

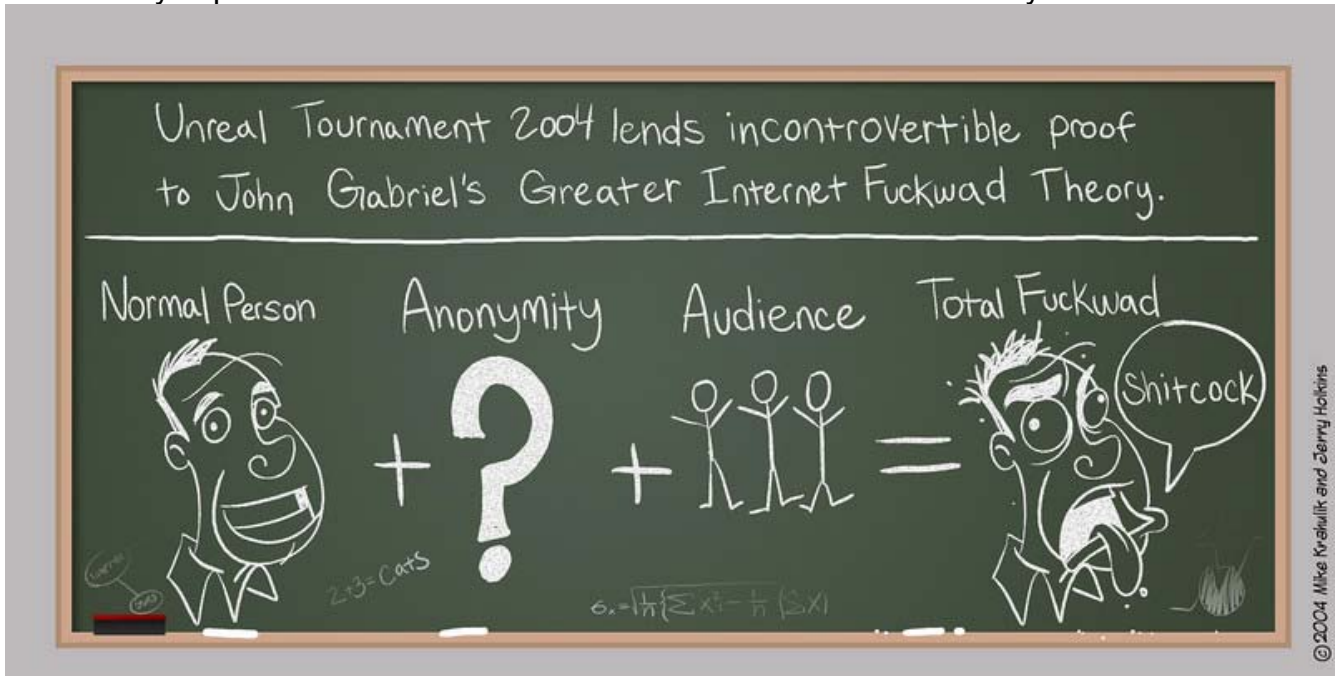
New Material for "Digitality" Lecture

Online disinhibition effect

This term refers to the way people behave on the Internet with less restraint than in real-world situations, and is related to the break between a person's real-world and online identities.

⤴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Online_disinhibition_effect

The disinhibition that individuals experience can be amplified by anonymity online, humorously captured in John Gabriel's "Greater Internet Fuckwad Theory":



A contemporary example is the UCLA student, Alexandra Wallace, who posted a video rant against Asian students after the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami. Here is the original video:

⤴ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0JKb_Cn1qc

The video "went viral" and was viewed by millions, quickly generating a backlash. Ms. Wallace said that she was leaving the university after she and her family received death threats over this incident.

⤴ <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/16/us/16ucla.html>

⤴ http://articles.nydailynews.com/2011-03-19/news/29185796_1_ucla-student-student-newspaper-death-threats

Anonymous in the News

This does not refer to the use of anonymous sources; rather, this is about the collective known as “Anonymous.” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anonymous_\(group\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anonymous_(group))

Anonymous is loosely connected group of activists and members of certain internet communities and subcultures, which originated out of the free message board known as 4chan in 2003.

Anonymous first gained mainstream notoriety in 2008 for their protests activities aimed at the Church of Scientology, which had frequently attempted to suppress material critical Scientology on the Internet through the use of lawsuits and legal threats. Anonymous viewed these as coercive attempts to censor the internet and began “Project Chanology,” a distributed, online social movement aimed at disrupting the Church of Scientology's website and organizational activities. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_Chanology

More recently, Anonymous has played a role in aiding groups wishing to evade internet censorship in the country where they live:

- ⤴ In the wake of the controversial election results in Iran in 2009, Anonymous and Iranian hackers launched a website called “Anonymous Iran” to provide resources and support to Iranians whose voices were being stifled by the government. By-passing official government censorship proved to be an important component of the “Green Revolution.”
- ⤴ In 2010, the Wikileaks organization published documents from secret U.S. diplomatic cables. Under intense pressure from the U.S. Government, many companies severed their financial relations with Wikileaks, such as Amazon, Paypal, Visa, and Mastercard. Anonymous organized a protest activity called “Avenge Assange” to raise awareness of this *de facto* censorship.
- ⤴ During the 2011 popular uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere, Anonymous provided assistance to groups attempting to evade internet censors and carried out attacks against official government websites which were spreading propaganda against protestors.

In 2011, the security firm HBGary Federal claimed they had infiltrated Anonymous and gathered data on the identity of its members. (In fact, they had identified only a few participants in the decentralized Anonymous group.) In response, Anonymous hacked into the HBGary Federal email server and retrieved several emails and reports that linked the security firm to the law firm Hunton & Williams, the megabank Bank of America, the pro-corporate lobbying group U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the U.S. Department of Justice. Critics point to these emails and documents as evidence of the close collusion between government and private firms to monitor the behavior of individuals, suppress dissent, discredit unions, tarnish the reputation of progressive journalists (such as Glenn Greenwald), and censor and prosecute the Wikileaks organization.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/12/us/politics/12hackers.html>

Finally, Anonymous operates AnonNews, a censorship-free posting board for news about or created by the group: <http://anonnews.org/>

NPR Expose

In March 2011, conservative political provocateur James O'Keefe secretly recorded a discussion with Ronald Schiller, NPR's outgoing senior vice president for fundraising, in which Schiller made remarks viewed as disparaging of the Tea Party and conservatives, and controversial comments regarding Palestine and funding for NPR.

Schiller immediately resigned, and NPR disavowed Schiller's comments. CEO Vivian Schiller, no relation, later resigned over the fallout from the comments.

Later, as expected, the release of the (nearly) full, (nearly) unedited undercover tape showed that many of Schiller's comments were taken out of context to appear more incriminating than they actually were. Furthermore, NPR maintains that a strict separation between the editorial side of their organization and the development side has not been breached, and that this one tape fails to prove the alleged bias in their news coverage.

First released video here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=xd9OYJMX9t4

Full, (nearly) unedited video here: <http://vimeo.com/20786470>

(Nearly 2 minutes of audio is still "redacted" in the unedited video, raising suspicion over the journalistic ethics of this undercover expose.)

The Blaze's analysis of the sting: <http://www.theblaze.com/stories/does-raw-video-of-npr-expose-reveal-questionable-editing-tactics/>

Further information and reaction from this incident:

- ✦ Ira Glass, host of NPR's *This American Life*, defends NPR against charges of being biased: <http://www.mediaite.com/online/ira-glass-comes-to-dc-to-argue-against-npr-bias/>
- ✦ Columbia Journalism Review, commentary on whether NPR is politically biased: http://www.cjr.org/campaign_desk/another_take_on_nprs_liberal_bias.php
- ✦ MediaMatters considers whether conservatives have proven their case that NPR is biased: <http://mediamatters.org/blog/201103140016>
- ✦ Great discussion on NPR's *On the Media* about whether NPR has a political bias: <http://www.onthemedial.org/transcripts/2011/03/25/03>

Perhaps of interest?

- ✦ NPR's controversial opinion cartoon, "Learn to Speak Tea Bag": <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=120344047>

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

2010
AN INCOMPLETE AND SUBJECTIVE LOOK AT THE YEAR IN CRAZY
PART THE FIRST

JAN. 14: UNHAPPY WITH DEMOCRATS, SHARRON ANGLE SUGGESTS "2ND AMENDMENT REMEDIES" MIGHT BE NEEDED.
YOU'LL PRY MY RIGHT TO BE REFUSED HEALTH CARE FROM MY COLD DEAD FINGERS!

JAN. 21: SUPREME COURT HANDS DEMOCRACY OVER TO HIGHEST BIDDER.
IF CORPORATIONS ARE NOT FREE TO MAKE UNLIMITED ANONYMOUS CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS--
--THEN NONE OF US ARE TRULY FREE!

JAN. 25: JAMES O'KEEFE ARRESTED TRYING TO WIRE-TAP A SENATOR'S OFFICE.
WHAT PART OF "CITIZEN JOURNALISM" DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?

FEB. 16: DICK CHENEY CONFESSES:
"I WAS A BIG SUP-PORTER OF WATER-BOARDING!"
INEXPLICABLY, NO PROSECUTION ENSUES.

FEB. 25: NOT-AT-ALL CRAZY RIGHT-WINGERS SAY MISSILE DEFENSE LOGO PROVES OBAMA'S SUBMISSION TO SHARIA.
HE IS UNDERMINING AMERICA THROUGH GRAPHIC DESIGN!

MAR. 21: CONGRESS PASSES MODEST HEALTH CARE REFORM; CONSERVATIVE MELTDOWN ENSUES.
SOCIALISM! DEATH PANELS!
YARGLE BARGLE BLARGH!

APRIL 7: OBAMA AUTHORIZES ASSASSINATION OF AMERICAN CITIZEN ACCUSED OF TERRORISM.
EXECUTIVE OVERREACH IS OKAY IF YOU'RE A DEMOCRAT!

APRIL 14: NOT-AT-ALL CRAZY RIGHT-WINGERS FIND ANOTHER ADMINISTRATION LOGO WITH HIDDEN MUSLIM SYMBOLS!
WHERE WILL THIS GRAPHIC SUBVERSION END?
Nuclear Security Summit

APRIL 15: TEA PARTIERS ACROSS COUNTRY GATHER TO DENOUNCE THEIR TAX BURDEN--
--WHICH, FOR MOST, WENT DOWN UNDER OBAMA.
WHUT?

APRIL 20: NOT-AT-ALL RACIST ARIZONA HOUSE VOTES FOR PROVISION REQUIRING OBAMA TO SHOW BIRTH CERTIFICATE BEFORE 2012 ELECTION.
WE JUST WANT TO BE SURE HE'S NOT CANADIAN!

MAY 14: IN WAKE OF B.P. OIL SPILL, HALEY BARBOUR ENCOURAGES TOURISTS TO "ENJOY THE BEACH!"
IT'S PRACTICALLY PRISTINE, IF YOU IGNORE THE TARBALLS & ALL THE DEAD FISH!

MAY 21: ADMINISTRATION WINS RIGHT TO DETAIN PEOPLE WITHOUT HABEAS.
WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG?
BEATS ME!

JUNE 6: RUSH LIMBAUGH TRADITIONALLY MARRIES FOR FOURTH TIME.
THANK GOODNESS THIS SACRED INSTITUTION HAS NOT BEEN SULLIED BY VILE HOMOSEXUALS!
SUCH AS MY WEDDING SINGER, ELTON JOHN.

JUNE 17: REP. BARTON APOLOGIZES TO B.P.
I DON'T KNOW HOW OUR OCEAN GOT IN THE WAY OF YOUR OIL!
CAN YOU EVER FORGIVE US?

JUNE 18: MICHELE BACHMAN REFUSES TO FILL OUT CONSTITUTIONALLY-MANDATED CENSUS.
IT'S A SOCIALIST PLOT--TO FIND OUT HOW MANY TOILETS I HAVE!
NEXT: MORE CRAZY!

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THIS MODERN WORLD

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2010
AN INCOMPLETE AND SUBJECTIVE LOOK AT THE YEAR IN CRAZY
PART THE SECOND

JUNE 19: GLENN BECK FAN OPENS FIRE ON COPS; WAS ON WAY TO MASSACRE EMPLOYEES AT BECK-DEMONIZED TIDES FOUNDATION.
LATER IN THE YEAR, THE SHOOTER WILL OPENLY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT HIS PLAN WAS INSPIRED BY THINGS BECK "EXPOSED!"

JULY 20: BREITBART/SHERROD FIASCO BEGINS.
IF A RIGHT WING PROVOCATEUR SAYS "JUMP"--
--OUR ONLY QUESTION IS, "WOULD YOU LIKE US TO FIRE SOMEONE FIRST?"

JULY 27: DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE SAYS 96% OF IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION MONEY UNACCOUNTED FOR.
BUT HEY--WHAT'S 8.7 BILLION DOLLARS BETWEEN FRIENDS?

MONTH OF AUGUST: CONS FREAK OUT OVER "GROUND ZERO MOSQUE."
IF WE ALLOW THE SACRED GROUND OF A FORMER BURLINGTON COAT FACTORY TO BE DESECRATED--
--THE TERRORISTS HAVE WON!

AUG. 28: PUDGY WHITE CONSPIRACY THEORIST LAYS CLAIM TO THE MANTLE OF REV. MARTIN LUTHER KING.
IF MLK WERE ALIVE TODAY, HE'D BE OBSESSED WITH GEORGE SOROS TOO!

SEPT. 8: OBAMA DOJ WINS COURT RULING SHIELDING TORTURE AND RENDITION AS "STATE SECRETS."
I PROMISE TO BE OUTRAGED WHEN THIS PRECEDENT IS ABUSED BY REPUBLICANS!

SEPT. 19: B.P. FINALLY SEALS WELL; EVERYONE POLITELY AGREES TO PRETEND MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF OIL HAVE MAGICALLY DISAPPEARED.
OIL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL!
HEH HEH!

SEPT. 23: BANK FORECLOSES HOUSE OF FLORIDA MAN WHO DID NOT EVEN HAVE A MORTGAGE.
THAT'S NOT WHAT IT SAYS ON OUR PAPERWORK--
--LEGALLY NOTARIZED BY "HEYWOOD JABLOWME!"

NOV. 2: G.O.P. TAKES HOUSE. ALSO, OKLAHOMANS VOTE TO PROTECT SELVES FROM DIRE THREAT OF SHARIA LAW!
WE'RE PASSING AN ANTI-VOLDEMORT MEASURE NEXT!
JUST TO BE SAFE.

NOV. 3: GEORGE BUSH CONFESSES:
DAMN RIGHT I AUTHORIZED WATERBOARDING!
INEXPLICABLY, NO PROSECUTION ENSUES.

NOV. 16: NEWLY-ELECTED ANTI-HEALTH-CARE CONGRESSMAN WANTS TO KNOW WHY HE HAS TO WAIT A MONTH FOR HEALTH CARE.
THERE OUGHTA BE A LAW!

DEC. 6: OBAMA CAVES ON TAX CUTS; PROMISES TO REALLY FIGHT IN TWO YEARS.
IF BY "FIGHT" YOU MEAN "PRE-EMPTIVELY CONCEDE ONCE AGAIN."
WHICH I DO.

DEC. 6: FOX NEWS DEMOCRAT BOB BECKEL URGES U.S. GOV'T TO ASSASSINATE JULIAN ASSANGE.
WHAT OTHER APPROPRIATE RESPONSE IS THERE--
--TO A GUY WITH A WEB-SITE??

MONTH OF DECEMBER: FOX'S ANNUAL WAR ON IMAGINARY WAR ON CHRISTMAS BEGINS YET AGAIN!
DON'T YOU JUST LOVE THE OLD FAMILIAR TRADITIONS?

NOT TO MENTION...
Texas school board rewriting history: Ginni Thomas asking Anita Hill for apology; everything Christine O'Donnell said; Chertoff airport scanner conflict of interest; 1/3 of Republicans who believe Obama is a Muslim; ABC/Breitbart fiasco; Boehner campaigning for Nazi re-enactor guy; etc., etc., etc...
SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!

www.thismodernworld.com

Social news

According to a 2010 study by Pew Research Center for the People & the Press: “Roughly a third (34%) of the public say they went online for news yesterday – on par with radio, and slightly higher than daily newspapers. And when cell phones, email, social networks and podcasts are added in, 44% of Americans say they got news through one or more internet or mobile digital source yesterday.”

<http://people-press.org/2010/09/12/americans-spending-more-time-following-the-news/>

But given the variety of sources of news available on the internet, what does it mean to say that Americans get their news “online”?

- ⤴ Roughly 10% say they got news *yesterday* from a...
 - Cell phone or smartphone
 - Social networking site like Facebook or Twitter
 - RSS feed or customizable webpage such as My Yahoo! or iGoogle
 - Email news (~14%)

Getting news online can come from the internet sites of traditional news outlets, such as www.nytimes.com or www.cnn.com, but increasingly people (especially those under 30) are turning to social news websites such as www.digg.com and www.reddit.com:

- ⤴ The main distinguishing feature of these social news websites is that they replace the traditional role of a news editor with the collective judgment of readers themselves.
- ⤴ The second feature of social news websites is that readers submit stories to be featured on the site. These news stories typically originate from *primary* news outlets, like CNN or the Times, and are then reposted on the social news site.

After a user submits a story, other users vote on its popularity, and the most popular stories are featured prominently on the social news website. The editorial judgment, which used to be performed by one (or a few) individuals, is thus distributed throughout the users and becomes an emergent property of the collective.

- ⤴ Finally, one unique feature of social news websites, especially reddit, is that users not only collaboratively select what news becomes popular, but they also sort, organize, and classify news stories – creating a flexible categorization schema that permits users to filter what news stories they read based on their own preferences in interests.

Social news websites rely on “collaborative filtering” of content. In the examples mentioned above, the users determine what news stories are popular. A second approach to “collaborative filtering” is having users judge the reliability and accuracy of a news story.

- ⤴ Newstrust (www.newstrust.net) relies on users to rate news stories based on typical journalistic values, such as fairness, context, and the weight of evidence provided in a story. Based on the cumulative ratings of individual users, higher-rated news stories are featured more prominently on the site.

A third type of social news is a website that relies completely on user-generated content. There are many examples of this: collaborative journalism, akin to Wikipedia for news (www.wikinews.org); “crowdsourced” news sites like NowPublic (www.nowpublic.com); and other websites for citizen journalism such as IndyMedia (www.indymedia.us).

Arrivederci APC.... Welcome back VIA!

In the past, students were told to mind their APCs when judging online news and information. It was found that this mnemonic was redundant, extraneous and superfluous. An alternative is for students is to apply the VIA standard uniformly to the information they receive, regardless of the source medium.

As a reminder, APC stood for authority, point of view, and currency. Here is the way we had been teaching these concepts:

- ✦ Authority: Does the website's operator have access, experience, credentials, or other superior knowledge?
- ✦ Point of view: Is the website an independent source of information, or is it an advocacy site or controlled by a particular interest group?
- ✦ Currency: Is the information on the website up-to-date?

Let us see if VIA can replace APC and still fit in with other ideas from the course:

- ✦ Instead of *authority*: Students should begin by considering what *information neighborhood* they are in. If they are in the news neighborhood, is this website **accountable** for the information they provide? Do they stand behind the material on their website? In addition, students should consider whether the particular outlet could credibly be considered *authoritative* and *informed* on what they are saying, similar to the guidelines about weighing sources.
- ✦ Instead of *point of view*: Students should judge whether this is an **independent** website providing journalism, as they would judge any other news organization. Is the website's primary mission to *inform* the public? Does it in any way attempt to deceive the public?
- ✦ Instead of *currency*: Students should remember that journalistic truth is *provisional*, and that it is their job to make sure they are getting the latest news that has been **verified**.

It goes without saying that there is not a one-to-one correspondence between APC and VIA, since *verification*, *independence*, and *accountability* are broader and encompass the other, more specific ideas.

Pedagogically, it is a good practice to have students return to the foundational concepts from the first part of the course when engaging in the applied deconstruction exercises found later in the course. Students should recognize that critical thinking involves using consistent standards, stated in unambiguous terminology, when judging the reliability of the information they encounter.