
Should Facebook Censor Political Posts?

Segment Length: 2:48 minutes; 4:30 minutes

Videos:

“Why Facebook Needs to Take Responsibility for Fake News”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCHSOTnXpB8>

“The New Censors”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZ-3yQfy2wg>

Guide:

The questions below will help students achieve a better understanding of the arguments made on either side of a contentious topic. Because these questions often touch upon statements made briefly in the videos, we recommend reading the questions before watching each video.

Students are encouraged to take notes during the videos, and it may be helpful for students to break into groups, each taking responsibility for only a few questions, before coming together for discussion.

Analysis Questions:

1. Wesley Lowery says that Facebook has a responsibility to provide a forum for “sane and reasonable interaction.” Do you agree? Why/Why not? How would John Stossel respond?
2. John Stossel says that Facebook’s warnings carry weight, and that Facebook will show content that receives warnings to fewer users. Is this reasonable? How would Wesley Lowery respond?
3. Lowery says that “Facebook has allowed millions of people to become deeply ill-informed.” How would John Stossel respond?
4. Stossel shows that his content was flagged due to things he never said, and claimed that the appeals process was complicated and unreasonable. Is this a reason for Facebook to stop censoring posts? Can you think of a better process?
5. Lowery compares Facebook to a newspaper which publishes letters from its readers. Is this a fair comparison? Why/Why not?
6. Both Stossel and Lowery agree that social media is a powerful tool for spreading information, and perhaps misinformation. Do you use social media to get news and information? Have you encountered “fake news”? Have you encountered censorship?