

Course Journal

YOUR NAME

2025-09-09

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1 Journal Home

This journal renders as a **book**. Each dated entry is a chapter.

- **MC 451 entries:** 250–300 words
- At the **end of each chapter** you'll see **three prompts. Answer only one.**
- Write your answer in the **Response** box; the page shows an **automatic word count** and whether you're in range.

1.0.1 Add a new entry

1. In R, run: `source("scripts/new_journal_entry.R")`
2. A new chapter like `entries/2025-09-01.qmd` appears with three prompts injected.
3. The script updates `_quarto.yml` so the new entry is included in the book.
4. Render the book: click **Render** in RStudio or run `quarto render`.

2 2025-09-09week3

2.1 Choose one prompt to answer

Prompt B: Imagine you are researching a public social media platform like X (formerly Twitter), Reddit, or TikTok. Would you consider the content you're analyzing to be public or private? Would you need to obtain informed consent? Why or why not? Reflect on the ethical gray areas that emerge in digital research and how you would navigate them.

2.2 Response

If I were to research TikTok, I would consider the information to be public. This would be because the accounts that show information would already be accessible to the public. They are considered "public" accounts and therefore I assume they are not private or privately withholding knowledge or research. Since they are posted publicly, I assume it is safe to think that the users sharing the information are okay and consent to being part of the public domain. Likewise, I do not think I would need to obtain informed consent because by posting on a public account or forum, the user is already consenting for their voice and opinion to be online and used. However, I might consider obtaining consent should I pull research from a private account, or even if I wanted to use a direct quote from a public account. Additionally, if I were to pull direct images or usernames of people I am quoting, I may consider obtaining consent. This is because by using username and images, I am linking directly to a source, so I may consider wanting their consent since I am directly mentioning them in my research. However, if I were to just paraphrase or mention an example that is not detailed, I would be less likely to consider consent since, as aforementioned, the information is in a public forum that is already susceptible of being relayed and spread across audiences. Things like public Tiktok accounts leave a wide margin for gray area because people use the platform to merely voice their opinion and may not expect to be used as a source for informative or academic research. This poses a gray area because researchers have to make the decision as to whether they believe it ethically right to ask for consent or believe it was given based on the use of a public account. Furthermore, people can post on Tiktok while their emotions are in the heat

of a moment and it could be considered unfair for a researcher to then go and run with the online opinion when it could not be how the original source or person truly felt after a time of reflection. What someone could have posted as meme or sarcasm can be taken and ran with, making it inappropriate to use in research. It could also be unfair to hold a person to that opinion. Furthermore, some users on Tiktok use it simply as a way to get clicks and “clout” meaning they are merely producing a reaction from a target audience. This goes back to the previous point that using unobtained consent could hold users accountable to opinions they don’t truly believe in. The use of public accounts on Tiktok provides a tricky answer to the question of what is ethical to use for research. I don’t believe there is per se one right or wrong answer, but rather these circumstances should be evaluated on a case by case basis, so that researchers can fully consider contexts of posts in correlation to the authentic opinions of the user posting them.

2.3 Word Count & Range Check

****Word count:**** 515

****Required range (MC501):**** 450-500 words

****Status:**** Out of range