

## Assignment 1: i203 – Social and Organizational Issues of Information

### Notes:

- Assignment 1 is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2008.
- Bring **two** stapled copies of your assignment to class.
- Papers should be double-spaced, 12-point font (e.g., Times New Roman).
- Cite quotes and paraphrased arguments from the readings using parenthetical documentation, i.e., (Cheshire, p.24).

### Part I (60%)

Choose 2 of the following 3 questions, and answer each one of them in approximately 500 words. At the top of each response, please clearly note the question you are answering.

1. Briefly state a problem or question of interest to you that has come up in class discussions or readings. **Use specific examples from course readings** to explain and contextualize this problem. Then discuss specific ways that you might use quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the problem. We are *not* asking you to design a specific study; rather, we want you to explain how your chosen methodological approach (or approaches) could be used to address your chosen problem. The bulk of your response should be devoted to explain and justifying your methodological choices, not re-stating the question or problem.
2. Your employer is about to launch a new web service that allows people to upload their own pictures, movies, etc. and wants to know if it is 'Web 2.0'. Do not actually worry about the specifics of what this service does. In a short memo to your employer, **use specific examples from course readings** to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of adopting the moniker of Web 2.0.
3. A friend is explaining to you why he believes that the internet causes us to behave in different ways. This, of course, reminds you of some of your early readings and discussions about social science internet research from i203. **Using specific examples from course readings**, describe what social science research says about the general relationship between the internet and human behavior. Then explain why you find the evidence convincing or unconvincing.

### Part II (30%)

Answer the following question in approximately 500 words.

'Network neutrality' is the principle that networks should be free of imposed limitations on modes of communication, hardware, platforms, and content – that communication channels should be 'neutral' in each of these respects. Net neutrality has spawned heated debate in recent months on both sides, pro and con. **Using specific examples from the readings**, discuss the social implications of network neutrality from both sides of the debate. Note that while your opinion on the matter will certainly show through, your response should not be devoted to arguing for one side or the other.

For background on the network neutrality debate see:

[http://timwu.org/network\\_neutrality.html](http://timwu.org/network_neutrality.html)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Network\\_neutrality](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Network_neutrality)

[http://www.infoworld.com/article/08/02/13/Lawmakers-introduce-new-net-neutrality-bill\\_1.html](http://www.infoworld.com/article/08/02/13/Lawmakers-introduce-new-net-neutrality-bill_1.html)

### **Part III (10%)**

Describe at least two topic areas of interest to you that could become your final paper for i203. These could be topics that we have covered in our overviews in the past few weeks, topics that we have not yet discussed in class but are on the syllabus, or topics that are related to social issues of information but are not even on our syllabus. You will get full credit for this part of the assignment as long as you write one paragraph explaining each of your topic ideas.

To stimulate your thinking, here are some sample final paper topics from previous years.

- Motivation in Open-Source Software Development
- What kind of Social Networks Enable ICT Diffusion in Developing Regions?
- Social Issues in Privacy within Facebook
- The Effects of Anonymity in Internet Systems on the Development of Self-Esteem
- Evaluating the Panopticon Effect in the Use of Computer Surveillance