

# **Mass Media, Social Media, and American Politics**

*Kevin Munger*

## *Auditing the Algorithm*

### **Expectation (What Am I Supposed To Do?)**

1. Log into your YouTube account. If you don't have one, make one.
2. [Click here for a Google doc template you will use. Please make your own copy and do not edit the original file.](#)
3. Search for the first term (gun control). Click on the first result. Record the channel name of the first three recommended videos. Do this for each of the ten terms listed.
4. Choose one term to go on a "deep traversal." Search again, then click on the first video recommended. Then watch 30 seconds of the next video, recording the channel name and whether it was on the topic you chose. Then click on the first recommended video, and repeat this process until you are 10 steps down the chain.
5. Pick a non-political term. Repeat step 4, ignoring channel name and recording whether the top 3 recommended videos are political or not, and whether or not they are about your chosen topic.
6. Open an incognito browser, do not log into YouTube (or anything else) and repeat the entire enterprise.
7. Reflect on how the experience was different when you were logged in vs when you were incognito. What kind of videos and channels were you more likely to see when anonymous? Did the algorithm update "faster" (show more things related to your search terms) when you weren't logged in?