

To: Professor Mann

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Subject: First Amendment Questions and the Digital World

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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, and why.

My sources and means to access and gather are many, I use Fox, CNN, YouTube, Yahoo, MSNBC, and others. I use them when I have questions about what is going on in the world, and I tend to use most if not all of them, because I know that none of them by themselves will tell me the whole truth. In that thought I do not think I am well informed about current events overall, because I don't think the government wants us to be totally well informed and I think that the people running the bigger news networks are trying to keep us from looking at the other side of the news. There is not a source I trust fully to keep me well informed about current events. As for sharing or communicating my ideas and opinions, I like the old-fashioned way of talking to people in person and being human with them even if we do not agree on things.

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?

This question is hard for me because I personally do not think that the government should restrict or remove any content and that the citizens should look at everything and do their own research. However, I know that most Americans will watch a specific news network and take whatever they say as truth and law. With that knowledge, I think

(against my personal objections) that the government should have someone looking at evidence of people trying to be misleading, have hateful speech and purposely trying to spread lies, to stop or punish them. I have family that has been misled in election years, because of things that have been spread on Facebook and X.

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

The private sector has more authority to restrict and remove things from their social media platforms. They, however, have been reported to focus their restrictions and removals to select groups that they deem as problematic. If a social media platform is going to be truly 'social' then they should follow the letter of the law, and allow the talk of the citizens to go forth without hindering it. Giving social media the ability to restrict and remove any first amendment right is wrong. With that being said there should not be speech of harm or threats thereof to ensure the safety of all citizens.

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.

U.S. Circuit Judge Kyle Duncan was invited to talk at Stanford Law School on March 9, 2023, by a Federalist Society. As he was speaking at Stanford Law School students started to shout and disrupt the Judge, and as he was asking for help in restoring order " Tirien Steinbach, an associate dean for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) then entered the room, commandeered the podium, and began what seemed to be a prepared six-minute speech, accusing Duncan of "disenfranchising ... people, families, and communities.", According to the Washington Stand. (2023) This caused the Judge and event to end about forty minutes early.

I do not think that this was an appropriate response, mostly because its rude. I think that anyone under the age of 35 is being asked to not listen or hear anything other than what they know as 'truth' and that is harming any type of thinking that would otherwise make the country and world better. Allow for the exchanged of ideas and thoughts is critical to making each other better in life.

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?

With the question of do I believe the internet and technological developments being 'overall' better or worse for the public, I would say better. I think and say this because having the internet and other tech developments allows for any person of the public to access all the information they could ever want. This allows for all people that want to take the time and see the other side of things the ability to, with public libraries, smart phones, internet cafes and other sources like this. To fully take advantage of the internet and other tech developments, people have to know how to do the research and that is where the problems lie.

Bibliography

Hart, D. (2023, March 13). *Stanford allows judge Kyle Duncan's speech to be shouted down by activists*. The Washington Stand. <https://washingtonstand.com/news/stanford-allows-judge-kyle-duncans-speech-to-be-shouted-down-by-activists>