**INFO215: Social Aspects of Information Systems**

**Assignment 1**

Imagine that you are an intern at Google. You had a strong reaction to their concept video, “The Selfish Ledger,” and you want to communicate your thoughts to your supervisor. You want to do so in order to show them that you deserve a permanent job at Google because you are thoughtful, insightful, and you understand the complex relationship between technology and society at a deep level. So, from the perspective of an intern, write a roughly 500-word email to your supervisor discussing three aspects of “The Selfish Ledger” from a sociotechnical perspective.

**Video Link**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUSZfEBTwRc>

**Due**: See Syllabus.

**Your response should**:

1. Be in proper email form, addressed to your supervisor (use my name or make one up);
2. Include a Subject line;
3. Include an introductory paragraph that describes what your email is about. This should contain a definition of “sociotechnical” in your own words that uses an example of your own to demonstrate the definition.
4. Clearly indicate three aspects of “The Selfish Ledger” and describe: (a) why you think they are important; and (b) why you agree or disagree with them from a sociotechnical perspective.
5. Contain an analysis of each of the three points you’re choosing to discuss (i.e., why you agree/disagree with them).
   1. Analysis of each point should cite at least one scholarly article from the syllabus.
   2. Pro Tip: 100 words per point you analyze is a good goal heuristic.
6. Contain a summary conclusion that explains why sociotechnical perspectives can improve Google’s vision for “The Selfish Ledger”.
7. Be about 500 (+/- 50 words) words – it’s an email, after all. (NB: Citations and bibliography do not count toward the 500-word limit ☺)

**Format**:

* Standard formatting and submission requirements apply in addition to those listed below (See syllabus).
* Submission must contain all components of a professional email: Subject line; Greeting; Body; Signature; language should be professional, clear, and concise.
* Submission should clearly reference the portions of “The Selfish Ledger” you’re responding to. For example, if you’re discussing a point made in the video host made between minutes four and seven, include a timestamp as follows: (00:04:35 – 00:07:50). Your submission should contain such timestamps for each of the three points you’re discussing; if you are discussing specific segments (e.g., “Episodes”) of the video, please make reference to those episode titles.
* Please use APA format for references and bibliography (references and bibliography do not count towards the word count)

**Grading Rubric**:

(**4pts**) Appropriate format

(**4pts**) Clarity and organization of writing

(**4pts**) Definition of “sociotechnical” in your own words + example

(**3pts**) Specification of the three aspects you agree/disagree with

(**6pts**) Well-founded agreement/disagreement with the three points you choose

(**4pts**) Summary of why sociotechnical thinking is required when designing new products/initiatives

**Reasoning**:

* Email is a standard mode of communication in professional settings;
* Writing remains a profoundly important skill to develop;
* A short word limit will encourage you to choose your words wisely – this is a major hurdle for many writers, who assume that “longer” = “better”;
* In tech fields (everything from libraries to Big Tech), it is often difficult to make sociotechnical arguments (i.e., to convince colleagues that sociotechnics matter). This exercise is intended to help you prepare for that ☺

**Pro Tips:**

* It is more difficult to write short pieces than it is to write long ones. You have roughly 500 words to express your ideas. Just because this is a short writing assignment, do not wait until the last minute to complete it.
* Any aspect of the video is a valid aspect to discuss, so long as your discussion of it is grounded in the readings we have discussed in class.