Background

According to Clay Shirky, a New York University professor and social media theorist, there have been four revolutions that have fundamentally changed the way we communicate: (1) the printing press, (2) the telephone and the telegraph, (3) television and radio, and now (4) social media. As with the previous revolutions, there are pros and cons, winners and losers.

“Social media” are websites and applications used for social networking, i.e. finding and communicating with people who share similar interests to oneself. Note that texting, e-mail, Google searches, and other uses of smartphones or the Internet do not constitute social networking.

This research essay will evaluate contemporary social media. However, its purpose is not to decide whether the social media revolution is a good thing or a bad thing. In this assignment, “evaluating” means showing the strengths and weaknesses—the benefits as well as the risks and dangers—of this phenomenon.

This assignment is also an introduction to academic research. You will be doing book research in the Goleman Library and Internet research online. See the Prewriting #3 handouts for step-by-step guidance. Don’t fall behind!

Documentation

In academic research like this, writers will “cite” (borrow) information from a variety of sources such as periodicals, web sites, and books. Writers must always “document” their sources, i.e. show where the information comes from.

WHY document?

1. It always strengthens your case to show that you are not merely expressing your opinion but that you have trusted authorities to back you up. The reader may also want to go and investigate these same sources.

2. Ethically, you should always give credit where credit is due. If you don’t do this, you are guilty of plagiarism. When you plagiarize, you are both a thief and a liar! You are a thief because you have stolen another person’s material, and you are a liar because you have pretended that it is your own. There are penalties associated with plagiarism, sometimes quite severe.

HOW document?

1. An IN-TEXT CITATION in the body of your essay every time you rely on an outside source for information.

2. An END CITATIONS page at the end of your essay.

Prompt

Write a three-page (minimum) research paper with an additional END CITATIONS page evaluating today’s social media revolution. Cite at least one of the single-author books and one of the multiple-author books on reserve in the Goleman Library + at least five other sources from procon.org. See Prewriting and Format handouts for further instructions.

You will first conduct your research and compile a tentative END CITATIONS page showing where you obtained your information. Then you will write your essay and attach your finalized END CITATIONS page. You will receive two grades: one for your essay and one for your END CITATIONS page.