

To: Professor Cheney

From: Lavontay Johnson, Cyber Law 406, 01277672

Subject: First Amendment Questions and the Digital World

Date: 26 February 2025

1. As an American citizen, who is 24 years old, and I hate to say this, but I access, gather, and share information and most of my opinions through social media platforms like Twitter (X), Tiktok, etc. With that being said, I'm not really one to share my opinions through social media at all really as I don't post much and I just use it to stay connected with friends and family, but I do happen to use it as a news source (mostly Twitter). In my opinion, I will say I'm somewhat knowledgeable on current events and issues. If I had to rate it on a scale of 1-10, I would probably say a cool 6.5-7. I feel like I'm kind of in between because there are times where my Dad brings something up in conversation and it's either I have little to no clue what he is talking about or I do know. I'm just going to outright say it, I believe I'm like this because of the age I grew up in. I feel like growing up in the 'social media' age, people seem to care less when it comes to watching the news to stay up to date on things. Not to say I'm completely like this, but I do find myself just scrolling through Twitter and casually finding news there or searching it up through google. In terms of sources I trust, obviously I tend to trust big verified sources like CNN and other news outlets. With that being said, I feel like it's so easy nowadays to be fed misinformation through parody accounts of big verified news sources and other outlets. In my opinion, I feel like I can easily spot it out and weed through it, but there's a

lot of people out there that fall for it every time and I think it really showed during the election season.

2. I think it is a tricky situation because everyone has the right to flex their first amendment, but how far is the question? Especially if there is, for example, heavy misleading or even hateful speech/information being spewed throughout the platform and it's clearly having an effect on society, I can see where the lines start to become a bit murky and grey in that case. However, in my opinion, I think the government should not get involved, solely because of the first amendment. I feel like if the government were to get involved and start censoring content that doesn't fit their 'criteria' throughout social media platforms then what makes them any different from countries like China? To answer the question in full, I don't think the government should have no type of role when it comes to the removal or restriction of content in the digital world.
3. With all that being said above, I think the private sector and especially platforms like Facebook, X, Tiktok, should play a heavy role when it comes to restricting or removal of content that involves misleading information or hateful content. I mean I think it's only right as it's their platform and they can dictate what content is being spewed on it, plus most of these platforms have terms and conditions that usually state that there is no form of hateful speech or misinformation. For example, here is a body of text from Tiktok's own terms and conditions, "We do not allow hate speech and hateful ideologies, and will not recommend content that contains negative stereotypes about a person or group with a protected attribute. We use a combination of technology and human moderators to detect and remove accounts and content that break our rules" (Tiktok 2024). I believe these platforms have full right to censor and restrict content that goes against anything they

state in their terms and conditions such as hateful speech and other misinformation being spread that can cause ill will.

4. For this question, I chose an interesting article I found from 'The Times' and the title reads 'Protesters disrupt gender critical discussion at Oxford'. More than 600 people signed a petition "protesting transphobia" at Oxford University as tensions flared during a talk by Helen Joyce, a gender-critical author. "Shortly after Joyce, 57, entered Balliol College for a discussion on transgender issues, sex and gender, a group of pro-trans protesters staged a walkout, briefly leaving Joyce and John Maier, the host, at a loss for words. Joyce, a former editor at The Economist, referred to herself as a "sex realist" and said that being transgender was a "rights-destroying belief". She argues that the belief in being "born in the wrong body" has led to a medical crisis in which young people are encouraged to take life-altering treatments without sufficient scrutiny" (The Times). After reading the article, I do think the article is appropriate because I feel everybody is entitled to their own opinion and can express it in a non-threatening or abusive manner. Staging a walk out, in my opinion, doesn't hurt anyone and just clearly shows they're take on the speaker's opinion on the matter. Let's say if they were verbally threatening the abuser, then I would have a completely different view on this situation and say they were in the wrong even though I agree with them.
5. In my opinion, I think the internet and technological developments can both strengthen and weaken public discourse, but if I had to choose one, I would say it strengthens it. I know I'm kind of going against what I said earlier, but I do feel like with the internet, people are able to do as much research as they want if they ever wanted to have an in

more depth perspective on a certain issue the world may be going through, and when I say everybody can partake in that, I mean everybody.

## References

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Lambert, G. (2025, February 14). *Protesters disrupt gender critical discussion at Oxford.* The Times & The Sunday Times.

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