

Assignment 1

Due Date: Tuesday, Feb 9th, 2012

- Assignment 1 is due at the beginning of class
- 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 paraphrase arguments from the readings using parenthetical documentation according to the reader's pagination, i.e. (Ackerman, p.24). You do not need a bibliography for articles and papers used in the course syllabus.
- **Grading Criteria:** you will be graded on (1) your fully answering all aspects of the questions, (2) your understanding of course readings (how you reference them in your essays) (3) the logic of your claims (4) your extension of concepts and arguments from course readings to new situations/topics

Short essays (90%): Answer 2 out of 4 essay topics. Each essay response should be about 500 words, which is roughly 2 double spaced pages of text.

1. Consider the following statement: "The rapidly growing smart phone market and the convergence of the Internet and mobile phones was inevitable; as a society we increasingly demand information anytime, anywhere and this was the next logical step." In your essay, answer both of these questions: (1) what theoretical perspective(s) that we have discussed in class and in our readings are represented in this statement, and (2) defend or oppose this statement using support from our readings and lectures. *Note: there is no one right answer for defending or opposing this statement. A successful answer will provide a clear argument and cite evidence (author and page number) from our course materials.*

2. Examples of what Ackerman defines as the "social-technical gap" abound among the information and communication technologies we use today. Consider a popular technology (hardware, software, or web service) that you have some personal experience with such as the mobile phone, Facebook, Foursquare, etc. Give 1 or 2 examples you can think of, drawing from personal experience or observation, of the "socio-technical gap" in the functions and uses of these technologies. What specific findings from Ackerman's summary of CSCW research are apparent in your examples? Comparing your experience with at least one of the historical cases we have read about in class, what design changes can you envision that would better mediate this gap? *You should cite the article we read from him as well as any other course reading as necessary (author and page number).*

3. The New York Times article "The Facebook Resisters" (Dec 13, 2011) <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/14/technology/shunning-facebook-and-living-to-tell-about-it.html> profiles individuals who have resisted getting onto Facebook up until now or who have used it and then decided to close their accounts. Pick two readings among the following: Brown and Duguid, Ackerman, Winner, Fischer, Bijker, Cowan and compare how they might explain this phenomenon. You may wish to also take into account these letters to the editor in your analysis:

- <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/16/opinion/like-facebook-count-them-out.html?scp=1&sq=like%20facebook>
- http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/29/opinion/truth-and-facebook.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=facebook&st=Search

Note: As always, the best answers will use specific examples from the readings and cite course readings as necessary (author and page number).

4. “The tools now offered by Google (Google Search, Google Books, Google Scholar) have made the brick-and-mortar library and the job role of librarian obsolete.” In your essay, answer both of these questions: (1) identify one or two tasks that have been delegated from libraries and librarians to non-humans and (2) defend or oppose this statement using support from our readings and lectures. *Note: As always, the best answers will use specific examples from the readings and cite course readings as necessary (author and page number).*

Part II (10%)

Answer the following question in 300 words maximum.

Describe at least two or three topic areas (but no more than three) of interest to you that could become your final paper for i203. These could be topics that we have covered in class, topics that we have not yet discussed in class but are on the syllabus, or issues that relate to social issues of information that interest you but are not even on our syllabus. Tell us about (1) your topic idea, (2) what interests you about it, (3) various angles you might take. You are not locking yourself into anything at this point. We simply want you to brainstorm and begin the process of finding a suitable topic for your final paper.

To stimulate your thinking, here are some sample final paper topics from previous years (and some ideas that we thought up)

- How Twitter and Other Communication Tools Spread Spoilers and Challenge the Freedom to Time-Shift Television
- The Diffusion of Open ID
- Issues of Ethical Hacking
- Mobile Phone Usage and Its Effects on Personal Safety
- Motivation in Open-Source Software Development
- Social Issues in Privacy within Facebook (you could even focus in on one particular issue)
- The Effects of Anonymity in Internet Systems on the Development of Self-Esteem
- Evaluating the Privacy Effect in the Use of Computer Surveillance
- Implications of Phone Sharing for Expanding Communication Access in Rural Africa
- The Uses and Abuses of Anthropomorphism in User Interface Design