



Digital Citizenship: Filter Bubbles

Duration: 1 and ½ hours

Introduction:

The rise of filter bubbles and echo chambers on online platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Google has brought about significant social issues. Namely, that the algorithms at work on the web are extremely personalised (also relating to issues of data privacy and consent) and operate to direct our attention towards the online content that the platforms feel we are most likely to agree with.

This results in a widening gap in society whereby people only share, create and communicate in an online 'bubble' composed of individuals with views and attitudes that mirror their own. Bolstered by online anonymity, the online environment can become nasty as the nature of online communication can lead to misunderstandings and people behaving in ways that they wouldn't in the real world.

Of course, there are real world reasons for social splintering, such as rising inequality, however, it is important for us to look for ways to create a better digital environment for everyone so that we all may enjoy the benefits of the internet without being abused. This is one aspect of digital citizenship.

In this lesson we will discuss the issue of filter bubbles from the potential effects they have on society to the responsibility of platforms and citizens.

A) Questions

1. Ask students what they think a filter bubble is? Use the above explanation to clarify
2. Ask students whether they think filter bubbles are a good or bad thing and why?
3. Discuss what some of the issues with filter bubbles may be.

B) Video: [Beware Online Filter Bubbles](#) - TED

Watch the above video and follow up with some questions;

1. What is the responsibility of the online platforms? Should they be allowed to edit our news feeds with algorithms? Should they be more transparent? Should there be a code of ethics?
2. Or is it our responsibility to search for information and opinions of people from outside our immediate circle?
3. How is the age of the internet different to the age of TV, radio and newspapers?
4. What information did Eli Pariser say Google tracks?
5. Ask students what they consider information junk food and information vegetables to be.
6. How can we burst our own filter bubbles? Watch the video: [How to burst your filter bubble?](#)
7. What are the benefits and drawbacks of trying to see the world the way others do?

C) Investigate

Ask students to look up a hotly debated topic in groups (maybe not something too sensitive) and compare the results that the groups received. Alternatively ask students to check their Facebook news feeds to see which opinions are represented there and then ask them to research opposing viewpoints.

Students then write down