

CS 4873 Computing, Society, and Professionalism (Spring 2020)
Week 10 (Mar 9, 11, 2020) Section Guide

0. TA will give out printed copies of the section handout (class activities) to each student

I. Questions (5 min)

- Remember each class to bring a question, observation or relevant news item for discussion

II. Discussion 1: Internet Censorship (20 min).

- In the US, television commercials for cigarettes are banned. Should there be a ban on commercials for violent video games too? (Describe in the light of “private right versus public good” – the First Amendment)
- Should people publishing accusations against others/unsubstantiated content on their blogs or Facebook pages be held responsible if they disseminate false information (e.g., political misinformation around the elections)?
 - Sometimes people are unintentional in what they share – take the case of people sharing misinformation on Covid-19 (ref. <https://www.zdnet.com/article/coronavirus-misinformation-is-increasing-newsguard-finds/> -- TA to pull it up). There’s a ton of information floating on social media on magic cures and medically unverified, alternate treatment/prevention information. Should individuals sharing this information during a global crisis be penalized by platforms? What are the downsides and upsides of doing so?
- Are platform enforced measures successful in reducing hate speech and harassment?

III. Discussion 2: Facebook banning Alex Jones and Milo Yiannopoulos (20 min). TA to ask students to pull up the following link: <https://www.npr.org/2019/05/03/719897599/facebook-bans-alex-jones-louis-farrakhan-and-other-dangerous-individuals>

- Background
 - Alex and Milo have been widely banned from the internet
 - Reportedly can’t even use Uber
 - Alex is guilty for example of claiming Sandy Hook never happened, attacking bereaved parents
 - Milo ‘dog whistled’ his followers to attack actress Leslie Jones in the wake of controversy over the movie Ghost Busters
 - Legally: the government can’t block your free speech, but social media platforms can do what they want
- Did Facebook do the right thing in banning Alex and Milo?
- How do we balance one person’s right to free speech and another person’s right to be free from harassment?

- How do you feel about the fact that Alex and Milo are banned from most of the internet?
 - Is this different than people just banned from one platform?

IV. Work on Class Activity 1 on your own to arrive at an answer. Then discuss it with the classmate next to you. After that, present the views you together came up with to the rest of the section. TA to moderate the discussion. (15 min)