-axis 0–6)

US v. International law - actual

(bar chart with x-axis labels: 0-20% US, 20-40, 40-60, 60-80, 80-100; y-axis 0–10)
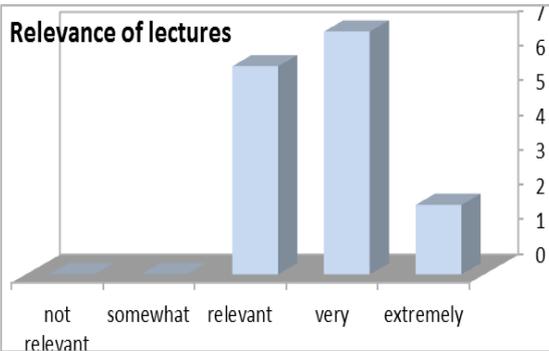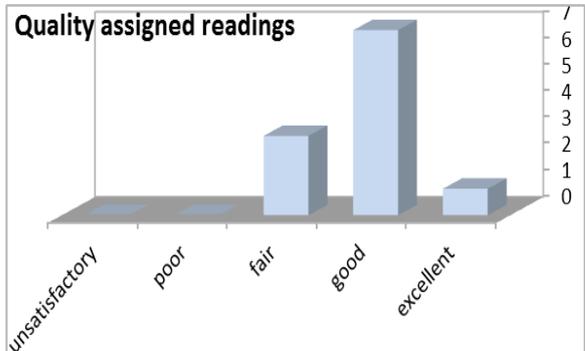
Quality recorded lectures
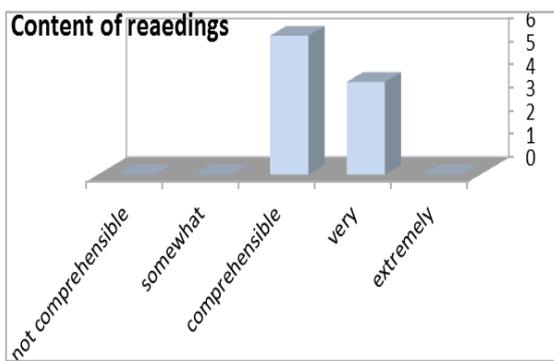

How comprehensible

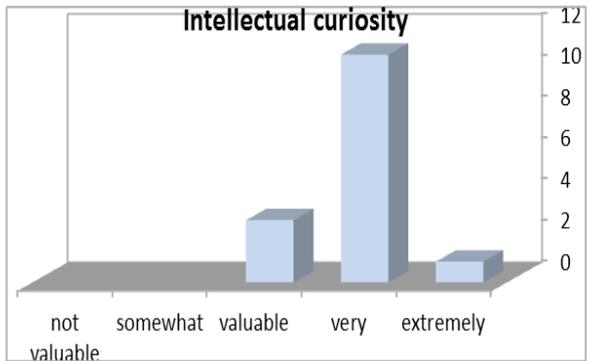Relevance of lectures
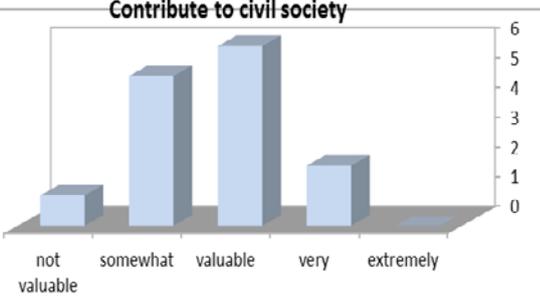

Quality assigned readings

Content of reaedings

Intellectual curiosity

Contribute to civil society

Professional performance

Sharing knowledge

not valuable | somewhat | valuable | very | extremely

Improving creativity

not valuable | somewhat | valuable | very | extremely