Lecture 3-2
Networked Communications
Government Control of the Internet

- North Korea: Internet mostly inaccessible; Myanmar: formerly inaccessible; Cuba: Notoriously slow & expensive.
- Saudi Arabia: centralized control
- People’s Republic of China: “one of most sophisticated filtering systems in the world” as well as censorship
- Germany: Forbids access to neo-Nazi sites
- United States: Limits access of minors to pornography
- Can you think of other examples?
Rising Cyber Sovereignty Threatens to Further Splinter the Internet

More governments are imposing restrictions on the flow of information across national borders.

**MORE OPEN INTERNET**

**EUROPEAN UNION**
In July 2020, the EU’s highest court invalidated the bloc’s US-data-sharing agreement, jeopardizing one of the internet’s busiest border crossings.

**INDIA**
The world leader in internet shutdowns, the government banned over 100 Chinese apps and may compel companies to store citizens’ personal data domestically.

**UNITED STATES**
The Trump administration’s unprecedented move to ban TikTok and WeChat was a step toward cyber sovereignty.

**MORE CLOSED INTERNET**

**HONG KONG**
The Beijing-imposed National Security Law threatens to extend the Great Firewall into the region.

**RUSSIA**
The “Sovereign Internet” law could see the Russian web secede from the international internet. Foreign websites are already blocked en masse.

**TURKEY**
A new law coerces social media platforms to comply with censorship and surveillance, effectively extinguishing channels of free speech.

**VIETNAM**
Authorities slowed down connections to Facebook in an apparent push to force the company to cooperate with censorship demands.

**CHINA**
The Great Firewall is the world’s most heavily fortified digital border and controls what information enters and exits the country.

**IRAN**
A national “intranet” of government-approved content is being built to prevent Iranians from accessing the global internet.

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Recent Changes in Internet Freedom

Largest One-Year and Five-Year Score Declines
Of the 65 countries covered by Freedom on the Net, these experienced the steepest one-year and five-year declines in internet freedom.

**Biggest 1-year decline**
- MYANMAR: 36 to 31
- KYRGYZSTAN: 61 to 56
- INDIA: 55 to 51
- ECUADOR: 61 to 57
- NIGERIA: 64 to 60

**Biggest 5-year decline**
- VENEZUELA: 40 to 28
- EGYPT: 37 to 26
- PHILIPPINES: 74 to 64
- RWANDA: 49 to 39
- KYRGYZSTAN: 65 to 56

Internet Freedom Score - Biggest Gains
- Sudan
- Ukraine
- Zimbabwe

Sudan saw a 5 point improvement in its internet freedom score.
Ukraine saw a 5 point improvement in its internet freedom score.
Zimbabwe saw a 4 point improvement in its internet freedom score.
Forms of Direct Censorship

• Government monopolization of a communication medium
  – E.g., the government owns all television stations, or all printing presses, and so controls the message
  – Doesn’t work so well with the Internet (though see Saudi Arabia; China)

• Prepublication review
  – Certain kinds of information must be reviewed before they can be published
  – E.g., nuclear/military secrets

• Licensing and registration
  – You can’t operate a TV station without a license
  – Necessary because of limited bandwidth
  – Opens the door to regulation of content (as in Canada)
Self-censorship

• Most common form of censorship
• Group decides for itself not to publish
• Reasons
  – Avoid subsequent prosecution
  – Maintain good relations with government officials (sources of information)
• A “soft” form of self-censorship: ratings systems
  – Movies, TVs, CDs, video games
  – Nothing similar has happened on the Web
    • At least, not consistently.
Challenges Posed by the Internet

- Many-to-many communications
  - Hard for the government to shut down (but not at all impossible)
- Dynamic connections
  - Computers coming and going all the time; hard to know who’s who
- Huge numbers of Web sites
  - Hard to control access to online information
- Extends beyond national borders, laws
  - Governments may have limited authority to shut down sites
- Hard to distinguish between minors and adults
  - Important for initiatives that seek to restrict children’s access
Ethical Perspectives on Censorship

• Kant opposed censorship
  – Product of the Enlightenment: reaction to institutional control
  – “Have courage to use your own reason”

• Mill opposed censorship
  1. No one is infallible: we may silence the truth.
  2. Even if not, an opinion may contain a kernel of truth.
  3. Even if not, the truth must be rationally tested and validated.
  4. Ideas are most persuasive if they’re tested rigorously.

Principle of harm: “The only ground on which intervention is justified is to prevent harm to others; the individual’s own good is not a sufficient condition.”

*When, if ever, do you think censorship is justified?*
Freedom of Expression: History

• De Scandalis Magnatum (England, 1275)
  – You could be imprisoned for weakening loyalty to the King
  – Not so different from lèse-majesty laws today, esp. in Thailand, Morocco, Jordan (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lese-majesty)

• 18th century: freedom of the press in England
  – Anyone could print what they liked
  – Punishment for libel: publication causing harm, even if truth

• American states adopted bills of rights including freedom of expression
  – Freedom of expression in 1st amendment to U.S. Constitution: “Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press”
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

1. The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* guarantees the rights and freedoms set out in it subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.

2. Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:

(a) freedom of conscience and religion;

(b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication;

(c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and

(d) freedom of association.
Freedom of Expression is always in the news
Freedom of Expression is not an Absolute Right

- Right to freedom of expression must be balanced against the public good
- Various restrictions on freedom of expression exist
  - e.g., Section 1 of the Canadian Charter is used to justify laws against hate speech, even though these limit expression

In pairs:

*Which restrictions on freedom of expression do you think are justified?*
Identity Theft

- Identity theft: when a person uses another person’s electronic identity
- Phishing: use of email to attempt to deceive people into revealing personal information

Child Sex Abuse Imagery

- Recent explosion in online child sex abuse imagery
  - 1998: 3,000 reports of child sex abuse imagery
  - 2009: over 100,000 reports
  - 2014: over 1,000,000 reports
  - 2018: over 18,400,000 reports
    - 1/3 of total ever reported; represents over 45,000,000 images

- It’s important that we approach this issue with sensitivity
  - also important that we not ignore it; it’s important

- What factors contribute to this epidemic?
- Why have legal responses failed?
- What can be done?
Cyberbullying

- Cyberbullying: Use of the Internet or phone system to inflict psychological harm
- In a 2009 survey, 10% admitted to cyberbullying, and 19% said they had been cyberbullied (2016 same)
Sexting

• Definition: sexually suggestive text messages or emails with nude or nearly nude photographs
• In a 2009 survey, 9% of U.S. teenagers admitted to sending a sext, 17% admitted to receiving a sext
• 2018 study: 14% sending; 25% receiving
• Case of Jesse Logan
  – killed herself after ex-boyfriend shared pictures
• Case of Phillip Alpert
  – just turned 18; sent pictures of his 16 year-old girlfriend.
  – sentenced and registered as a sex offender for child pornography
• Case of Ting-Yi Oei
  – principal kept a copy of a picture as evidence
  – angry parent sued him
  – lost job over child pornography charges

How should society respond to sexting?
Chat-Room Predators

• Chat room: supports real-time discussions among many people connected to network
• Instant messaging and chat rooms replacing telephone for many people
• Some pedophiles meeting children through chat rooms
• Police countering with “sting” operations

Are chatroom “stings” ethical?

Kantianism, Utilitarianism (act/rule), Social Contract, Virtue Ethics
Internet Addiction/Excessive Use

• Some liken compulsive computer use to pathological gambling

• Traditional definition of addiction:
  – Compulsive use of harmful substance or drug
  – Knowledge of its long-term harm

• Some people spend 40-80 hours/week on the Internet, with individual sessions lasting up to 20 hours
Is Internet Addiction Real?

• Kimberly Young created test for Internet addiction
  – Sample question: “Have you repeatedly made unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop Internet use?”
  – Patients who answer “yes” to at least 5 of 8 questions may be addicted

• Arguments against it being an addiction
  – Computer use is generally considered a positive activity
  – Do not need more to function; we don’t develop a ‘tolerance’
  – Excessive use does not lead to criminal activity
  – More accurate to call excessive use a compulsion
Vote

Do you believe that internet addiction is real?
A: Yes
B: No

Does society bear an ethical responsibility for excessive internet use/internet addiction?
A: Yes
B: Somewhat
C: No

Should we hold tech companies accountable?