



7 Social Media and Communication Theory

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Name _____

Activity 1: Blogging

Purpose

To critique and analyze a blog

Instructions

Pick a blog that you read regularly, whether it is for news, opinions, cultural content, or a special interest that you have. Using the archives, go back over the blog history and record what devices the author uses to express his/her content and how it changes over time. Ask yourself why you chose this blog to get your information.

Name _____

Activity 2: Online Personality

Purpose

To examine your online presence and your public identity management skills

Instructions

Imagine yourself as a potential employer. Go to your Facebook page (if you have one) and peruse your photos, personal information, and your friends. What items would you not want your potential employer to see? Why? Does this make you want to delete photos and alter personal information? Facebook owns your content and can use it any way the company chooses. Does this change your feelings about what you post?

Name _____

Activity 3: Media in the World

Purpose

To compare a prediction about the state of media to the current reality

Instructions

Watch the flash movie *EPIC 2014*. What convergent corporations does this predict? The film was made in 2004—how close is it to the current reality of the media world?

Name _____

Activity 4: Channelling Marshall McLuhan

Purpose

To apply Marshall McLuhan's four laws of media

Instructions

Go to SkyMall.com, a website that sells quirky technological devices. Choose three devices and apply McLuhan's laws to them. What does your device enhance? What does it retrieve? What does it obsolesce? What does it reverse into?

Name _____

Activity 5: Applying Diffusion of Innovations Theory

Purpose

To apply the diffusion of innovations theory to a real world situation

Instructions

When the iPhone 4 was coming out, there was tremendous hype. But there were also rumours that the phone had issues with the antenna and reception. Apple finally had to release a new set of phones that worked better. What kind of technologist are you? An early adopter? A laggard? Or somewhere in between? How would you have approached the iPhone 4 situation? Would you have had any regrets afterwards?

Name _____

Activity 6: The Tweeting World

Purpose

To think critically about Twitter as a form of social media

Instructions

Athletes and celebrities have taken to Twitter as a way to communicate directly with their fans. It also allows them to broadcast their perspectives on current events or issues. There is, however, a long list of celebrities and sports stars who have quit or severely limited their presence on Twitter, citing mental health issues, racist and/or sexist trolling, and fan drama as reasons. What do you think about the medium of Twitter and how it is used?

Name _____

Activity 7: Responding to Current Issues

Purpose

To analyze and reflect on current issues in communications and media

Instructions

Re-read the box “The Internet Dilemma: Do People Have a Right to be Forgotten?” (pages 308–309) and respond to it in 250 to 300 words of personal reflection. What does this article suggest to you about the value of permanence and our ability to forget aspects of our lives? Share your response with your classmates or your study group.

Activity 8: Comparative Voices

Purpose

1. To evaluate communication tactics
2. To enhance skills with voice and form

Instructions

Choose an area of personal interest for you, such as rock climbing, baking, mountain biking, publishing, or journalism. Find two blogs that discuss this area of interest. One blog should be a personal blog, written by an individual. The other blog should be a corporate blog, written by people inside an organization to reflect corporate interests. Compare and contrast the bloggers' strategies. Examine the voice, the subject matter, the frequency of posting, the use of image and photography, the community-building or commenting strategy (if comments are permitted), and any other features you find distinctive or interesting. What do you observe, and what does it suggest to you about communication practices?

If you have a personal blog, use it to try writing model (guest) posts for each of the blogs you've examined. If your class uses a class forum, you may be able to share your model posts there. If not, share your model copy with your instructor or your study group, and be prepared to explain why you have made your presentation choices for each example.

Activity 9: Booktubing and McLuhan

Purpose

1. To explore a specific form of social media
2. To connect McLuhan's tetrad theory to a concrete practice

Instructions

Have you heard about booktubers? If not, read the article “Meet the YouTube Stars Turning Viewers into Readers” (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/31/books/booktubers-youtube.html>). Now go on YouTube and explore! Watch a few episodes from a range of booktubers, based on your favourite authors, your favourite genres, or just random chance. Having sampled booktubers, use your social media to share the episodes you particularly enjoyed. What does booktubing suggest to you about McLuhan's tetrad?

Activity 10: Talking About Cyberstalking

Purpose

1. To recognize some dangers of social media
2. To practise interpersonal communication skills learned in earlier chapters

Instructions

Re-read the sidebar “Cyberstalking” on page 291 and visit the website it mentions. Then do further exploring; you might want to jump off from some of the TED Talks listed in the “Additional Resources” section for this chapter. Use your findings to prepare a short post for your class blog, a brief piece of service journalism for your campus paper or hometown paper, or an age-appropriate presentation for younger students you know through a service organization or a faith-based group. Pay attention to the feedback you receive: you may learn a great deal more about cyberstalking through interpersonal communication once you open up a conversation.

Activity 11: Let's Slow It Down

Purpose

1. To think critically about some dangers of social media
2. To apply your knowledge about social media to solving a specific problem

Instructions

In late fall 2018, a panel of comedians on a television game show proposed that the best way to manage the harms of social media is to slow down Internet speeds. Slower speeds would slow down our instrumental consumption of other people's words and images, possibly making us more thoughtful or encouraging us to wait an extra moment before responding to content in anger. Although the proposal was made in jest, it had traction with the audience watching and with people beyond the show. What do you think? Discuss the question with several people outside your class and then bring what you hear to class for further discussion (if your professor is OK with it). What other ideas do people have for making social media safer?

Activity 12: AI Is Here

Purpose

1. To investigate an emerging area of communication studies
2. To think critically about representations of communication technologies in popular media

Instructions

Artificial intelligence represents a big and complex element of humanity's future. On page 205, the textbook authors state, "You should start paying attention to this subject in the news, on the Internet, and in other places you get information." So do so! For one week, consciously pay attention to the topic of artificial intelligence outside your classroom and the textbook. Bookmark articles, news stories, and YouTube videos on the subject; listen closely when others raise the topic; look for discussions in "old media" (books, newspapers, and magazines). What picture of AI would you form from the popular discourse? How does your learning from this chapter enhance, or diverge from, that perspective?