IS1200: Information Ethics, Law, and Policy (Spring 2019)

Policy Memo Two: Regulating Platform Speech?

*In the past two years, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and others have been accused of fostering hate speech, the proliferation of fake news, the generation of increasingly segregated speech ‘echo-chambers’, strategic interference from outside actors, and overall contributions to a more divisive and corrosive political culture. Leaders of these firms have recently promised (or taken) steps that they say will help address some of these problems.*

*Following the format and standards of the “How To Write a Policy Memo” document, and drawing on arguments from scholarly sources, public interest groups, media reports, and the companies themselves, write a 3-4 page (single-spaced, 12-pt font (reference list not included in page limit)) policy memo addressed to the leadership of one or more social media platforms that: a) describes (with reference to evidence and sources) the most important speech problems facing social media platforms today; b) reviews and assesses actions or policies taken (or promised) by the company(ies) in question to date; and c) provides clear recommendations for other or further actions in response to the problems identified (or conversely, argues why existing or additional actions may be unnecessary or inappropriate).*

*Your paper should provide key background on the issues in question, existing problems or controversies, and show familiarity with what the companies have said and done in response to these issues to date. Where important counter-arguments or limitations to your recommendations exist, these should be noted (and balanced or resolved in your final recommendations). Please note too that your analysis and recommendations should focus primarily on questions of speech, not other policy issues that may also be present at the firm in question (privacy, antitrust, etc). Your paper may draw on arguments from public interest groups, industry associations, government and court documents, media analyses and scholarly sources, and should include a minimum of 8-10 references (assigned class readings can count towards this, but should not be your* only *sources).*

*Your memo is due by end of day (11:59 pm) on* ***Friday, March 29th****; we will also accept memos without penalty up until the start of lecture on Monday, April 8th.*