



## Jeff Geiger Counters

### Sale of Class Notes Objectionable?

**By: Jeff Geiger. *This was posted Thursday, October 28th, 2010***

So, you are in class and take notes from the professor's lecture. A classmate misses class and asks you to share your notes and you do. Problem? What if you posted your notes online? Or, better yet, what if you embraced our entrepreneurial spirit and posted your notes online and charged a fee for someone to review them?

Ryan Stevens, a former college student, set up a company, [NoteUtopia.com](http://NoteUtopia.com), by which students would share class notes for a small fee. Apparently, the service ran into [objections from the university](#) based upon a [California law](#) (supported by college faculty) that "no business, agency, or person, including, but not necessarily limited to, an enrolled student, shall prepare, cause to be prepared, give, sell, transfer, or otherwise distribute or publish, for any commercial purpose, any contemporaneous recording of an academic presentation in a classroom or equivalent site of instruction by an instructor of record."

Seriously! Copyright law protects the expression of the idea but not the idea itself. For example, you go see a movie. The movie is protected by a host of copyrights. But that does not stop you from writing a review about how terrible the film was (imagine the appalling melodrama with [Titanic's](#) "I'm the king of the world!" or "I'll never let go" followed by [Leonardo DiCaprio](#) letting go and drifting into the ocean to his death).

If I go to a lecture and want to share my thoughts on its content, I should be free to do so. I get it that professors spend a lot of time preparing for class, as do I when I teach. Still, the dissemination of notes is not only a fair use of the contents of the lecture but stands firmly in favor of intellectual freedom for both student and professor. If you want to publish a book, fine, I won't copy it unless I pay you a royalty. But if you are simply going to blabber at the podium and I want to share your as yet unrecorded thoughts, I should be free to do so.

Am I wrong?

<http://www.jeffgeigercounters.com/>

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