**GP Essays – Social Media and Censorship**

**Essay Question 1 – GP Tuition Bukit Timah**

Is censorship becoming increasingly necessary in today's world?

**Essay Question 2 – GP Tuition Bishan**

To what extent does the mass media create mediocrity?

**Essay Question 3 – www.generalpaper.com.sg**

To what extent has the media advanced the cause of conservation?

Essay Question 4

Today’s news is reliable. Do you agree?

**Essay Question 1**

**Is censorship becoming increasingly necessary in today's world?**

**Thesis – it is becoming increasingly necessary in today’s world**

**Changes in the modern society that demands the need for censorship**

**(economics, social, cultural, political, mass media (fake news)**

**Anti-thesis – it is unnecessary**

**(education, individual, culture)**

**Introduction (observation, perspectives, stand)**

Censorship has always been criticized by liberals as the violation of the rights of the individuals as it is seen as a measure that undermines freedom of speech. However, as our society becomes more complex, the result of higher degree of institutionalization and integration of diverse communities while the modern media technology advances, there is a call for the re-examination of the requirement of censorship to ensure that the detrimental effects of the mass media will not occur to undermine the development of a civil society. Therefore, it is indisputable to agree that censorship has become increasingly necessary in today’s world. (stand – thesis)

**Main Body (opposing view – view against my stand – the anti-thesis)**

For detractors who are against censorship, they would not agree that censorship is needed in the modern society despite the growing negative influences it imposes on the society as it is seen as a restriction of the freedom of speech. To them, it is imperative for the society to uphold freedom of speech as it is the fundamental right of any individuals in a democratic nation. Furthermore, the imposition of censorship is a complex notion to introduce due to the complexity in setting the yardstick as there are diverse opinions on this matter, especially in modern societies where multiculturalism is the explanation for the complexity.

(linking sentence – rebuttal)

Nonetheless, such an argument is questionable. In reality, the notion of freedom of speech we uphold faithfully does not benefit the interests of the masses, but only for the interest of the owners and operators of the media industry. As for the difficulty in setting the yardstick, it is often resolved with the yardstick set by the consensus of the majority. It is reasonable for the individuals to agree to the values of the majority as ‘the will of all’ as noted by John Jacque Rousseau is the social norm to be respected and accepted if one chooses to live in the society that advocates this value. Moreover, if we examine the complexity of the influence the mass media would impose on the modern society and various phenomenon that occur in this era, we will demand the imposition of censorship to prevent such negative development.

(linking sentence – supporting view – thesis)

One such complication that demands the imposition of censorship is the commonality of vices and morally degrading behaviours seen in our society made prevalent by the use of internet. Pornography and internet gaming has intoxicated the minds of many, especially the youths who are immature and are easily susceptible to temptations of undesirable values. Without censorship to regulate the accessibility of this information, the youths are likely to get addicted to the vices and fall preys to syndicate crimes as internet gaming are appealing to the young people. In a recent article in the Strait Times, there are reports of syndicate criminals in China using internet as a way to get youngsters to get addicted to gambling and made them indebted to loan-sharking activities subsequently. Thus, the need to stamp out rampant rise of syndicate crime and its adverse impact on youth would make censorship increasingly necessary.

The imposition of censorship is also deemed necessary when we consider the negative impact on social harmony and stability if freedom of speech is not made accountable. Deleterious and offensive remarks are often made through new media technology like Facebook, tweeters and blogs as they have made it very accessible and convenient for individuals to voice out their opinions. On a bright side, this technological development in the media industry empowers the individuals but on a dark side, the technological empowerment is abused as individuals are not held accountable for biased and defaming remarks, creating social disputes that undermines the society. Consequently, we can observe the rise of many cyber bullies among the young users of the internet whose behavoiurs are considered anti-social. From a wider observation, we can see how these remarks can incite racial tensions as seen by a recent YouTube upload of the racist remark made by a student in Berkley. The charges brought against three youngsters for their racist remarks over the internet under the Sedition Act by the courts in Singapore show how serious the government in regulation of freedom of speech as there is disastrous impact on the social fabrics of the nation, given its vulnerability as a multicultural society.

But the most pressing reason for the imposition of censorship is seen from how the new media technology is being used for ill political motive that threatens the political stability and security of the nations. Many of the infamous terrorist groups like Jammah Islamiyah and Al-Qaeda are known to exploit the use of internet to spread their cause and recruit new members to implement their terrorist acts. With the use of modern media technology, these groups are able to indoctrinate their values in their new recruits as the exposure is invasive and persistent through this personal and private form of interaction. From the arrest of the JI cell group in Singapore, it is noted that some of these members are recruited through the internet. Besides this perilous threat, the recent remarks made about the new People’s Action Party candidates, Tin Pei Lin over the new media platforms has drawn concerns from Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong that this will hurt the political leadership renewal for the country in the future. Thus, from both the imminent and future point of view, the lack of censorship can create dire consequence on the political front of a nation.

**Conclusion (retrospective summary / opinionated suggestion**

In retrospect, we can understand why censorship is not desired by the liberals but the complex development in the contemporary era will demand us to ponder over the need of censorship. These adverse developments that are realistically tearing down our social fabrics, undermining the civility and threatening our political security and stability and it is only through an effective regulation of the modern media technology that will ensure us from succumbing to the adverse impacts. However, there is a need to **develop an effective institution to perform this imperative task** to ensure that the new media is made accountable to reap the benefit of freedom of speech without making it an adversary of the society.

**Essay Question 2**

**To what extent does the mass media create mediocrity?**

**Nature of question – EOA**

**meaning of mass media / mediocrity ((trivialised, superficial, hedonistic, self-centredness)**

**category – cultural, economic political, social**

**Structure:**

**Introduction – observation, development of proposition, method of discussion**

**Main body**

**para 1 – show how mass media leads to mediocrity from one category (Economics)**

**Para 2 – extent of agreement**

**para 3 – show how mass media leads to mediocrity from one category (cultural)**

**Para 4 – extent of agreement**

**Para 5A – if there is proposition but no extent of agreement – very agreeable**

**Para 5B – there is extent of agreement but no proposition – less agreeable**

**Conclusion**

**retrospective summary / address the extent of agreement/ opinions**

One of the most current and controversial criticism about the influence of the mass media made by educators and moralists is the role the mass media has played in the development of mediocrity in our modern society. In this context, we see a society that is trivialized in terms of values, behaviours and concern where the contributions and concerns of the individuals are now insignificant and meaningless under the omnipresence and manipulative influence of the mass media. Though we may not be able to refute the views of the detractors who are quick to make such accusation about the influence of the mass media in our state of mediocrity, the extent of this influence of the mass media is subjected to debate.

One of the reasons for criticizing the role of the mass media in the development of a society of mediocrity stems from how the mass media creates a consumerist culture which has made the average citizens lose their concerns over the more meaningful matters as they become self-absorbed in personal material gains. Under the manipulation and the omnipresence of the mass media with its technologically influential impact, it is able to create an ever-satisfying appetite that will demand the individuals to focus all their efforts and energy to create income to satisfy their demand. In this immersion, we become more superficial as we are vain and materialistic, recognizing only how we are viewed by others in our appearance and the basic level of needs as we ignore the inner self the need to be more enlightened and enriched in intellectual acumen. When we see how fashion statements from Nike and Adidas' advertisements are used to define body, mind and soul, we know that materialism has gained ground and human spirit is dehumanized and trivialized.

However, the rise of consumerist culture promoted by mass media does not just lead to the rise of the narcissistic society. Modern consumerist activities raise the intellectual well-being of the average individuals as they provide individuals more experiences which will broaden their horizons as seen in the rise of tourism and the usage of media technology which will expose them to new and meaningful experiences. Traveling sites like Lonely Planets, Life Hackers and the Expeditioners provide insights about the world, aspiring the youths to seek adventurous journey unusual to many. All these activities which are encouraged by the mass media will allow the individuals to live a more meaningful and knowledgeable life, refuting that our lives are not that superficial.

Just as the term 'mass media' would suggest, the effects of the media are imposed on the masses and the whole society creates the effects of standardization of the cultural values. Consequently, as the society becomes unified for the commercial and political purposes, individuals become insignificant as their behaviours and values are recognized as a whole rather as individuals. Individuals will ignore their preference and conform to the common values and norms of the society. Cultural diversity is minimized as the individuals are shaped to share a common cultural platform as seen from how common festival celebrations like Valentine's Day is promoted in global diverse societies for the intended commercial gain.

However, such an observation fails to understand the realistic implication of the mass media, especially when the modern media technology is considered. Internet technology along with other mobile communication technology like 3G and 4G technology has endorsed personal empowerment that make individuals more significant and prominent, promoting individualism to greater heights as seen from how the choice of the individuals is exercised from the voting on American Idol or E-bay and how the media technology has contributed to the fall of dictatorship in Middle East. In reality, the mass media has recognized the significance of individuals as it is the views of the individuals that constitute the values that the mass media will promote. The fact that the Time Magazine has voted YOU as the 'Person of the Year' in 2006 by putting a mirror on its cover page accentuates that the mass media recognizes the significance of the individuals.

Nonetheless, many will still agree that the mass media is responsible for the trivialization of the society when they pinpoint how the mass media is used to manipulate the individuals. The intended aim to cultivate a common market with common thinking and behaviours is achieved through its manipulation of the mindsets of the individuals. The mass media is influential in this manipulation as its influence is opportunistic and subtle as the ideas of the society is implanted with subtle exposures that will eventually instil acceptance of the values of the society. In this process, we cannot deny that the mass media is able to influence the individuals to conform to the society, forcing the individuals to comply with the social values and thus, ignores the preference and values of the individuals.

But detractors doubt the capacity of influence of the mass media when we consider the various forms of censorship that the society will impose on the mass media to reduce the detrimental effects it will create. Furthermore, as individuals are more educated and exposed, they are able to impose the concept of 'self-censorship' where a wider perspective of knowledge will help to determine the objectivity of information as proposed by liberal advocates, preventing the negative influences of the media on the individuals. Furthermore, if we observe how modern media technology like Facebook and Twitter are giving more ways for individuals to express their views in the modern society, the media is in fact providing the individuals the opportunities for greater control of their roles in the society instead of a diminishing role.

In retrospect, we can observe that the mass media plays a significant role in shaping a society of mediocrity but the extent of its creation is debatable, depending on how the influence of the mass media is conducted and how the impact is observed. Its extent of influence is more impactful on the trivialization of the society when the mass media is not regulated and the detrimental effects are deal with by the society.

**Essay Question 3**

**To what extent has the media advanced the cause of conservation?**

**Introduction**

It is without much doubt that mankind activities are causing much harm to environments worldwide, destroying the habitats of flora and fauna. Much more has to be done with regards to conservation, in order to preserve our environment for our future generations. The use of media has been mostly a boon for conservation efforts, as it has allowed the essence and spirit of conservation to be easily disseminated among peoples around the world. It is important to note that the media is at best, a tool used in conservation efforts and people may abuse the power of the media to slow down conservation efforts.

**Main Body**

From a societal viewpoint, the use of media has emerged as a potent force multiplier for conservation efforts, as it has enabled the message of conservation to be easily spread among many people. When people first started confronting environmental issues like air pollution or rain forest destruction decades ago, it was mainly through traditional press reports on the nightly news or the front page of a major newspaper. With people becoming more interested in social media, and the news media losing strength as advertising revenues declined, many environmental organizations found it easier to get people’s attention through the use of advertising. Social media platforms provide a place for sharing biodiversity-related content and posts on nature experiences. Such posts include a wealth of information about what users find meaningful to post about. They may reveal species people have spotted or tell which landscapes they like. Content of the posts may also reveal why users were visiting specific locations. National parks could increasingly encourage their visitors to post about their experiences, with a common hashtag. Media would essentially raise the public profile for conservation groups which in turn might mean more opportunities for the group to leverage upon. For example, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), a conservation group based in USA has largely turned to the Internet to help the public foster understanding on the vision and ideas of the group. This shows how valuable media has become in reaching out to large swathes of people, spreading the crucial message of conservation around the world and advancing its cause.

From an economic perspective, the use of media and technology has allowed conservation and environment groups to be more self-sustaining and thereby ease the spreading of conservation’s core message. As most of these conservation groups are non-profit organizations, they often have to rely on donations from the public for essential bills. Using various crowdfunding sources such as Kickstarter and Indiegogo, most of these conservation groups are better equipped to pay essential bills, by virtue of donations from the public. This frees them up from various marketing costs and efforts, allowing them to focus on their core mission-spreading the message of conservation. In addition, governments also leverage upon the costs savings that media brings about. Instead of entrenching themselves in traditional forms of communication and advertisements, which are sometimes prohibitively expensive, governments are switching to a lighter and more interactive approach in terms of reaching out to the public about the message of conservation. Indeed, media has allowed various stakeholders to drastically reduce marketing and advertising costs by making use of social media, allowing them to focus on their core area of operations.

Despite media allowing more people to learn about conservation efforts, most people still do not act upon this simple message hence reducing the importance of media as a medium of communication. Many people still feel that conservation efforts should be left to huge and wealthy organizations where with their economic resources and political influence, these organizations can make a difference. In addition, many people still feel that as a mere individual, they are unable to positively affect the conservation effort. Indeed, the increased traffic about conservation via technology and media also resulted in a rise of climate change deniers. Using the accessibility and the convenience of media, these climate change deniers have been vociferous in their efforts in claiming that climate change is part of natural progression of the world and that reports about devastation of habits have been wildly overblown. Companies and organizations who still rely on funding from the massive fossil fuels industry are huge climate change deniers, coining terms like “climate alarmism” and are actively promoting their views on both traditional and new media. The use of media remains a double-edged sword, especially since it hardly can be fully regulated. This has resulted in environment and conservation sceptics seizing on the very advantage of media, its immense reach to slow down efforts to preserve our environment.

**Conclusion**

It is imperative that the importance of conservation be drilled into the minds of the younger generation as they would bear most of the responsibility and effort in preserving and conserving the environment. As a tool, the media is indeed useful for reaching out and educating the masses about the importance of Mother Earth. However, it is important to note the potential detrimental effects and as well as ethical concerns of utilizing media as a tool to help promote conservation. Greater care must be undertaken to ensure that media is not manipulated by unsavoury individuals which may derail the efforts of conservationists.