

CS 3001 Computers, Society, and Professionalism
Spring 2023
Section Discussion Guide
Week 5

Virtue Ethics and Free Speech

I. Questions and news items

- Go around the room with questions/observations/relevant news items

II. Quotes from the virtue ethics reading

- Ask each student to read their quote out loud
 - Why did you pick that quote?
 - What is significant about it?
 - Discuss with everyone

III. Discussion: Hate speech

- Hate speech is legal in the US, illegal in many other countries
- What is the argument in favor of making it illegal?
- What is the argument in favor of keeping it legal?
- Which argument do you prefer?
- A private platform can have stricter rules than what is technically “legal”
 - Suppose you started a successful social media platform
 - Would you restrict hate speech?
 - Would you ban users for hate speech?

IV. Articles about free speech

- Each student should summarize the article they picked, and explain why they find it interesting.
- Discuss the broader implications of each article as a group.

V. Deplatforming/replatforming

(You may skip any parts you’ve already discussed in covering articles people brought.)

- How do you feel about (old) Twitter banning controversial figures?
 - Legally: the government can’t block your free speech, but Twitter can do what they want
 - Did Twitter do the right thing in banning Alex Jones? Donald Trump?
 - How do we balance one person’s right to free speech and another person’s right to be free from harassment?
- How do you feel about (new) Twitter letting controversial figures back on?

VI. Misinformation

- Should social media companies delete any misinformation?
 - If so, what kinds?

- Twitter deleted Covid misinfo until Elon Musk bought the platform. Which approach is better?
- Should social media companies put a warning on articles that are false?
 - What about statements made by politicians?
 - Should they fact-check political ads?

VII. Introduce the readings for next week