

Essay 3 – CSCI 405 – Algorithmic Amplification

The US Supreme Court is currently debating whether social media companies have the ability to police speech on their platforms. This has far-reaching implications for our society. For some context into this extremely current event, please review the following sources:

- [“Supreme Court debates state laws restricting social media content moderation”](#), 2024-02-06, Fox News (leans politically conservative)
- “Takeaways From the Supreme Court Arguments on Social Media Laws”, 2024-02-06, New York Times (leans politically liberal)

Besides actively and intentionally policing content on social media, these platforms use algorithms to determine what to show you. For example, the endlessly scrolling Facebook or TikTok feeds are generated by algorithms. Often, these are trying to maximize the amount of time you spend on the site or some other metric of engagement. (In olden times, like when I grew up, newspapers used to say “if it bleeds, it leads,” meaning that gory or shocking content led to more interest.) A study from 2021, “Algorithmic amplification of politics on Twitter,” found that certain political views were amplified more than others on that platform in a period from 2016–2020.

Read the study and review the news sources above. Write an opinion piece (another persuasive essay) about what you think about this problem. Address the question of whether social media should or should not be able to police speech on their platforms. Note that while our country does allow for freedom of speech, the constitution does not permit all speech such as that which incites violence. Be sure to also address the roles of algorithms in social media sites. What extra dangers do you see algorithms creating or advantages they might offer compared to, say, the editor of a newspaper?

Your essay will be graded using the rubric provided. It should be 3 – 5 pages, double-spaced, using 1 inch margins and 12 pt font. You must work alone.