Social Media Platform Analysis

For this assignment, we'll be combining visual rhetoric with critical analysis. This project involves choosing a social media platform to analyze with regard to ethics, practices, and potential impact on the professional/civic lives of its users. Some topics to consider in your research include:

- Data collection of users – how it's collected, stored, and used
- User agreements
- User privacy
- Overall functionality of the platform
- Promotion of mis/disinformation, AI-generated content (nonsense text posts, inappropriate, violent, pornographic, or otherwise harmful images), and/or hate speech
- Methods of content moderation
- Algorithmic bias (promoting certain users over others, shadowbanning users, etc.)

Methods of finding this type of information can include:
- Conversations on subreddits about the platform
- Trending hashtags on X/Instagram
- News articles
- The platform's press releases and/or marketing materials
- Senate hearings (for some platforms including Meta and TikTok)
- Legislative documents (TikTok)
- Biographical information on the platform's CEO/upper-level administration

For your analysis of this information, I'd like for you to pay particular attention to a few items:
- Potential impact on future professional/civic lives of users
- Potential impact on social media influencers
- Potential impact on companies who use the platform to promote their business
- Impact that mis/disinformation, AI-generated content, hate speech, and algorithmic bias has on the user experience of the platform
- Impact on those who moderate content for the platform

The first draft of this assignment will be a written piece. This piece should be well-organized, well-researched, understandable to a wide audience, and around 1500-1800 words. Think about genres like op-eds, exposés, and investigative reports. The first draft will be submitted to a discussion board for peer review.

The final draft of this assignment will incorporate visual rhetoric. This could mean turning your written piece into a series of TikTok videos, a YouTube video essay, an interactive webpage, a thread on X, a series of Instagram posts, a graphic design piece, a PSA, or something else entirely. Visual pieces should take approximately 4-6 minutes to view/read (if a graphic design piece, interactive webpage, thread on X, or a series of

Instagram posts) or approximately 6-8 minutes to watch (if in video form, whether that be a PSA, TikTok series, or YouTube video essay).

There should be multiple points of visual interest throughout your final piece; these points of visual interest must be accessible to a broad range of viewers, they must be visually appealing and follow the design concepts we've been reading about and discussing in class, and they must be properly cited if not created by you. Relevant and appropriate hashtags should be incorporated following current social media trends and best practices.

Public Writing Syllabus Statement Refresher
Some of the work you do in this class is intended to be professional and public on the web. If you are not comfortable having your intellectual property published online, please reach out as soon as possible. While an important component of this course is practicing online writing, your intellectual property and rights as an author supersede that learning outcome. I cannot legally require you to publish public writing under your own name; if you would prefer to publish under a pseudonym that is well within your right as a student. This may involve creating a "burner" email account to use to create new social media accounts under personas/alter-egos/fictional identities, etc. Your identity should be clear to me, however, when submitting assignments.