

Scenario

Imagine that you are writing an academic paper for [the Undergraduate Research Journal](#), a periodical that publishes outstanding research projects by undergrads from all disciplines and fields of study. Though a college campus is comprised of many communities with diverse interests, your primary audience for this assignment is *scholarly*. None of these scholarly readers have read the prompt below and will read your essay because its title caught their attention.

Prompt

Thanks to technology, we live in an age where the totality of human knowledge rests but a few swipes and taps away. Yet scholars have disagree whether modern technology has made it easier for people to connect learn more about the world or has trapped people into informational cocoons. It remains to be seen what impact technology has on the kind of broad-based discourse necessary for democracies and pluralistic societies to thrive.

So here is your question:

According to the latest research, how serious a problem do these modern technologies (e.g. social media, internet search engines, etc.) pose to democracy?

Write a 1,500 academic paper in response to this question. Your paper will take the form of a standalone [“literature review”](#) ([Links to an external site.](#))[Links to an external site.](#)

It's helpful to think of a literature review as an attempt to help fellow scholars make sense of the existing research (much of it confusing, contradictory and incomplete). In your paper, you will help sort out what's true, reliable information from that which is not. This is a challenging task.

To make your argument, you are required to reference at least three outside sources (see below). No, you will not be conducting your new research experiments. Please do

not venture beyond the sources listed below to find your own studies; just stick to these given sources.

One last piece of advice. While you might feel the pressure to pursue multiple claims and to draw many conclusions, try to focus on adding one clear, well-supported insight to the conversation. Despite what you think, 1,500 words goes quickly.

Formatting

According to [the Journal's "Paper Submission Guidelines"](#), your manuscript must include a title, abstract, key terms, acknowledgments, and a works cited. All references must be in [MLA format \(Links to an external site.\)](#)[Links to an external site..](#) Please see the the *Journal*'s guidelines for the full instructions and some helpful tips on style.

Provided Sources

In the course of your paper, make reference to at least three of the following texts.

- Bakshy et al., *Science*, "Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Facebook"
- Barberá et al., *Psychological Science*, "Tweeting From Left to Right: Is Online Political Communication More Than an Echo Chamber"
- Boxell, "Is the internet causing polarization? Evidence from demographics" (working draft)
- Quattrociocchi et al. "Echo Chambers on Facebook" (working draft)

Grading

Two initial drafts will be due at the end of Weeks 5 and 6, respectively. The final draft will be due at the end of the quarter as one of the required essays of the Final ePortfolio. Your writing will be evaluated holistically according to the guidelines in the following rubric:

Categories	Exemplary (A Range)	Satisfactory (B Range)	Poor (C & NP)
Introduction and purpose	Explains problem to be addressed; provides necessary background and builds toward a contestable, original and compelling thesis; background context heightens interest and enhances thesis; thesis clearly addresses problem and relates to larger academic conversation	Background context does not aid effectiveness of thesis; problem/position poorly focused and framed; thesis unclear, unoriginal, not contestable, and/or does not fully answer question; claim does not show relevance to problem or academic conversation	Paper begins without context or background; paper lacks discernible thesis; reader confused about what writer is attempting to do
Quality of ideas and argument	Strong, original insights into problem; effectively links sources to argument; sound reasoning based on evidence and assumptions; acknowledges and responds to alternative viewpoints in a convincing manner	Some good insights; loses focus on topic or gaps in argument; connections between claims and sources vague; some unsupported generalizations and questionable moments of logic; implies alternative views but doesn't respond to them, or responds unconvincingly	Fails to adequately follow through on thesis; contains no clear argument; descriptive rather than analytical; tends to over-rely on summary; ignores alternative viewpoints
Use of evidence	Excellent use of exhibits and evidence to support claims; effectively provides relevant examples; elegant integration	Uneven use of evidence and examples; cited evidence not always directly relevant; significance of outside exhibits not readily apparent; chunky integration	Lack of clear evidence; if provided, not related to overall argument; limited reference to outside sources; little integration
Organization and clarity	Clear, well-organized paper; paragraphs demonstrate cohesion; topic sentences/claims/reasons fully developed in each paragraph; essay-wide structure flows logically; reader doesn't get lost	Generally sound organization; some topic sentences/claims strong, others weak; some paragraphs not fully developed; reader occasionally confused by awkward organization, unclear sentences, fuzzy ideas	Poor organization, lacks clarity; paper not organized around coherent paragraphs; paragraphs lack topic sentences/purpose; prose is hard to follow and understand
Editing and manuscript form	Flawless paper, or an occasional minor error; looks like a professional humanities paper; in-text citations follow assigned format; contains an academic title.	Distractions due to spelling, punctuation, grammar errors; writer seems a bit careless; varies from assigned style and format in a few ways; contains non-academic title.	Paper seriously marred by mistakes in grammar, spelling and punctuation; lack of editing; paper does not follow assigned style and format; paper lacks a title.