

To: Professor Mann

From: Olivia Diaz, Cyber law 406, and [REDACTED]

Subject: First Amendment Questions and the Digital World

Date: 05/28/2023

1. Consider your own circumstances as a citizen (presume you are a citizen even if you are not) protected by First Amendment freedoms. What primary sources and means do you use to access, gather, and share/communicate information, ideas and opinions? Be honest and specific, and be sure to include any online sources. Do you believe you are well-informed about current events and issues? Why or why not? Identify some sources you trust, and don't trust. (Please note that *I don't care* where you lie in the political spectrum, but I do care about well-informed, clear writing.)

**I use a variety of primary sources such as Google, Twitter, Facebook, and Reddit. I do not believe I am well-informed about current events and issues. Personally, I find it difficult to believe what is real in the news. Which is why I heavily rely on social media outlets for current news. I will also typically discuss current events with peers, family, and friends.**

2. What roles *can and should* **governments and government institutions** in the U.S. play in the removal or restriction of content involving misleading, hateful speech/information, especially in the digital world? Give specific examples and cite sources in the body of the memo.

**I believe the government could restrict things that people post on social media.**

**How people post certain current events that can be misleading or hateful. I think the United States should have laws and restrictions to regulate what people can and can't post.**

3. What roles *can and should* **the private sector, especially social media platforms such as Facebook**, play in the removal or restriction of content involving misleading, hateful information in their platform? Give specific examples and cite sources.

**I believe social media platforms should ban anyone who posts misleading or hateful information. There are way too many people who somehow getaway with posting these things and I believe the guidelines should be stricter. I think when someone commits their first offense that is misleading or hateful, every post or comment made thereafter should be reviewed considerably. However, If they cannot comply their account gets deleted or banned and cannot make an account using the same email.**

4. There are many examples of university students who have shouted down university-invited guest speakers with whom they disagree. Find a published example and summarize what happened (cite your source). Do you believe this was an appropriate response? Why or why not? Consider pros, cons, and potential First Amendment concerns.

**The first example that comes to mind is recently when Governor Glenn Youngkin was scheduled to make the commencement speech for George Mason University's spring class of 2023. As soon as it was announced, there were already petitions against him giving the speech. According to Levine (2023), "Youngkin's selection as commencement**

**speaker sparked opposition from some students who cited his support for “anti-trans legislation,” efforts to abolish what they called “racial equity curricula” and book bans, according to a petition protesting his invitation to speak which attracted more than 8,000 signatures.”**

**I believe this was an appropriate response, everyone is entitled to their own opinion. I believe especially when it deals with transgender rights. Especially because it was handled peacefully with a petition, and a small protest.**

5. Overall, do you believe the internet and technological developments described in the background section (and perhaps within your own answers to these questions) strengthen or weaken public discourse and democratic processes? Provide some justification.

**I believe it would strengthen public discourse and democratic processes. I believe this because if these guidelines were stricter, it would prevent misleading information being spread. It would also prevent people being hateful in regards to these events, knowing there are consequences if they are hateful.**

## References:

Council on Foreign Relations. (n.d.). *How countries regulate online speech*. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/social-media-and-online-speech-how-should-countries-regulate-tech-giants>

*Sign the petition*. Change.org. (n.d.). <https://www.change.org/p/oppose-youngkin-as-gmu-commencement-speaker>

Levine, J. (2023, May 20). *Virginia gov. Glenn Youngkin heckled at graduation speech*. New York Post. <https://nypost.com/2023/05/20/virginia-gov-glenn-youngkin-heckled-at-graduation-speech/>