Digital Worlds: Privacy/Social Media

Written Assignment | Readings | Planning | Revision | Proofreading

Assignment Overview

Abstraction.

How do you understand an idea? A concept? A way of looking at the world? And why? Why is it necessary to do this?

On one level, the "how to is easy: first read up on the subject and then, to truly understand it, write about it; second, you have to want to understand the idea or concept.

Why is that desire to understand so important? Because without it, you will not devote the necessary mental energy needed to feed your imagination. And your imagination and intellect -- the left and right side of your brain -- are necessary to fire off the neurons that will get you to understand abstractions. That understanding lies at the core of the college endeavor. It is this ability to understand connections between seemingly disparate ideas or evidence that mean the difference between a job with a corner office ("I'm presenting at the London conference) -- and a job in a grease trap ("Where does this used lard go?)

Purpose of Essay

This next assignment is designed to get you in that corner office. It will show you how to understand, form an opinion on, and then write about an abstract concept.

Topic of Essay

The broad topic here is our lives in the digital soup. To narrow this down, examine two categories: privacy in the digital age and social media. While there's overlap between these two, the arguments (see Written Assignment below) makes the distinctions clear.

First, businesses, and as we've discovered, the government, can and often do track what we do electronically (that page on #&&!@!! you visited a week ago? Yep, it's documented). Many dismiss this with a glib "I'm not guilty of anything so I don't care" thinking, but is this really true? Should someone, say an employer, be able to check your Facebook page? Should someone else make money from your search habits? Do you really want everything you've every posted or said online or every site you visited available to anyone?

The second topic here involves the electronic device in your purse or pocket that enables you to connect with the world and stay in constant contact with friends. Is that a good thing? Does knowing what your BFF -- or aunt -- or friend from grammar school that you haven't seen in ten years -- is doing make you a better person? And what about cyberbullying?

Begin thinking early -- and asking classmates, other professors, family, friends, random people on the street, etc., questions about this topic. You'll find that many people don't really care about privacy or the ramifications of social media use. The key here is to understand the issue and the consequences of action -- or inaction.

There's a problem with that. And it involves the Cement Truck of Life
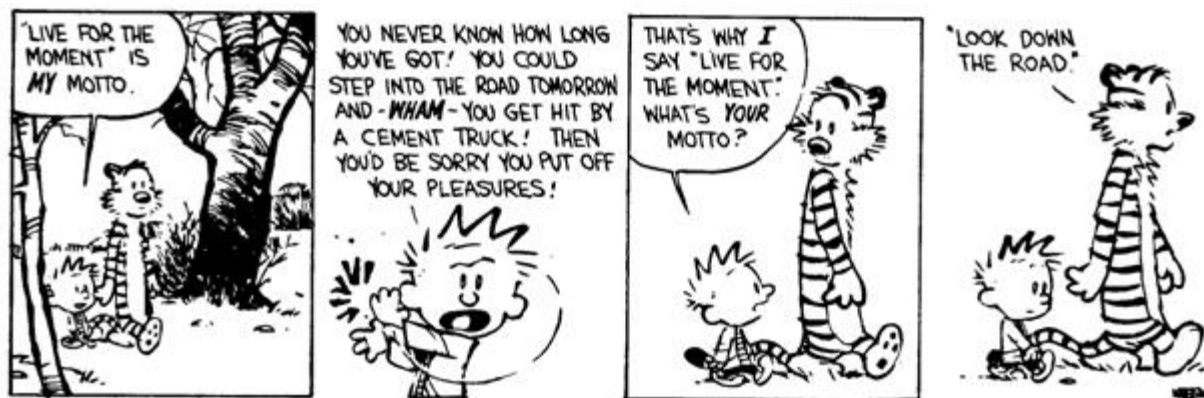
In life you have to make choices. You can live the unexamined life, like Calvin (the little boy in the cartoon) above. But why not do both? Why not live for the moment and watch the road (a cement truck is one of the best examples of kinetic energy -- particularly when it hits a pedestrian). Hobbes's (that oh so intelligent tiger) motto "Look down the road" suggests that foresight and knowledge are necessary to truly enjoy life -- and to avoid being buried in an envelope.

These choices often involve examining ideas that make your brain tingle. Why would someone want to know I'm looking up weight loss information? I'm innocent so who cares what's online? If a business is making money off my search habits, how come I don't get a cut? Is the Internet shortening our attention span? Is social media providing more effective ways of keeping in touch? Is social media taking up too much of our time? Do online "conversations" help or hurt the political/social/economic discourse?

These are specific examples of the kinds of choices Americans need to make. It will be your job to determine to what extent alternate viewpoints should play in the debates over these questions.

Discourse
NSA, cookies, drones, ISP, monetize

These are some of the terms you've heard about: now you'll get a chance to understand them.

Written Assignment

Three choices here:

1) write an essay arguing that digital privacy a) is an important issue and why; or b) isn't really at risk -- and why. Remember that you'll need to define clearly what you mean by digital privacy: no tracking? making money from your search habits/email content?

2) write an essay arguing that the government should or should not be able to monitor our digital communication.

3) write an essay arguing that social media helps or hurts society.

This is an academic essay, so the tone is formal, but remember that you need to keep the reader interested. Follow the suggestions for planning, revision, and proofreading in *I&C* (87 +). As stated in the Assignment sheet for essay #1, for this and all essays, assume your audience is college educated (or getting there).

Requirements
Final draft, minimum of 1,250 words. In addition to at least three of the assigned essays, you need to include a minimum of one other source (which means a minimum of four works cited entries and at least four in-text citations): most good essays use five-six sources. That said, the emphasis is on your reasoning: it's what you actually do with the sources that makes a good essay. Essay must include introduction (with thesis and division statement), body paragraphs, counter-arguments and rebuttal, and conclusion.

Note on sources

See "How Do I Find Sources (*I&C* 139 +) for help on, well, finding sources. If taken from the Internet, sources MUST be from the libraries databases, which can be accessed through the "Library Links on the course site through our library's home page. ANY other Internet source MUST (that's MUST) be approved by me *before* (that's BEFORE) you include them in your essay. The penalty? A substantially lowered grade (i.e. in the "D range).

Learning Objectives

After successfully completing this assignment you will have learned how to

1. Articulate the differences and similarities between several different abstract concepts
2. Move from abstraction (privacy) to the concrete (examples)
3. Develop a narrow topic for an essay from a broader subject.
4. Finding, selecting, and evaluating sources (information literacy)
5. Turn information into knowledge by using current events, statistics, and/or historical examples to prove an argument
6. Develop engaging introductions and conclusions
7. Develop a single idea (division) over the course of two or more paragraphs
8. Understand the advantages of revising your work in stages (paragraph by paragraph)
9. Use more sophisticated punctuation (dashes, colons, semi-colons)
10. Proofread your work so that it does not interfere with reader's comprehension of your argument
11. Manage your time and complete each draft by the assigned due date

Directions

Follow suggestions below and in *I&C*. The suggestions below are from another and related topic: you can still use the (many) examples, but will have to make allowances on the changed topic.

Grading Criteria

To receive a passing grade, you must successfully complete the following:

Organization : A thesis statement which clearly states the subject, your position and the divisions of your essay. A counter-argument and rebuttal.

Content : Overview of issue you're discussing; clear and balanced arguments, developed with examples, descriptions and narratives, and a full and persuasive development of the reasoning behind each of the examples.

Proofreading : Sentences that are clear and no more than 5 major errors (major errors include sentence fragments, run-on sentences, verb-tense error, subject-verb agreement error, unclear phrasing, documentation and spelling/wrong word error).

Things to Watch for

Lack of explanation. Your examples do not speak for themselves -- in fact, your argument lies not in the evidence, but in why and how the evidence supports your point. And since examples can't speak, it's up to you to connect them to the point of your paragraph and the larger point of your essay.

Readings

Readings are found below.

You should make up your own writer's notes. If you like, you can copy and paste the following as a template:

_____

MLA works cited entry

Background information and stats on _____ (blank being your topic)

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ENG 151-10

November 21, 2016

Rough Draft

<div align="center">Distracted and Addicted; Reality of the Negatives of Social Media</div>

Social networking allows you to find and connect with just about anyone, from a family member out of state to the girl that sat behind you in math class six years ago. Browsing these social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and etc. can make you feel connected to a larger community, but occasional connection in an electronic environment can also have its downside. Social media sites can make it more troublesome for us to identify between the substantial relationships we interest in real life vs. the various casual relationships formed through our social media accounts. This millennial generation spends an extraordinarily amount of time and energy focusing on less relevant relationships, that the most significant real life connections start to dwindle. Social media has a negative effect on society because it decreases productivity, distracts us from the significant moments and relationships we share, and depresses our privacy.

Social media is a main cause to decline in productivity. All though many productive working environments such as businesses or school campuses use social networking sites to search and communicate with others, these sites can also result to be a great distraction to employees and students who may show more interest in what their friends are posting/doing on the online world than in their current assignment or work tasks. The productivity decline seems to be an issue across a wide range of situations, and the millennial generation is at the limelight of the complaints. These complaints can only continue to go on for so long until action is taken to increase productivity. An alarming realization is needed for the 20 and 30-somethings who are mesmerized by their phone screens more often than their work-related tasks. Jacob Weisberg is Chairman of the Slate Group and the author of *The Bush Tragedy*, among other books, states that, "Americans spend an average of five and a half hours a day with digital media, more than half of that time on mobile devices, according to research firm eMarketer." (We Are, Weisberg)

Social media distracts us from the significance of our everyday moments and relationships we have. "The first touchscreen-operated iPhones went on sale in June 2007, followed by the first Android-powered phone the following year." (We Are, Weisberg) This is an example that only ten years ago, things were very different from what they are now. In a matter of ten years, the way we search, communicate, and stay connected has changed drastically. "Smartphones went from 10 percent to 40 percent market penetration faster than any other consumer technology in history. In the United States, adoption hit 50 percent only three years ago. Yet today, not carrying a smartphone indicates eccentricity, social marginalization, or old age." (We Are, Weisberg) This again is pointing the finger at the millennial generation. He also goes onto say that, "Three quarters of

eighteen-to-twenty-four-year-olds say that they search for their phones immediately upon waking up in the morning." These numbers should be a frightening wake up to society on how we are sadly absorbed by the digital world we've created on our digital devices. Edward Mendelson is a Professor in the Humanities at Columbia and a Contributing Editor at *PC Magazine*, in his article "In the Depths of the Digital Age", he says, "When the smartphone brings messages, alerts, and notifications that invite instant responses—and induces anxiety if those messages fail to arrive—everyone's sense of time changes, and attention that used to be focused more or less distantly on, say, tomorrow's mail is concentrated in the present moment." (In the, Mendelson)

In addition to, social media is not private. It weakens our privacy. Social networking sites encourage people to be more public about their personal lives, since the confidential details of our lives can be posted so effortlessly. Not to mention the things that are posted remain available permanently. While at one occasion a picture of friends doing shots at a party may seem innocent, that same image may appear not as great in the situation of an employer doing a background check. When posting to these websites, the information you are posting is not private. Pictures, videos, statuses, etc. are out there for the world to see. Even when you think you have your privacy settings set to private to just your friends and family, this information is visible to all to see, including the government. The world of the interest is known as, "A place where millions of Americans store important personal data, from credit-card numbers and bank account information to family photos and histories of their online purchases. But that data does not have the same legal protection as data that Americans store in their homes. What's more, powerful new technologies are creating unexpected challenges to privacy online. Advertisers, for example, can now track the Web sites you visit, and actions you take on those sites, to analyze how to more effectively sell products to you. And they may sell the information they collect to others." (Online Privacy, Marshall)

In the final analysis, Social Media has a negative effect on society because decreases productivity, distracts us, and depresses our privacy.

Work Cited

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Naeem Harris

Rough Draft

Social media is a positive force against society because it has a great source of entertainment, it will spark debates and it has a powerful mass media exposure.

Social media's entertainment value is a positive effect on society, since it keeps people connected to a variety of favorite subjects you enjoy. Just a click away, and your prided sport team is on your news feed with the latest updates. It keeps society happy by giving easy accessibility to the topics you want to see all in one place and if you would like to, you can share it to whoever you want. Media outlets like Facebook Twitter and Instagram use different methods to entertain the populace, for example Instagram is used primarily for picture rather than Facebook's Videos and Twitters news feed. People can leave opinions of your photos, be they good news or bad you are getting the answers you were looking for based on what you posted. Everyone knows the feeling of being liked in some way: with social Medias receiving a like or a positive mark from any of the media outlets feel satisfying.

 Another positive about social media is the debates that occur because they are as interesting to read as they are to be a part of. People will go back in forth about an issue and you will see every side of the story, be they neutral for or against. Almost every post or topic on a social media outlet will spark the attention of another for them to voice their opinion. A lot of people take advantage of this because it is a lot safer to debate an issue over the internet rather than face to face. Also your voice could have supporters based on the amount of likes it receives. The debates that occur can increase intellectual growth among the populous. These debates are easy to find all over social media, mainly on controversy topics like, child abuse vs. discipline or religious beliefs.

Social Media's news reported to the populous is not always accurate, however it is the people's decision to enforce this knowledge. It is your choice if you believe to accept anything written without first doing research or studying whatever you're looking for. For example the 2016 presidential debates, they were filled with fear mongering mass media outlets. Both candidates were filled with so much problematic background which left a lot of people stunned. The new voters of the millennia were introduced to a political debate being influenced over social media where people have the freedom to report fake news and opinions. This is not the media outlets fault, rather the people for becoming brainwashed by an unknown but trusted entity. This is a positive regardless of the events because the media showed its freedom of speech, regardless of the topic and surely everyone has learned the lesson in trusting whatever someone has to say even if it is on the internet

Finally social media has a very fast and very powerful mass media exposure since the internet and a cell phone goes hand in hand. Over fifty percent of the populous has a social media account or have used one in some time. In this frame, a positive would be in marketing this is very important for business owners to sell their products or influence the need to buy their product. People can simply like or subscribe to their favorite food place, for example subways and receive deals on a variety of foods or items there. Another benefit of this to society is in emergency situations since it will broadcast an

emergency signal to either mark yourself safe or inform you on what is going to happen. This doesn't always have to be from the media outlet itself this can be from any of what you subscribed to.