Ethics and the Internet: Social Media, Big Data, and Fake News
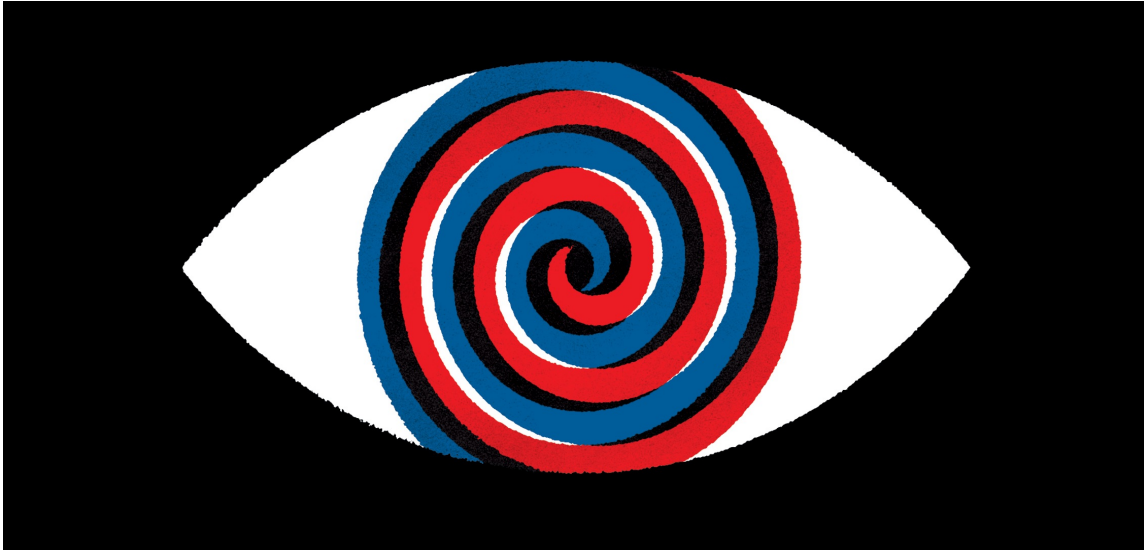
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Description
This course focuses on ethical issues that arise given the ubiquity of the Internet and the ocean of information available to us, from us, and about us. How, if at all, should "Big Data" and associated technologies be regulated? What should governments, parents, and employers be able to learn about you based on your digital footprint? Questions concerning privacy, autonomy, consent, and the extent to which values should constrain technology will be discussed. The second part of the course investigates questions concerning knowledge, understanding, objectivity, and trust in the Internet Age, including the prevalence of "fake news" and the consequences of "information bubbles."

Course Pre-requisites
None

Logistics
Instructor: Jeremy Dolan <jeremy.dolan@nyu.edu>
Class time: Tuesdays and Thursday, 4:55 – 6:10 p.m. (1/28/2021 – 5/10/2021)
Final exam allocation: 5/18/2021, 2:00 – 3:50 p.m.
Class location: online using Zoom, https://nyu.zoom.us/my/bigdatafakenews
Office hours: After class and by appointment
Office: online using Zoom, https://nyu.zoom.us/my/bigdatafakenews
NYU Classes (Sakai): https://newclasses.nyu.edu/portal/site/d3167541-bc80-473a-9187-c0659bb09912

Course Plan

#	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
1	Jan. 28	Introductions	—	Survey (in class)
2	Feb. 2	Privacy in the Age of Tech	Short story: Ken Liu, *Here-and-Now* https://www.kasmamagazine.com/here-and-now.html Game: 'Can You Defeat the Privacy Chicken?' https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/01/21/ opinion/privacy-chicken-game.html 'What are you revealing online? Much more than you think.' Interview by Thu-Huong Ha. https://ideas.ted.com/do-you-know-what-youre-revealing-online-much-more-than-you-think/	
3	Feb. 4	Big Data: collection, analysis, and inference	'One Nation, Tracked' Stuart A. Thompson & Charlie Warzel • Part 1, What we found: Twelve Million Phones, One Dataset, Zero Privacy. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/12/19/ opinion/location-tracking-cell-phone.html • Part 4, How it works: Smartphones Are Spies. Here's Whom They Report To. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/12/20/ opinion/location-tracking-smartphone-marketing.html 'How Companies Learn Your Secrets' Charles Duhigg, *The New York Times Magazine*. https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/19/magazine/ shopping-habits.html	
4	Feb. 9	Privacy: historical, legal, and political perspectives	*(optional)* 'An Enduring Value' Raymond Wacks, *Privacy: A Very Short Introduction,* Chapter 2 'Why Do We Care So Much About Privacy?' Louis Menand (June 18, 2018) *The New Yorker* https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/06/18/ why-do-we-care-so-much-about-privacy *(optional)* 'The Right to Privacy' Samuel D. Warren and Louis D. Brandeis (1890) *Harvard Law Review, 4* https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Right_to_Privacy 'Why Privacy Matters' Glenn Greenwald, TED Talk (video) https://www.ted.com/talks/glenn_greenwald_why_privacy_matters	Discussion board #1
5	Feb. 11	Privacy: philosophical analysis (reductionism)	'The Right to Privacy' Judith Jarvis Thomson (1975) *Philosophy & Public Affairs,* 4: 295-314 *(optional)* 'Privacy' Judith DeCew, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/privacy/	Quiz #1

6	Feb. 16	Privacy: philosophical analysis (privacy as a distinct right)	'What Is the Right to Privacy?' Andrei Marmor (2015) *Philosophy & Public Affairs, 43*, 3–26	Discussion board #2
—	Feb. 18	No class (legislative day)		
7	Feb. 23	Privacy and autonomy	'Who Wants to Know: Privacy and Autonomy' Michael Lynch, *The Internet of Us*, Chapter 5 'Privacy and Human Behavior in the Age of Information' Alessandro Acquisti, Laura Brandimarte, & George Loewenstein, *Science*	
8	Feb. 25	Surveillance capitalism	'The Secrets of Surveillance Capitalism' Shoshana Zuboff (2016) *Frankfurter Allgemeine* https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/debatten/the-digital-debate/shoshana-zuboff-secrets-of-surveillance-capitalism-14103616.html 'The goal is to automate us: welcome to the age of surveillance capitalism' John Naughton & Shoshana Zuboff (2019) *The Guardian* https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/jan/20/shoshana-zuboff-age-of-surveillance-capitalism-google-facebook	
9	Mar. 2	Consent: introduction	'Informed Consent' Nir Eyal, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/informed-consent/	Discussion board #3
10	Mar. 4	Consent: criticisms and limitations	'Some limits of informed consent' O'Neill (2003) *Journal of Medical Ethics 29*: 4–7 'Have We Asked Too Much of Consent?' Koenig (2014) *Hastings Center Report 44*: 33-34 'Forced to be free? Increasing patient autonomy by constraining it' Levy (2014) *J. of Medical Ethics 40*: 293–300	
11	Mar. 9	Consent *vs.* Big Data	Facebook Data Policy https://www.facebook.com/policy.php 'We Read 150 Privacy Policies. They Were an Incomprehensible Disaster.' Kevin Litman-Navarro, *New York Times* https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/06/12/opinion/facebook-google-privacy-policies.html '10 Other Facebook Experiments On Users, Rated On A Highly-Scientific WTF Scale' Kashmir Hill, *Forbes* https://www.forbes.com/sites/kashmirhill/2014/07/10/facebook-experiments-on-users/ 'Consent Is Not an Ethical Rubber Stamp' Crystal Lee & Jonathan Zong, *Slate* https://slate.com/technology/2019/08/consent-facial-recognition-data-privacy-technology.html 'Facebook strikes back against Apple privacy change' https://www.cnbc.com/2021/02/01/facebook-strikes-back-against-apple-ios-14-idfa-privacy-change.html	Discussion board #4

12	Mar. 11	Consent *vs.* the Internet of Things	'Privacy and the Internet of Things' UC Berkeley Center For Long-Term Cybersecurity https://cltc.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/CLTC_Privacy_of_the_IoT-1.pdf 'The Internet of Things You Don't Really Need' Ian Bogost, The Atlantic *https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/06/the-internet-of-things-you-dont-really-need/396485/*	
13	Mar. 16	A right to be forgotten? Eternal remembrance?	'Youthful Indiscretion in an Internet Age' Anupam Chander, in: *The Offensive Internet: Speech, Privacy, and Reputation* 'What the 'Right to be Forgotten' Means for Privacy in a Digital Age' Abraham Newman (2015) *Science 347*: 507-508 'Deletion as Second Death: The Moral Status of Digital Remains' Patrick Stokes (2015) *Ethics and Information Technology 17*: 237–248 'On Facebook, the Dead Will Eventually Outnumber the Living. What Does That Mean for Our Histories?' *Rachel E. Greenspan, Time* *(optional)* Right to be Forgotten *Radiolab*, August 23, 2019 https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/radiolab-right-be-forgotten	Discussion board #5
14	Mar. 18	Big Data bias and criminal justice	Introduction, Chapter 1 ('Bomb Parts: What is a Model?'), and Chapter 5 ('Civilian Casualties: Justice in the Age of Big Data') Cathy O'Neil (2016) *Weapons of Math Destruction* 'Big data may be reinforcing racial bias in the criminal justice system' Laurel Eckhouse, *The Washington Post* https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/big-data-may-be-reinforcing-racial-bias-in-the-criminal-justice-system/2017/02/10/d63de518-ee3a-11e6-9973-c5efb7ccfb0d_story.html	Short paper #1 *draft* due, 9 a.m.
15	Mar. 23	Bias in other contexts; proposed solutions	'Tackling bias in artificial intelligence (and in humans)' Jake Silberg and James Manyika, *McKinsey Global Institute* https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/artificial-intelligence/tackling-bias-in-artificial-intelligence-and-in-humans 'This is how AI bias really happens—and why it's so hard to fix' Karen Hao, *MIT Technology Review* https://www.technologyreview.com/s/612876/this-is-how-ai-bias-really-happensand-why-its-so-hard-to-fix/	Discussion board #6

16	Mar. 25	Democracy	*(optional)* 'Democracy' Tom Christiano, *Stanford Encycl. of Philosophy* https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/democracy/ *(optional)* 'What Is Democracy (and What Is Its Raison D'Etre)?' Alvin Goldman (2015) *Journal of the American Philosophical Association, 1*: 233-256	Short paper #1
17	Mar. 30	The Fourth Estate	§I ("The Press Clause: The Founders' Interpretation") and §II ("The Press Clause: The Traditional Debate") of: Encryption & the Press Clause D. Victoria Baranetsky (2017) *NYU Journal of Intellectual Property & Entertainment Law, 6*: 179-236. Affidavit of Max Frankel in support of publishing the Pentagon Papers (1971) https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/newswar/part1/frankel.html	Discussion board #7
18	Apr. 1	Democracy *vs.* propaganda	'Propaganda, Misinformation, and the Epistemic Value of Democracy' Étienne Brown, *Critical Review, 30*, 194-218	
19	Apr. 6	Democracy *vs.* social media	'Three Painful Truths about social media' Ronald J. Deibert (2019) *Journal of Democracy, 30*: 25–39 'The Knowledge Coup' Shoshana Zuboff (2021) *The New York Times* https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/29/opinion/sunday/facebook-surveillance-society-technology.html	Discussion board #8
20	Apr. 8	Meme warfare	'Meme warfare: how the power of mass replication has poisoned the US election' Douglas Haddow, *The Guardian* https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/04/political-memes-2016-election-hillary-clinton-donald-trump 'Can NATO Weaponize Memes?' Robbie Gramer, *Foreign Policy* https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/04/13/nato-cyber-information-warfare-battle-of-ideas-memes-internet-culture/	
21	Apr. 13	Fake news	'Fake News and Partisan Epistemology' Regina Rini, *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* https://kiej.georgetown.edu/fake-news-partisan-epistemology/ *(optional)* After Truth: Disinformation and the Cost of Fake News (HBO)	Discussion board #9

22	Apr. 15	Information bubbles and echo chambers	'Echo chambers and epistemic bubbles' C. Thi Nguyen, *Episteme* 'Three Weeks Inside a Pro-Trump QAnon Chat Room' Stuart A. Thompson, *New York Times* https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/01/26/ opinion/trump-qanon-washington-capitol-hill.html *(optional)* 'Political Polarization & Media Habits' Pew Research Center	
23	Apr. 20	Conspiracy theories	'The applied epistemology of conspiracy theories' Dentith & Keeley, *Routledge Handbook on Applied Epistemology pp. 284–294* 'The psychology of conspiracy theories' Karen Douglas, *et al.,, Current Directions in Psychological Science* 'Democrats and Republicans differ on conspiracy theory beliefs' *Tom Jensen, Public Policy Polling* https://www.publicpolicypolling.com/polls/democrats-and-republicans-differ-on-conspiracy-theory-beliefs/	Discussion board #10
24	Apr. 22	Misinfodemics, anti-vax, and coronavirus conspiracy	'How Misinfodemics Spread Disease' Nat Gyenes & Xiao Mina, *The Atlantic* https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2018 /08/how-misinfodemics-spread-disease/568921/ 'Wakefield's article linking MMR vaccine and autism was fraudulent' *Editors of the BMJ* https://www.bmj.com/content/342/bmj.c7452.full.print 'Touting Virus Cure, 'Simple Country Doctor' Becomes a Right-Wing Star' Kevin Roose & Matthew Rosenberg, *New York Times* https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/02/technology/doctor -zelenko-coronavirus-drugs.html 'Tech giants struggle to stem 'infodemic' of false coronavirus claims' *Julia Carrie Wong, The Guardian* https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/10/tech-giants-struggle-stem-infodemic-false-coronavirus-claims	
25	Apr. 27	Prognostications: a world without truth?	'Deepfakes and the epistemic backstop' Regina Rini (2020) *Philosophers' Imprint, 20,* Video: 'Deepfakes: Believe at your own risk' *The Weekly*, episode 21, *New York Times* https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/22/the-weekly/deepfake-joe-rogan.html	
26	Apr. 29	Remedies: information literacy?	*(reading likely to be changed)* 'Information literacy in the digital age: why critical digital literacy matters for democracy' Gianfranco Polizzi, ch. 1 of *Informed societies: why information literacy matters for citizenship, participation and democracy*, Stéphane Goldstein (ed.)	

27	May 4	Remedies: regulation and antitrust?	'What's regulation? A plea' Cass Sunstein, chapter 7 of *#Republic* 'Facebook has a political fake news problem. Can we fix it without eroding the First Amendment?' Jessica Levinson, NBC News https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/facebook-has-political-fake-news-problem-can-we-fix-it-ncna1071001 'The Government Protects Our Food and Cars. Why Not Our Data?' Natasha Singer, *New York Times* https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/02/sunday-review/data-protection-privacy.html	Quiz #2
28	May 6	Saying goodbye?	'Do you have a moral duty to leave facebook?' S. Matthew Liao, *The New York Times Opinion* https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/24/opinion/sunday/facebook-immoral.html 'Ten arguments for deleting your social media accounts right now' (intro, excerpts, and conclusion) Jaron Lanier	
—	May 18	Final exam date (no class/no exam, paper is due on this date)		Short paper #2

Course Requirements and Expectations

This class places significant weight on discussion—together as a whole class, in break out groups, and on the course discussion board. As such, regular and timely attendance is required and participation in our discussions is a significant part of the course grade. Material will be covered in class that is not covered in the readings. Absences due to religious, cultural, or medical necessity will be excused with appropriate documentation, and each student is allowed two additional unexcused absences; each subsequent unexcused absence will result in a one-third letter grade reduction for the course. Tardiness will count as one-third of an absence.

It is expected that students will keep their cameras on during our sessions so that we can better communicate with one another. If circumstances prohibit you from keeping your camera on while in class please discuss these with me.

Finally, it is expected that students should be not merely present, but prepared. In addition to completing any written assignments and participating in the discussion boards, you should have carefully read and thought through all of the readings. You should be prepared to summarize main aspects of each reading if called upon, and you should have some questions prepared to aid your understanding of the material. At the end of our classes, I will provide some guidance as to how to approach the next class's readings: useful context, points to focus on, and questions to ask as you read. If you are new to reading philosophical work, you may find some general guidelines helpful:

http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html

> *Please note:* This class will cover controversial issues, and aims to challenge our beliefs, behaviors, and values throughout the course. It is important to be respectful, charitable, and considerate in discussion. Some of the issues we discuss may have special personal significance to you or to someone else in the class; some of the views may be radically opposed to your own. It is therefore important to approach the readings with an open mind and a sense of curiosity, and to frame your comments in a way that is charitable (interpret others and their arguments as sympathetically as possible), sensitive (recognize that the issues may have special significance to others), and humble (be open to the possibility that you are wrong).

Discussion Board Assignments
Most weeks (10 in total) a short discussion board assignment will be due. One group of students will be assigned a short prompt to respond to on the discussion board, due on Sunday night (11:59 p.m. Eastern time). The rest of the class will be assigned a specific student to respond to, due before we meet for class on Tuesday (4:55 p.m. Eastern time). The goal of these assignments is two-fold: (1) to develop skills related to giving and receiving constructive criticism, and (2) to aid in our discussions and collaborative analysis of the course content. Specific details will be provided prior to each assignment, and techniques for giving effective constructive criticism will be discussed as we go. Up to 10% extra credit is available for substantive participation in the discussion board beyond the initial required post.

Grading Components
Attendance, preparation, and participation (see requirements and expectations, above): 30%
Discussion board assignments (see above): 25%
First short paper (800 – 1,050 words): 13.5%
Second short paper (900 – 1,200 words): 17.5%
Two comprehension quizzes: 7% each = 14%

Grading Scale
A: 94–100%   A-: 90–93%   B+: 87–89%   B: 83–86%   B-: 80–82%
C+: 77–79%   C: 73–76%   C-: 70–72%   D+: 67–69%   D: 60–66%
F: <60%

NYU Classes
NYU Classes will be used extensively throughout the semester for assignments, announcements, and communication. NYU Classes is accessible at https://home.nyu.edu/academics

Technology Policy
Although we are all using electronic devices to connect to this class because of the pandemic, it is expected that you will do your best at avoiding multitasking temptations: checking e-mail, browsing news and social media, and so on. For in-person courses, studies have repeatedly shown a large decrease in learning and class performance by students who use electronic devices—even if just for note taking! See, *e.g.*:
> https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/22/business/laptops-not-during-lecture-or-meeting.html
For an on-line class, I cannot help separate you from your devices, so please try to help yourself. Please also set your electronics to not make noise (or turn them off) during our short 75 minutes together.

Disability Accommodation
Students with disabilities should contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities regarding the resources available to them, and to determine what classroom accommodations should be made available:
> https://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-wellness/students-with-disabilities.html
Students requesting accommodation must obtain a letter from the Moses Center to provide to me as early in the semester as possible.

Discussion board topic 1: Big Data, Social Media, and Unintended Consequences
Consider the short story "Here-and-Now," by Ken Liu. Suppose this app really existed *and* that it was in wide use. Describe one unintended consequence (*not mentioned in class or in the story)* that might occur. *Be specific.* You might think of a use of the application that probably wasn't what the Centillion corporation wanted its users to do with it when they created it. Or you might think of one effect on society that widespread use of this app might cause — for this, you might consider the data that Centillion will have about its users, and, in turn, how people might behave, knowing that Centillion has that data. (expected length 3-8 sentences)

For those assigned to respond: You are a board member of the Centillion corporation. How will you respond to this new use of your application? Does it require a PR intervention, or changes to the app, or can it be capitalized on to make even more $$$$. (expected length 3+ sentences)

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Discussion board topic 2: The Value of Privacy Thought Experiment
Return to our thought experiment from class: a world in which no individual privacy exists. Everyone (everyone!) lives in glass houses. Everyone can read everyone's e-mail. Etc., etc., etc. Would you want to live in such a world? Whether yes or no, what is your main reason for your preference. Why is this reason really a benefit or harm? (expected length 3-6 sentences)

For those assigned to respond: Consider the reason your classmate gave. Do you think it is really an important consideration in a privacy-free world? If they wanted to live in the world, would the benefit they cite really work out well, or would some other factor undermine that benefit. If they didn't want to live in that world, is their reason a good justification, or in other words, is their worry about the negative consequence correct (or a reasonable preference), or would their consideration not really be an issue? (expected length 3-6 sentences)

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Discussion board topic 3: The death of "dumb" products?
Zuboff writes "The very idea of a functional, effective, affordable product as a sufficient basis for economic exchange is dying." Citing "smart" workout clothes from Under Armour, "smart" cars, "smart" vodka bottles, and "smart"rectal thermometers, the thought seems to be that all of the products we use (from smart phones to thermometers) are poised to become surveillance channels for behavioral data, because that data, under the mechanisms of surveillance capitalism, stands to generate more profit than does manufacturing and selling the old "dumb" items used to. Do you agree that "functional, effective, affordable products" without 'smart' features might go extinct due to these market forces? Which physical product, in particular, do you think is LEAST likely to be replaced by a "smart" alternative. (expected length 3-6 sentences)

For those assigned to respond: Consider the product your classmate gave. Is it really unlikely to be replaced by a "smart" alternative? Or can you think of valuable "behavioral surplus" that could be captured and analyzed if people used a "smart" version of the product? What sort of company or government agency might want to purchase that data, and for what purpose would they want it? (expected length 3-6 sentences)

Discussion board topic 4: Facebook Data Policy
Read the Facebook Data Policy (https://www.facebook.com/about/privacy)
1) Which two things in the Data Policy might the average Facebook user be *most* surprised to learn?
2) Name one or two things which are worded in a particularly *deceptive* way. (You might copy and paste the sentence in question before saying what they are deceptive about.)
3) Name one or two things that Facebook collects, or does with the data it collects, which is not explicitly mentioned in the Data Policy.

For those assigned to respond: Suppose you are a member of the Facebook public relations team. Your classmate here claims that active Facebook users would be surprised to learn about the ways in which their data is used by your corporation. Moreover they say some portions of the data policy are worded deceptively. How might you best argue that Facebook's policies and practices do not violate users' privacy, and that the the ways in which data is used do not violate whatever consent users may have given. (expected length 4-8 sentences, due before class Tuesday)

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Discussion board topic 5: Consent
In most jurisdictions in the U.S. (excluding, *e.g.*, California), for most type of data (excluding, *e.g.*, medical data), for most companies (excluding, *e.g.,* financial institutions), there are no regulations or legal requirements that those organizations obtain consent from their users before collecting, analyzing, selling, and doing almost anything else they please with extensive personal data about their users. We have seen how this sort of data, when collated and processed in sophisticated ways, can be used to identify particular individuals; analyze their personality, psychology and circumstance; and how all of this can be stored in perpetuity, to be combined with ever more data and subjected to increasing sophisticated AI analysis.
      So legally, currently, the situation is relatively clear. But morally speaking: ought *voluntary, capacitated, informed consent* be required before such companies engage in this sort of surveillance? Nir Eyal, in the Informed Consent reading, listed seven justifications for requiring consent (sectoins 2.1 to 2.7). Pick one and give a brief argument for informed consent in the context of Big Data. (expected length 5-10 sentences)

For those assigned to respond: You have room this time to engage in a more open discussion. Respond *substantively* to your interlocutor. Do they make a clear case for robust consent based on the justification they chose? Do they overlook anything? Would some other rationale better justify a consent requirement?

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Remaining topics will be posted to Forums section of NYU Classes.

Ethics and the Internet: Social Media, Big Data, and Fake News
Short Paper 1 (900 – 1,200 words)
Draft due: Thursday, March 18, **9 am**
Final paper due: Thursday, March 25, **4:55 pm**

In Central Valley High, there is only one student who happens to not have a Facebook account: Dhara Smith. Dhara has always been a private person; a hard-working, unassuming high-schooler. Aside from debate club meetings, she always kept to herself. She was, generally, perceived as a bit of a nerd; none of the other kids paid her much mind, neither to invite her to parties nor to pick on her. Dhara was, for the most part, invisible, and Dhara would tell you that was exactly how she liked it.

Although one of the school's better debaters, Dhara was soft-spoken, and never one to inject herself to the center of a conversation or class discussion. The baggy clothes she wore made her all the more anonymous and unremarkable. And they served, consciously or unconsciously, to hide her incredibly toned physique, molded in years of intense martial arts training. Despite her competing in many regional championships and having taken a week off of school last year to travel to nationals (where she placed third), no one in school had any idea that Dhara did anything outside of school other than disappear.

Senior year came, and it was time for regionals again. This year, Dhara's classmate Marcela was at the competition to watch her cousin compete. Marcela was on the sidelines congratulating her cousin when she was shocked to see Dhara walking up to the ring to compete. When the fight started, Marcela was even more shocked to see Dhara's obvious skill and strength. Instinctively, she whipped out her phone, thinking, "people in school aren't going to believe this!" As luck would have it, Marcela happened to capture an incredibly dramatic photo of Dhara performing a flying scissor takedown, and (thanks to the iPhone 12X's ultra-portrait mode), the fierce intensity in Dhara's face, not to mentioned her bulging biceps, were clearly evident.

It was Friday and there was no way Marcela was going to wait all the way until Monday to share this incredible discovery with her friends. Without much thought, she shared the photo on Facebook with the caption "Dhara is actually a martial arts badass?!"

The photo was eye catching. Even if you hadn't spent the last three years of high school thinking of Dhara as very much *not* "a martial arts badass," it would have been a captivating shot of a young athlete in near-perfect scissor kick form. Naturally, some of Marcela's friends re-shared the photo on Facebook when they saw it. By Saturday, Alice had discovered Dhara's third-place finish at nationals the year before, and memes about her had started. By Sunday, Leon had created a clever mash-up of a Bruce Lee clip with Dhara's face edited in, and the memes had migrated to TikTok. When Monday came, half of the students at Central Valley High had seen the photo, if not the memes; the student-run newspaper was preparing a story about the school's newfound champion athlete; and as she walked into the building, Dhara was surprised to find a crowd of students draw towards her with questions.

At first glance, thinking of Marmor's theory of the right to privacy and the interest we have in self-presentation, it seems as if Dhara's right to privacy has been violated. (Of course, there are other theories of privacy, which you are also free to consider, and other interests, for all parties involved.)

If you agree that Dhara's right to privacy has been violated, articulate how she has been harmed. Who is responsible for this violation of her rights? (Perhaps it is one party, or many, or some social collective.) What, specifically, about the actions of those responsible violated Dhara's rights. (You might consider, if Marcela had only shown the photo to a few close friends *in person*, rather than upload it to Facebook, whether Dhara's right to privacy would still have been violated. Or, if the student body discovered Dhara's martial-arts prowess because of coverage of the tournament in the local newspaper, would Dhara's right to privacy still have been violated?) Finally, and importantly: How ought the situation be ameliorated? (What rights does Dhara have to impose ameliorative actions on others? If the tournament results are public, does Dhara have a right to prohibit the student paper from reporting them? If Marcela allows her photo to be used, does Dhara have a right to prohibit the student paper from printing it? Ought Facebook allow Dhara to expunge the recent posts about her? — Remember that Dhara does not have a Facebook account herself.)

If you disagree that Dhara's right to privacy has been violated, give an argument why it has not. For example, you might construct an argument around the tournament's being public and thus falling outside Dhara's *reasonable* control of her self-presentation once she chose to participate in it. Be sure to consider all of the ensuing actions (not just Marcela's) in your case that her privacy wasn't violated at any point.

Ethics and the Internet: Social Media, Big Data, and Fake News
Short Paper 2
Final paper due: Tuesday, May 18, **4:55 pm**

Expectations: 900-1,200 words. Unlike the first short paper, this is not an argumentative essay, so don't worry about defending every claim you make. Here we're more interested in reflecting and coming to awareness about our feelings on the matter. There are no right or wrong answers. Grading will be based on the appearance of honest effort in reflection and the clarity with which you express your thoughts. Most questions can be answered briefly, so you can choose which you answer matter-of-factly in a short sentence, and which you would like to elaborate more on. I hope this is a helpful end-of-year exercise! Please get in touch if you have any questions.

We have looked at many topics under the banners of "Social Media, Big Data, and Fake News." For your final assignment, I ask you to reflect on those three big concepts.

Social media: Given our discussion of the addictive properties of social media, and Lanier's characterization of these sites as "personalized streams of behavior modification stimuli" that tell us what we want to watch and read, consider your own relationship with social media. Very briefly describe your own use of Facebook/Instagram. What prompts you to open the site/app? How do you usually feel after using the site/app? How much time per day do you spend on social media, and how much time would you ideally like to spend. If those are not the same, what do you think explains the difference? Thinking back to how you may have been using social media in January, is your use different now? In what ways and for what reasons? Do you perceive other people's use of social media in different ways now? As we imagine our lives after emerging from our Covid quarantines, do you see your social media use changing? If so, how?

Big data: Firstly, how are you feeling now about your online privacy in the face of Big Data? If scared or worried, what concrete future possibility worries you? If relatively unconcerned, what development might cause you to become concerned? If some other feeling, briefly elaborate! Secondly, Lanier describes the personalized content that social media presents us with as a "Skinner box." (A Skinner box is a ready-made little laboratory designed to present an animal with stimuli, rewards, and punishments—allowing for rapid shaping of that animal's behaviors.) When you go to Youtube.com (or wherever), does it feel more like you are receiving useful video recommendations, or more like you are inescapably being sucked down into a two hour long ~~cute cat video hole~~ (or whatever your own personal Internet candy is). Is there necessarily a tradeoff between our autonomy and the personalization of content that social media sites offer up?

Fake news: What do you think would be more successful in stemming online misinformation: an information literacy campaign, or better filtering of fake news by social media sites? (Or something else?) What do you think prevents this remedy from being actualized? And finally, to end with some old fashioned, armchair speculation: will the U.S. become more or less democratic in the next decade? Why, do you guess? What development would be most likely to alter this trend?

Statement of Academic Integrity

The NYU School of Global Public Health values both open inquiry and academic integrity. Students in the program are expected to follow standards of excellence set forth by New York University. Such standards include respect, honesty and responsibility. The SGPH does not tolerate violations to academic integrity including:

- Plagiarism
- Cheating on an exam
- Submitting your own work toward requirements in more than one course without prior approval from the instructor
- Collaborating with other students for work expected to be completed individually
- Giving your work to another student to submit as his/her own
- Purchasing or using papers or work online or from a commercial firm and presenting it as your own work

Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the SGPH and University's policy on academic integrity as they will be expected to adhere to such policies at all times – as a student and an alumni of New York University.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, whether intended or not, is not tolerated in the SGPH. Plagiarism involves presenting ideas and/or words without acknowledging the source and includes any of the following acts:

- Using a phrase, sentence, or passage from another writer's work without using quotation marks
- Paraphrasing a passage from another writer's work without attribution
- Presenting facts, ideas, or written text gathered or downloaded from the Internet as your own
- Submitting another student's work with your name on it
- Submitting your own work toward requirements in more than one course without prior approval from the instructor
- Purchasing a paper or "research" from a term paper mill.

Students in the SGPH and SGPH courses are responsible for understanding what constitutes plagiarism. Students are encouraged to discuss specific questions with faculty instructors and to utilize the many resources available at New York University.

Disciplinary Sanctions

When a professor suspects cheating, plagiarism, and/or other forms of academic dishonesty, appropriate disciplinary action is as follows:

- The Professor will meet with the student to discuss, and present evidence for the particular violation, giving the student opportunity to refute or deny the charge(s).
- If the Professor confirms that violation(s), he/she, in consultation with the Chairperson or Program Director may take any of the following actions:
  - Allow the student to redo the assignment
  - Lower the grade for the work in question
  - Assign a grade of F for the work in question
  - Assign a grade of F for the course
  - Recommend dismissal

Once an action(s) is taken, the Professor will inform the Chairperson or Program Director and inform the student in writing, instructing the student to schedule an appointment with the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, as a final step. The student has the right to appeal the action taken in accordance with the GPH Student Complaint Procedure.

This syllabus is subject to revision, which will be announced both in class and by e-mail.
Last updated: March 11, 2021

Ethics and the Internet: Social Media, Big Data, and Fake News
Day 1 Survey
Please detach, fill out, and turn in. There's no need to write your name!

(1) What "social media" apps/websites do you use/log into at least once a month?

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Pinterest
- ☐ Reddit
- ☐ Snapchat
- ☐ TikTok
- ☐ Tumblr
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ Other: _____

(2) Where do you get most of your "news" from? (check TWO boxes at most)
- ☐ I happen upon news via the social media websites I checked above
- ☐ I seek news in a print edition of a newspaper
- ☐ I seek news directly from newspapers online
- ☐ Watch TV news (a cable news channel, or network nightly news)
- ☐ Listen to Radio news
- ☐ I don't really follow the "news"
- ☐ Other: _____

(3) How much confidence do you have in the reliability of the news sources you use?

1	2	3	4	5
Almost Never True	Usually Not True	Occasionally True	Usually True	Almost Always True

(4) How much confidence do you have in your own ability to access the reliability of news sources?

1	2	3	4	5
Not very confident	Slightly confident	Somewhat confident	Confident	Very confident

(5) When did you last clear the "cookies" on any of your web browsers?

1	2	3	4	5
I never have "cleared cookies"	With the last year	Within the last 6 months	Within the last month	I regularly clear web cookies

(6) How concerned are you, personally, about your own online privacy?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all concerned	Slightly concerned	Somewhat concerned	Concerned	Very concerned

(7) What voice-activated digital personal assistants (on your phone, smart TV, car...) do you use, if any?
- ☐ Apple Siri
- ☐ Amazon Alexa
- ☐ Google Assistant
- ☐ Other: _____

If there is else you would like to add, anything you would like to express a special interest in covering during the course, or any other (related!) thoughts, please write them on the back of this paper.