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| |  | | --- | | **Claim:**The emergence of the online “blogosphere” and social media has significantly weakened the quality of political discourse in the United States.  **Reason:**When anyone can publish political opinions easily, standards for covering news and political topics will inevitably decline.  Write a response in which you discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with the claim and the reason on which that claim is based. | |

The world is becoming an increasingly connected space, with new online channels for information dissemination that keep bringing us closer. This 'blogosphere' is a medium of expression for many individuals who wish to establish and argue in favour of their positions on various issues. The prompt claims that the blogosphere's emergence has weakened the quality of political discourse in the United States. It bases this on the premise that an ease of access implies a lower standard for news topics. In my opinion, I disagree with the claim and its reasoning, albeit to a certain extent. My opinion on this topic is based on three main points.

To begin, I can concede the fact that there has been an increase in the ubiquity of low-quality political discourse in the recent years. Relating this increase to the emergence of the blogosphere itself is hard to do, although some points could be made. Consider the 'Qanon Movement' within the United States during the 2020 US Presidential election cycle: Rumours and posts of political conspiracy spread rife through social media channels commonly used by people who are, on average, more right-wing. This began on the rather fringe platforms, like 4Chan, and then spread to Twitter and more mainstream media. One could dismiss this 'movement' to just be its own conspiracy, but it degraded the quality of political discourse, bringing back topics of debate from several years in the past, to the present. Political scientists have even correlated this to the rightward shift of the 'Overton Window', the representation of what topics are characterized as being politically left, right, or center, in the United States. Hence, it would appear from this perspective that the emergence of new online channels makes the nature of political discourse deteriorate.

However, there are other major things to consider. More insightful debate about the high prices of insulin and the effects of big pharma and the issue of student loan interest rates being unreasonably high have also been brought into the mainstream, as a result of the rise of the 'blogosphere'. One may point to the online conspiracy theories as being a disadvantage of online spaces, but it also forms a community that crosses physical boundaries - one where people from across the globe can hear other opinions, and geographical borders are more blurred. If people in America did not know of the lower prices of insulin in countries across the globe, would they still protest the high prices in their country? In a less online world, would they have examples to prove that student debt is a more uniquely American problem? Social media can also help more beneficial ideas get across, and can often give users a new perspective. A lower barrier to entry may even help better ideas to develop on the Internet. Hence, more insightful debate can be cited as a reason why the prompt is false.

One more thing: News channels do not necessarily inherit the good or bad aspects of social media. It is often more proofread, more factchecked, and new information goes through more levels of evaluation before it is released as a headline. They are often obligated to do this due to the demands of their stakeholders; if the news channel simply puts up headlines of less significant material, or politically 'incorrect' material, the stakeholders of the company would be more wary of their investment. Hence, no matter what the political discourse may be on social media, news channels and associated entities, like journalists, are more likely to keep their standards high for covering news stories.

In conclusion, I am of the opinion that there are no easy black-and-white answers, and that the claim is, on average, more false than true. Also, for the reasons detailed above, the prompt's reason is unreasonable, in my opinion. Social media and the 'blogosphere' is quite complex, and associating political discourse to the nature of easy access is not a direct mapping.