



General Certificate of Secondary Education  
June 2014

**General Studies**

**47601/PM**

**Unit 1 (Case Study)**

## **Case Study Material**

Case Study material on '**Individual responsibility in the online world**'

### **Instructions**

- To be issued to teachers and candidates on or after **1 March 2014**.
- You may write notes in this copy of the Case Study, but you will not be allowed to bring this copy, or any notes you may have made, into the examination.
- You will be given a clean copy of this material at the start of the examination on Monday 9 June 2014.

### **Advice** (See Specification, 2.1 Summary of Assessment)

- Teachers are allowed to discuss this material with candidates.
- Candidates are encouraged to do their own research and wider-reading around the topic and sources provided.

**There is no source material printed on this page**

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Study **all** the information in this booklet.

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## **'Individual responsibility in the online world'**

The information in this booklet comprises the following:

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(See **Advice** on the front cover of this booklet)

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Source 1

# Trolling: Who does it and why?

An internet “troll” has been jailed for mocking dead teenagers on various websites. Public figures, including Stephen Fry and Miranda Hart, have also been victims of trolling. So what is it and why do people do it?



Celebrities are often targets for abuse

Trolling is a phenomenon that has swept across websites in recent years. Online forums, Facebook pages and newspaper comment forms are bombarded with insults, provocations or threats. Supporters argue it's about humour, mischief and freedom of speech. But for many the ferocity and personal nature of the abuse verges on hate speech.

In its most extreme form it is a criminal offence. Sean Duffy was jailed for 18 weeks after posting offensive messages and videos on tribute pages about young people who had died. Duffy is the second person to be jailed for trolling in the UK. Colm Coss was imprisoned for posting obscene messages on Facebook tribute sites, including that of the late Jade Goody.

Trolling appears to be part of an international phenomenon that includes cyberbullying. One of the first high-profile cases emerged in the US state of Missouri in 2006, when 13-year-old Megan Meier killed herself after being bullied online. The bully, Lori Drew, was a middle-aged neighbour who had set up a MySpace account to win - and later betray - her trust.

The First Amendment of the US Constitution protects free speech and makes it difficult to punish people who post offensive messages. But concern over internet vitriol is growing.

Facebook's former marketing director Randi Zuckerberg and Google head Eric Schmidt have both suggested that anonymous posting should be phased out.

One of the difficulties is that trolling is a broad term, taking in everything from a cheeky provocation to violent threats. And why people do it continues to baffle the experts.

“Online people feel anonymous and disinhibited,” says Prof Mark Griffiths, director of the International Gaming Research Unit at Nottingham Trent University. “They lower their emotional guard and in the heat of the moment may troll either reactively or proactively.”

“It is usually carried out by young adult males for amusement, boredom and revenge,” he adds.

Arthur Cassidy, a social media psychologist, says young people’s determination to create an online identity makes them vulnerable to trolling. Secrecy is jettisoned in favour of self-publicity on Facebook, opening the way for ridicule, jealousy and betrayal.

“Most trolling is not criminal - it’s about having a laugh”, says Rob Manuel, co-founder of the website B3ta, which specialises in altering photographs for comic effect. “Trolling taps into people’s desire to poke fun, make trouble and cause annoyance,” he says.

Twitter has given the public direct access to celebrities. And stars, including Stephen Fry and Miranda Hart, have temporarily left the website after coming under fire. Internet experts say the key is not to “feed the troll” by offering them a response. Comedian Dom Joly takes a different approach.

He describes himself as “troll slayer” and takes pleasure in tracking down the culprits and exposing them to public shame, especially from close family.

“There’s something about a bully that really annoys me,” he says. “They’ll say something online that they’d never dare to say to your face.”

The deviousness is “freaky”. He discovered that one of those who’d threatened him was a 14-year-old girl with nine different online identities. “They aren’t always very intelligent about how they do it”, he says.

“One guy tweeted from his work account that he hoped my kids die of cancer. I let the MD of the firm know and the guy was fired. I felt no guilt, he should have gone to prison.”

## The law

- The Communications Act 2003 governs the internet, email, mobile phone calls and text messaging.
- Under section 127 of the act, it is an offence to send messages that are “grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character”.
- The offence occurs whether those targeted actually receive the message or not.

Source: adapted from ‘Trolling: Who does it and why?’, BBC News Magazine, 14 September 2011  
Photograph by Karwai Tang/ © Getty Images

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## Source 2

# No trolls please, we're debating

by Daisy Blacklock in MediaLab

**Why do you comment online? We ask regular Internet debaters about the who, what and whys of speaking up.**

Wind back forty years. If you wanted to respond to something you'd read in a newspaper, your option was to write a letter, put it in an envelope, and pop it in the letterbox.

But now there are other kinds of 'post'.



Today you can write what you think of a newspaper article instantly after you've read it by posting your thoughts in the space beneath it. You can articulate your views in your personal blog, and Tweet interesting links for your followers. You can post articles, music, video clips and pictures onto your friends' Facebook pages.

These online spaces are not only useful for sharing information, but for housing discussion and debate. The use of social networking sites – such as Facebook and Twitter – are now a part of many people's daily routine, as are conversations on forums or chat rooms for those with shared interests and concerns. Millions of people are finding a voice, forging links to others irrespective of geography, and enjoying the internet as a space for free expression.

In MediaLab, we asked those who make a regular appearance on the internet to tell us what they thought of debating, discussing, and sharing information online. Here we present the range of opinion: from what participants feel is the 'character' of debate and why they get involved, to some pointers for making the most of it.

**MediaLab asked: Which words do you think best describe the tone of the conversation, comment and debate that you usually see taking place online?**

Here's what MediaLab participants said:



[the larger the word, the more frequently it appeared]

**MediaLab asked: Why do you comment online?**

For many of you who comment online, the answer to this question was a simple one: “To express my opinion”. Frequently, MediaLab participants said they “felt strongly” about topics being aired, which is why they enter into a debate or discussion. And across responses, participants gave a variety of reasons as to why they felt sharing opinions online was a worthwhile activity.

- Many said that having an online presence gave them a voice, and enabled them to tap into national debate
- Some remarked that the internet provides a vital, free forum in which people can express themselves, and share views that they might not otherwise give ‘offline’
- They also liked the feeling of being able to impart their knowledge and wisdom of experience, in a way that might be helpful to other people, or trigger further discussion
- Another set of participants said they liked the camaraderie they’d found in discussions. They enjoyed coming across like-minded people, and forging new online and offline friendships brought about by shared interests.

And even if others didn’t share your views, the sense of engaging in a thoughtful and respectful exchange was a real ‘pull’ factor. One participant said they valued being able to communicate over the internet because it stood in for “the social interaction which modern society generally doesn’t have”. And it’s good fun too.

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On the other hand, some participants in our research acknowledged they were driven by a need to 'right wrongs' in the online debate-sphere.

- Many explained that they speak out in reaction to 'misinformed' and 'misguided' views, or when they feel 'frustrated'; to represent the other side of an argument where they felt a discussion was too one-sided, or to dispel untruths
- Speaking from this side of the argument, Davie from Southern England, a MediaLab participant, said: "It is important to allow others to see that you agree or disagree with their views. For evil to exist it only takes good men to stand by and do nothing."

Engaging online can be a learning experience too, which is a big attraction according to a number of participants. Taking part in a lively discussion over the internet quickly introduces you to a myriad of other opinions which can get you challenging and honing your own views, and teach you something about yourself.

To quote another participant:

"The most positive experiences have involved a real exchange of experience – realising something new, or accepting another person's perspective that I had not previously considered. It's rare to change opinions online, but it's very possible to provide and receive new information that could have long-term effects on shaping the other person's view."

#### THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR: the not-so favourable traits of being active online



There can be downsides to being vocal, however. Several participants said they'd had a negative response to something they had written. These ranged from people bluntly criticising their opinions over the internet, receiving comments that they felt didn't really 'get' what they were saying, to personal insults and abuse. However, while this is clearly unwelcome, some seemed to accept this as 'part of the deal' of commenting in an online public way.

Source: adapted from 'No trolls please, we're debating', Daisy Blacklock in MediaLab, 12 Jan 2012, © 2000–2013 YouGov plc. All rights reserved.  
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## Source 3

## Christopher Hitchens on Freedom of Speech

My own opinion is a very simple one. The right of others to free expression is part of my own. If someone's voice is silenced, then I am deprived of the right to hear. Moreover, I have never met nor heard of anybody I would trust with the job of deciding in advance what it might be permissible for me or anyone else to say or read. That freedom of expression consists of being able to tell people what they may not wish to hear, and that it must extend, above all, to those who think differently is, to me, self-evident.

Of all the things I have ever written, the one that gave me the most unwelcome attention from people I respect is a series of essays defending the right of Holocaust deniers and other Nazi sympathisers to publish their views. I did this because I think a right is a right and also because if this right is denied to one faction, it will not stop there. (Laws originally passed in Europe to criminalise Holocaust denial are already being extended to suppress criticism of Islam, as a case in point.)

But I could also argue it pragmatically. Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is a book that is banned in some countries and very hard to get in others. But the rare translated edition I possess was published by a group of German exiles at the New School in New York in 1938. It is complete and unexpurgated, with many pages of footnotes and cross-references. The Führer's enemies considered it of urgent importance that everybody study the book and understand the threat it contained. Alas, not enough people read it in time.

Almost all the celebrated free speech cases in the human record involve the strange concept of blasphemy, which is actually the simple concept that certain things just cannot be said or heard. The trial of Socrates involved the charge that his way of thinking caused young people to disrespect the gods. During the trial of Galileo, his findings about astronomy were held to subvert the religious dogma that our earth was the centre and object of creation. The Scopes Monkey Trial in Dayton, Tennessee, involved the charge that Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was profane and immoral as well as untrue. We look back on these moments when the authorities, and often the mob as well, decided to blind and deafen themselves and others, and we shake our heads. But with what right? There are many contemporary threats to the principle and the practice of free expression.

The Indian economist Amartya Sen demonstrated that no substantial famine has ever occurred in a country that has uncensored information. Famines are almost invariably caused not by shortage of food but by stupid hoarding in times of crisis, practised by governments that can disregard public opinion. Bear this in mind whenever you hear free expression described as a luxury.

Source: Christopher Hitchens, Reader's Digest, April 2011  
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The UK's chief objection to the EU move is that unrealistic expectations will be created by the right's expansive title because the controls proposed will be relatively modest in their impact on the way data spreads, or is traded, across websites.

The right to be forgotten, article 17 of the Data Protection Regulation, has been developed by the EU Justice Commissioner's office primarily in response to complaints about the way social media, such as Facebook, retain and handle information. Although the terms of the regulation have not yet been finalised, its current form provides for punitive fines – up to 2% of global turnover – for companies that refuse to comply with requests to erase customers' personal details.

Viviane Reding, the EU Justice Commissioner, said: "At present a citizen can request deletion only if [data is] incomplete or incorrect. We want to extend this right to make it stronger in this internet world. The burden of proof shall be on the companies. They will have to show that data is needed."

The case of the Austrian law student Max Schems, who battled Facebook for months to recover his personal data and eventually received 1222 pages of material in 2011, is emblematic of the problems Reding believes need addressing. Facebook subsequently altered its data-retention policies as a result of the case.

The UK's Information Commissioner's Office agrees that the new regulation will shift the balance between consumers and "data controllers". But it cautions: "Our concern is about how difficult (or impossible) this may be to achieve in practice and how it could lead individuals to believe falsely that they can achieve the absolute erasure of information about them".

"We know from the efforts of well-resourced and motivated individuals that it can in fact be impossible to remove information from the internet once it has been posted. We are concerned that this right, as billed, could mislead individuals as to the degree of protection the law can offer them in practice."

The London-based lobby group Privacy International is similarly sceptical. Anna Fielder, one of the organisation's trustees, said: "We think the right to erasure is essential and that's likely to stay; the right to delete your information once you have left a service provider. If you left a bank you wouldn't like them to keep your data forever."

"But it's no more than a right to delete your data. It's got so many exceptions. It's specifically targeted at Facebook users. For example, photos of drunken teenagers. Facebook should try and make all the people who have shared the data remove it as well."

Source: adapted from Owen Bowcott, The Guardian, Thursday 4 April 2013.  
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