

Humanity in IT

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1. First reflections

In week 7, you will have a class on cultural appropriation and stereotypes. After that class, write down your first reflections on cultural appropriation and stereotypes. This can be in the workplace, in your personal life or based on personal experiences. Aim for 100 to 150 words.

Before the lesson I never really thought about it like for Halloween I thought it was fine and normal to dress up in anything you want but now I see that for non-dominant groups this is not nice. I didn't realize it could enforce stereotypes or misunderstandings for these cultures.

I (Quinten) have realized I unknowingly appropriated Saudi Drifting culture by making videos of playing a game and doing Saudi drifting (Hajwala / Tafheet). I didn't intent to be malicious but now see that it's damaging to the car culture of Saudi Arabia. I also used the wrong music for these videos.

I (Alexander) at school when I was young, they also did like the 'Indianen dans' and dressed up as Indians for kids but that also has been cultural appropriation, so you do it already in school when you're young. You kind of grow up doing it.

2. Research

In week 8, you will have a class on how IT can impact our worldview. Pick a culturally relevant topic of your own and research it. Aim for 500 to 600 words, excluding your bibliography. Provide enough background information and make sure to separate fact from opinion. You are encouraged to share your opinion, but make sure you frame it as such and can give multiple, strong points of argumentation. Three different sources in your text and bibliography are the absolute minimum.

The impact of IT on political activism

IT has completely changed political activism because you can now use the internet to spread information on, for example social media platforms or even your own website. But this could also be a negative because of this you also get a lot of misinformation, you get government surveillance and even online censorship.

One of the biggest impacts of IT is how it helps people organize and act quickly. Social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook allow activists to share updates and gather support. For example, during the Arab Spring in 2010–2012 social media played a key role in helping people organize protests and share what was happening with the world. In the 2019 Hong Kong protests, apps like Telegram were used for secure communication to avoid government tracking.

IT also makes it easier to reach a bigger audience. For example, by using hashtags like #BLM The Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 gained massive support thanks to the hashtags and viral videos that exposed injustices.

Alexander: I find the internet very useful for all the information you can find but I feel like activist are very dependent of platforms like Facebook, Twitter or even TikTok now and if they want, they can just delete the videos or posts.

Quinten: Social media has become the easiest way to find information from individual people and media from around the world. IT has made it possible for everyone to be connected and share opinions and information about situations which is a double-edged sword still.

While IT helps with spreading useful information, there is also misinformation that gets spread. For example, a lot of social media platforms push content that gets a lot of views and likes to more people even if it's not correct information. Or even during the 2016 U.S. election, fake news stories and misleading posts were shared confusing voters and their opinions.

Alexander: In my opinion this is the scariest thing about IT because some people believe certain things that are or are not true, but they don't even know that it isn't true. Because sometimes they watch a short video and believe what the person said but you should always do your own research before believing it.

Quinten: I don't like how misinformation and disinformation are easily spread on social media. They can give millions, even billions, the wrong perspective on something, which can become harmful to lots of people. Propaganda is now much easier to spread on these platforms. Also, with AI, footage can be convincingly manipulated, potentially having harmful impacts on the lives of many people.

It helps activists but it also makes the government can track them. Some countries have tools like facial recognition cameras and even internet shutdowns to try and stop protests. For example, during Hong Kong protest people had to use umbrellas and laser pointers to not get identified by the facial recognition cameras.

Alexander: I think that protestors should implement more anonymous and secure chat rooms to communicate with each other because in some countries they could get in a lot of trouble. But even for us I think we should take privacy more seriously because everything we do online can be tracked by your internet provider. I also find that wanting to have more privacy by using tools like Tails OS gives a wrong impression to thinking that you are probably doing something illegal but you're just taking privacy more seriously.

Quinten: IT has transformed political activism making it easier to organize and spread awareness. However, it also leads to misinformation and surveillance. IT is a powerful tool for activism, but it needs to be used carefully.

History.com Editors. (2020, 17 januari). Arab Spring. HISTORY. Via <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/arab-spring>

Hughes, B. H. C. & R. (2020, 21 mei). Why are there protests in Hong Kong? All the context you need. BBC News. Via <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-48607723>

Pew Research Center. (2024, 25 oktober). *#BlackLivesMatter turns 10*. Via <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2023/06/29/blacklivesmatter-turns-10/>

Freedom House. (z.d.). The Rise of Digital Authoritarianism. In Freedom House. Via <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2018/rise-digital-authoritarianism>

3. Growth as an IT professional

This exercise should contribute to your growth as an IT professional. Briefly reflect on what you have learned and *how* you will use this once you graduate and enter the workforce. Avoid broad, vague or general statements. Aim for 100 to 200 words.

Alexander: I have learned that you should take privacy very serious and also try and stay anonymous online by using tools like Tails OS, especially if you are an activist. I didn't know that in some countries it was this strict with even internet shutdowns and identifying you from social media to real life with facial recognition cameras. Once I graduate, I will always try to stay safe and anonymous online and don't believe everything on the internet. Always do your own research before believing in someone else. When I work with data, I would make sure that it is secure so nobody could use this information for a bad purpose. At work or even life in general I would try not to make stereotypes and keep in mind non-dominant groups. For example, because we are from the IT world it would have happened once where you make a joke of Indian scammers and use their accent but if someone from India hears that they wouldn't like it.

Quinten: I have learned how IT both helps and endangers activists and users online. When I graduate, I will use IT responsibly and avoid spreading misinformation, I will also instruct people measures to take on the internet. I will take privacy seriously in personal and professional settings, applying secure tools and promoting ethical practices. I will also be mindful of cultural aspects in IT, reflecting on my past experiences like my cultural appropriation of Saudi drifting. This awareness has helped me in spotting cultural appropriation and other malpractices. I aim to continuously educate myself and others on ethical IT practices to create a more inclusive online environment.