

Info for educators – Privacy and Social Media – Fall 2019

Module Description

This module introduces students to the issues around privacy and social media. Students will develop understand of privacy on the internet as a concept, along with learning how and why information is collected and used. This is one of a series of modules designed to introduce young adults to cybersecurity concepts. It uses news articles to highlight the impact of privacy on social media.

Module contents

- 1) Recorded lecture (approx. 40 minutes)
- 2) Slide deck materials (pdf)
- 3) Discussion topics (below)
- 4) Suggested assignments (below)

Student Learning Outcomes

- Develop student knowledge of the fundamental principles of privacy from on the internet
- Understand how information is collected and used to shape our online experience
- Learn about the role of social media in collecting and using personal information
- Understand the concept of microtargeting and the use of “fake news” to influence decisions
- Learn basic methods of protecting persona information and recognizing use of target advertising and information

Time/Effort

- Recorded lecture – approx. 40 minutes
- Reading/reviewing the posted links – approx. 1 hour
- Interactive “getbadnews” game – approx. 15-20 minutes
- Discussion: 30 – 60 minutes

Suggested Discussion Topics

- How do you feel about the use of information about your activities – what websites you’ve visited, your browser search terms, your shopping records... to influence the advertisements you see online. Is that a good thing or a bad thing?
- How do you feel about the use of information about you as an individual – where you live, what car you drive, how much money you make, what opinions and posts you’ve liked and disliked... to influence those advertisements? How about to influence the news you see? Good thing or bad thing?
- Compare your answers to topics 1 and 2 – do you feel different about which information use used or whether it is for advertising or “influence” such as was used for the 2016 election? Why. What makes them different.

- Review your social media feeds. Can you find examples of microtargeting or fake/influence news? Share some (non-embarrassing) examples and see if you can explain how or why that ad or “news” item was placed in your feed.
- (more in depth) Research how internet privacy laws have changed over the past 20 years. Why do you think the laws were created and in some cases, dismantled. Who is benefiting from these changes? (suggest – minimum 3 page paper)
- Ask students to play the “getbadnews.com” game. Create a competition for the most followers and credibility. Then ask students if they think there should be any consequence for persons who create fake news with the intent of influencing an election or other popular opinion. Briefly have them review the concepts of libel and free speech under the first amendment. Are US laws adequate to address this problem? What about when the fake news is created by people outside the US? In general, whose responsibility is it to prevent this?

Suggested reading:

Listed in slide deck:

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/16/technology/facebook-microtargeting-advertising.html>
- <https://www.wired.com/story/cambridge-analytica-facebook-privacy-awakening/>
- <https://www.pnas.org/content/114/48/12714>
- <https://getbadnews.com>
- <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/russian-intel-planted-fake-report-that-seth-rich-was-killed-by-assassins-working-for-clinton>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/07/09/dont-blame-seth-rich-conspiracy-russians-blame-americans>
- https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/business/media/how-fake-news-spreads.html?_r=0

Other

Books:

- Bruce Schneier, “Data and Goliath – The Hidden Battle to Collect Your Data and Control Your World”, Norton, 2015
- Cyrus Farivar. *Habeas Data: Privacy vs the Rise of Surveillance Tech*. Melville House, 2018.

Web:

- <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/opinion/internet-privacy-project.html>
- <https://www.eff.org/issues/privacy>

Video:

- Documentary: Karim Amer, Jehane Noujaim, “The Great Hack”, Netflix, 2019

