

## Instruction

Recently, Frances Haugen, a former Facebook employee, presented testimony before Congress (and also in public interviews) describing how Facebook's engagement algorithms encourage extreme content, and testifying that Facebook knows this but chooses not to modify its algorithm because doing so would lessen their advertising revenues. Apparently, content that promotes conspiracy theories, fear, and mistrust of others draws in users to remain on the platform longer and become more engaged than thoughtful, moderate content that encourages people to consider both sides and seek the truth. Further, evidence was presented that Instagram (also owned by Facebook) can be "toxic" to teens and, in a substantial number of cases, may lead to anxiety, stress, and depression in young girls, and that Facebook is also aware of this. For example, its viral search algorithm was demonstrated to lead extremely quickly from queries about a healthy diet to shocking sites promoting anorexia as a means of losing weight.

Legally, Facebook may not face any repercussions for its actions, because current corporate law holds corporations responsible primarily to their shareholders, which encourages them to maximize profit at nearly any cost. Additionally, Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act protects online hosting services like Facebook from liability associated with user-generated content, based on the premise that such companies simply provide access, not oversight.

**Do you believe that Facebook's position is ethical? Why or why not? What professional responsibility should Facebook have when considering how its actions may affect the mental health of the users of their platform, and/or the health of the public and our democracy as a whole?**

**Write an essay that discusses your personal views of Facebook's ethical and professional responsibilities. As part of your discussion, analyze this situation using TWO of the ethical theories (not including relativism or egoism) such as Divine Command Theory, Act Utilitarianism , Deontology , Social Contract as ethical theory, Virtue Ethics.**

**You may use Professionalism of the online textbook to refer to it while completing this essay if you find it helpful.**