

ANONYMITY ONLINE

// CLASS 16

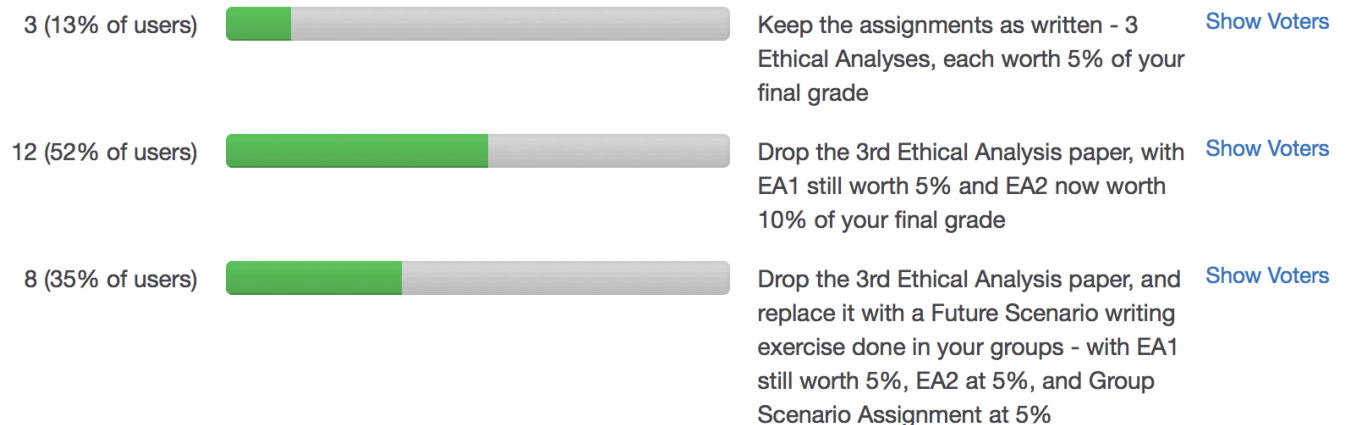
FALL 2015 / SECTION 02 / HOLLY BUCK

TODAY'S CLASS...

- Ethical Analysis Assignments...
- Mini-lecture / readings review
- Discussion

Poll - Writing assignments is now closed

A total of 23 vote(s) in 160 hours



ANONYMITY

“the inability of others to identify an individual or for others to identify one’s self.

Technical anonymity: the removal of all meaningful identifying information about others in the exchange of material. This can include the removal of one’s name or other identifying information from Internet communications.

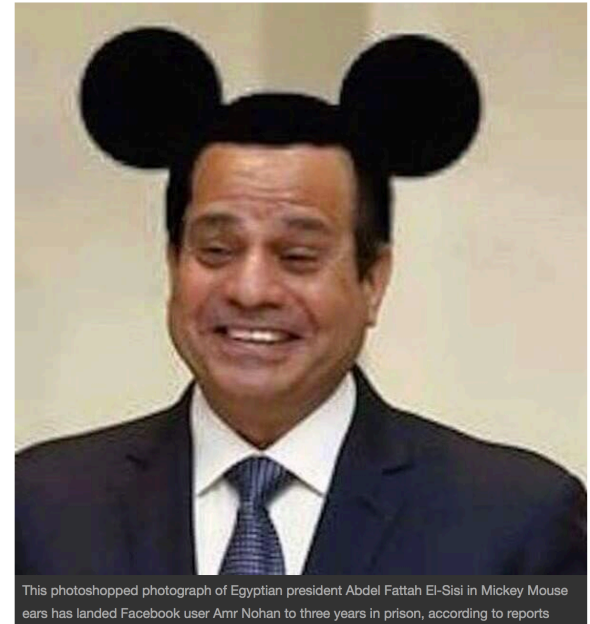
Social anonymity: the perception of others and/or one’s self as unidentifiable because of a lack of cues to use to attribute an identity to that individual.

In other words, it may not be the case that one is truly anonymous in a social context, but the individual perceives him or herself to be anonymous to others.”

— Christopherson (2007)

A MULTIDIMENSIONAL ISSUE

- Psychological / sociological
- Political
- Technical
- Economic



This photoshopped photograph of Egyptian president Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in Mickey Mouse ears has landed Facebook user Amr Nohan to three years in prison, according to reports

HISTORY OF ANONYMITY

Gulliver's Travels

Common Sense

the Federalist Papers arguing for adoption of U.S. Constitution
(Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay)

pseudonyms & pen names - A historically established way of protecting political speech

A CIVILIZATION OF THE MIND

“Cyberspace consists of transactions, relationships, and thought itself, arrayed like a standing wave in the web of our communications.

Ours is a world that is both everywhere and nowhere, but it is not where bodies live.

We are creating a world that all may enter without privilege or prejudice accorded by race, economic power, military force, or station of birth.

We are creating a world where anyone, anywhere may express his or her beliefs, no matter how singular, without fear of being coerced into silence or conformity.

Your legal concepts of property, expression, identity, movement, and context do not apply to us. They are all based on matter, and there is no matter here.” — John Perry Barlow, 1996 – *A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace*

BENEFITS? DRAWBACKS?

For individuals?

For businesses?

For governments?

BENEFITS

- Encourage participation
- Encourage risk-taking, creative thinking
- Promote community identity
- Protection against retaliation & embarrassment
- Protect whistleblowers
- Counter efforts towards marketizing personal data
- Removal of bias / stereotypes
- Separation between private & professional lives
- Psychological effects of privacy

EQUALIZATION HYPOTHESIS

“The proposal that Internet technology allows for a more equal playing ground” —
Christopherson, 2007

Freedom from visual cues

Lab studies indicate more equalization in computer-mediated communications versus face-to-face ... but not always; some studies find that stereotypical behavior is accentuated in CMC

6 TYPES OF PRIVACY

- Reserve (unwillingness to disclose personal information)
- Isolation (desire to be alone)
- Intimacy with family (wanting to be alone with a select group of persons)
- Intimacy with friends
- Solitude (being free of observation)
- Anonymity (being around other individuals but not under surveillance by them)

Anonymity provides **recovery, catharsis and autonomy**

Recovery: sense of rejuvenation from active contemplation of one's situation; catharsis: unhindered expression of thoughts & feelings to others; autonomy: ability to experiment with new behaviors without repercussions)

SAFETY – PERSONAL THREAT MODEL

5 types of personal threat:

- online predators
- organizations,
- known others
- other users on the site or in the community
- unknown others

(Kang, Brown, and Kiesler 2013)

DRAWBACKS

- Protects criminal & antisocial activities
- Challenges to law enforcement
- Can mask illegal surveillance by government agencies
- Effects within groups: social loafing, bystander apathy, group polarization (tendency for like-minded group members to become more extreme in their views following a discussion)
- Deindividuation? Greater expression of otherwise inhibited behavior

DISCUSSION

“Current Internet design allows for anonymity at the application level (e.g., within a website), but anonymity across applications (especially in some countries) is very difficult to achieve for most users.

Further, the demographic information or content that users reveal can be linked across applications and cause them to be identified even if their legal name, email address, and IP address are hidden.” (Kang, Brown, & Kiesler 2013)

1. Should Internet users should have stronger controls on their levels of anonymity?
2. Do the risks of anonymity outweigh its benefits?

ANONYMITY (SECURITY) GUIDANCE

1. Don't use own computer
2. Don't use skype – use open source VOIP (Mumble)
3. Go in with the mindset that you'll be sharing everything
4. Use common sense
5. Give away as little PI as possible
6. Use Tor
7. Bitcoin for transactions
8. Pay attention to privacy settings and only put in info you feel comfortable sharing with large crowd
9. Look for lock sign on secure webpages
10. Don't listen to spam
11. Don't download things you don't trust
12. Be careful opening links in emails
13. If you're on home router, pay attention to security settings
14. Disable web RTC (Realtime Communication)
15. Use DuckDuckGo, not google
16. Windows install – privacy settings
17. If you think what you're doing might be a bad idea, don't do it
18. Think about stuff before you do stuff