

## CYSE 406 Writing Assignment

**To:** Professor Klena

**From:** Devin Johnson, Cyber Law 406, UIN: 01271155

**Subject:** Freedom of Expression and Privacy in the Digital World

**Date:** 03/23/25

**1. Freedom of Expression.** I regularly use a variety of online platforms to learn and communicate ideas, including Reddit, Instagram, Messenger, and YouTube. Each platform serves a different purpose for me. Reddit is where I participate in discussions on news, technology, lifestyle and stocks. Instagram is more personal and visual—I share life moments or show support for causes I care about. I use YouTube to learn from others and occasionally comment on videos. Messenger is used for communication purposes with friends and family that are far in distance. I trust Reddit the most because of its semi-anonymous nature and its content moderation. They combine site-wide administrators with subreddit-specific community moderators. Reddit also has upvotes and downvotes, which helps filter out low-effort content while promoting meaningful discussion. I always find myself searching for something on Google and ending it with “Reddit”. According to Reddit’s Terms of Service and Content Policy, users are prohibited from posting harassment, threats, hate speech, or personal information (Reddit, 2024). I frequently see moderators enforcing these rules when necessary. Based on my experience, Reddit’s moderation is mostly effective, especially in large communities with active mods. In some smaller communities, enforcement is inconsistent, and content that violates policy may go unnoticed. Still, the site appears to enforce its content guidelines very well. On Reddit, I tend to always find real life experiences and thoughts, which is why I continue to use and trust the platform.

**2. Privacy.** I share personal information with several institutions and organizations online. I share with financial institutions, FAFSA, and retailers. The institution that has more of my personal information than any other is the U.S. Navy, where I served. During my time in the Navy, I was required to provide extensive personal data. It wasn't just basic identifiers like name, date of birth, and Social Security number. I had to give biometric data, such as fingerprints and facial/body scans. They also have all my health records prior, during and now after my service. For my TS/SCI I had to have multiple intensive background checks and polygraphs. With that, the military's databases contain a very detailed profile of who I am. I trust and know that the DOD uses strong cybersecurity measures and follows federal laws like the Privacy Act of 1974 to protect my data. I'm also aware that military systems are always targets in cyberattacks. Knowing this, it can be something to worry about, but I trust in the system.

**3. Online Presence.** What concerns me most about my online presence is the silent and widespread of my personal information from multiple sources. Companies and even government agencies collect data. When these are combined, they can create a detailed profile of me. The information has where I live, what I buy, what I search, and what I believe. You notice how you search something on Google and then see that same product as an ad while scrolling on Instagram. This profiling is invisible, and it's unknown who controls it or how it's being used. According to an article titled "How Data Brokers Track You" (2021), brokers collect information from public records. The use of social media, online purchases, and mobile apps has the data sold to advertisers, insurers, and even law enforcement. Another report by *The Washington Post* (2023) explains how artificial intelligence uses this data to make automated decisions. These decisions can affect credit, employment, and even treatment options. These actions are often generated without user consent. The issue in the modern world of freedom of expression and privacy is more complicated than

ever. The ability to share our ideas depends on the guarantee that real identities and data are properly protected. With the extensive use of data collection and the policies covering it, that confidence is tough.

## REFERENCES

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