

PLSC 197 / SODA 197N: Social Data, Technology, and Artificial Intelligence

Assignment 1B: Data Biography

Assignment

Choose one digital system you interact with regularly (e.g., your phone, CANVAS, Instagram, a transit card, a streaming service, a subreddit, etc.). Write a “biography” of the data you generate through that system. In particular:

1. Describe what behaviors are captured by the system, and how.
2. Also describe what is *not* captured.
3. Describe what one might learn from the data captured on you, and how the data might be interpreted incorrectly.
4. Finally, talk a bit about who benefits from its collection.

Details

Your biography should include a separate title page with your name, the name of the course, the name of the assignment, and the date on which it was completed / submitted. The body of the biography should be double-spaced, in a conventionally-sized (10 to 12 point) font. The biography itself need be as short or long as you deem necessary; I would anticipate something in the neighborhood of 1000-1200 words would be adequate. You need not cite any source, or include references, unless you choose to.

This assignment must be completed and submitted by Thursday, February 5, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. ET. Submit your assignment by *creating / converting your essay to PDF format*, and emailing it to Dr. Zorn (at zorn@psu.edu) and Mr. Memovic (at arif.memovic@psu.edu). Biographies received after the due date will not be accepted. Note: If you choose to complete this assignment, you may not also complete / submit Assignment 1A.

This assignment is worth a possible 100 points.