Threshold Concept: ALGORITHMS ORGANIZE INFORMATION AND LIMIT CHOICES
Writing 122: Assignment for Final Essay #3
ASSIGNED TOPIC: Filter Bubbles, Nudges and "Choice Architecture": A field research argument essay.

PAGE REQUIREMENTS:
4-6 pages (1000-1500 WORDS)
DUE DATES:
DRAFT DUE:
Wednesday Week 10 (June 1) (750 words minimum/ 3 pages) Grace period Thursday 10:00 am (post before class)
WRITING WORKSHOP:
Thursday June 1 in class
FINAL EXAM/STUDIO HOUR: **Thursday June 9 from 10-12 noon. Use this time to complete your essay, ask questions or just spend 2 hours quietly working before turning in your essay. If you complete your essay and you are satisfied with it you can submit it online without attending the studio hour. There are NO LATE PAPERS though.**
FINAL REVISION DUE DATE:
Thursday June 9 in class by 12 NOON. No late papers.

INSTRUCTOR FEEDBACK:
Post questions about your essay to the Ask Instructor Drop Box by Sunday June 5 at 11:55 pm.

REQUIRED ESSAY TOPIC:

Personalization, choice architecture and the "nudge" culture of information in your life: a field work research project.

For your last essay, you will take up the question of information in the information age:
What kind of an impact is "choice architecture" having on daily life?
How are filter bubbles and "personalization" narrowing our experience?
What are we being "nudged" into choosing?

For this essay you will *begin a process of discovery and inquiry* and conclude with an argument essay about the experience of being "information-processed" by the various technologies that filter the online world for you and for all of us.
As you learn about this online phenomenon through readings, research and your own observations online, *talk about what you discover about human choice in the information age*.
Talk about the ways in which you agree with Pariser—that our experience is being narrowed so much that we are living in "bubbles." And talk about what Pariser does not consider.
Use your short research project to learn more about "choice" in the information age and to share your findings to support your argument.

STEPS TO READING AND RESEARCH PROCESS:
To begin, read the articles and watch the video in the course block for Week 9 to start your thinking about this subject.
Eli Pariser on Filter Bubbles: http://www.ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles

Book Review on *Nudge* http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/24/books/review/Friedman-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Then follow these steps to research, draft and revise your essay:

1. **Discussion Question Week 9: Compare your filter bubbles:**The course link to **Question for Discussion** #9 has detailed instructions for how to begin your field research (COPIED BELOW)

COMPARE YOUR FILTER BUBBLES

- This week we'll begin by thinking about what Eli Pariser is saying about personalization and "filter bubbles." After we watch the video, spend some time on your favorite social media sites, on Amazon or other shopping sites (please choose sites that are appropriate for a college classroom).
- If you can, create a screencapture of the "nudges" and "personalization" you receive from Facebook, Twitter, Amazon, Barnes and Noble or other shopping sites you browse.
- Later this week, take time to compare your "nudges" with those of your friends: use the same search terms on Google or Bing or Amazon or any other searchable database and see what kinds of "suggestions" you get. Compare your suggestions with those of your friends.

Here are some suggestions:

Google: See if you and a couple friends can go online onto your different computers. Enter several search terms such as: Climate Change; Super Tuesday; Barack Obama; Boots; Shoes; Fiction; Entertainment News; Celebrities, and others that come to mind. Compare the first 10 or 15 results and record them in a document or (even better) take screen captures of them to post into the Question for Discussion for Week 9. The QD allows you to upload attachments or you can post a couple pictures directly into your posts. (You can download screencapture software on Jing.com or Irfanview.com.) Are they exactly the same? In the same order? What ads show up on the right-hand side? If you find any differences, can you attribute them to any of your preferences?

Facebook: Go to your Facebook page (if you have one) and go to "Settings" then "Timelines and Tagging." Compare how the public sees you with how one or more of your friends see you. What are the differences? Do ads show up in your newsfeed? How are they different from the ads in your friends' feeds? (This would be especially interesting to observe in people of different backgrounds, ages, genders, etc.)

Amazon: Search for a book title on Amazon that you might want to read. Beside the book that comes up, what else pops up? Then try a couple more book or subject or product searches, and record what comes up for you. Are you begin "nudged" in any particular way?

Yahoo: What kinds of news stories show up for you on your Yahoo page? Compare your page results with friends or fellow students.

You Tube: Type in some search terms and see what pops up. Then click on one of the suggested videos and keep clicking until you are a couple pages away. What kinds of "nudges" are you getting? How are these nudges narrowing or filtering your experience?

Netflix: If you have a Netflix account, type in some different titles and see what their personalization software recommends for you. What kinds of "similarity" algorithms are they developing for you? Genre-based? Topic-based? Chick flicks or fight films? What would happen if you only followed their advice over time?

Connecting the QD to your final essay: This QD gives you the opportunity to exchange stories with your fellow Writing 122 students about this experience of the "filter bubble" in your life. After our quick in-class exploration, spend time this week comparing your "bubbles" with those of friends and family members. Post your own screencaptures and descriptions of your experience of "filter bubbles" in the QD link on Moodle. Keep your own careful notes (your comp book or RN Journal is a good place for this) and observe other instances of "personalization." so you can write your results up as part of your Essay Draft #3.

2. Reading Note Week 9: Eli Pariser and Thayler and Sunstein
Take notes on the articles and the video for this unit: Eli Pariser's talk on TED Talks; Lynn Parramore's interview with Eli Pariser about "filter bubbles," and Rob London's book review of Thayler and Sunstein's book, *Nudge.* These articles will give you an introduction to the ideas of "nudge theory," "choice architecture," "filter bubbles," "search engine optimization" and "personalization" on the internet. Along with your research, this introduction will prepare you to draft your Final Exam Essay #3.

3. Draft your essay: Final Exam Essay #3 First Draft Due June 1 by 11:55 pm (Grace period til class Thursday)
You'll begin your research in class today and continue it this week. Even though you haven't completed your research into this area, it's time to get a draft started based on your reading and observations. Turn in your draft so that you can get feedback in Week 10 during the Writing Workshop.

4. Writing Workshop
Just as with Essay #1 and #2, you will read at least 2 of your peers' essays and offer feedback. This process will also give you more information about how your peers are experiencing the "filter bubbles" before you move to the final research and revision stages of your project.

5. Library Research: Using Online Databases
A key skill for academic writing is learning how to find and evaluate sources for research projects. You may find a lot of information from Wikipedia (which always has lots of links to continue your search), Google Scholar and elsewhere. Those are good places to get started. But for this project you must find at least two articles from Lane's online library database on one or more of the following subjects:

- **Nudge theory**
- **Filter Bubbles**
- **Search Engine Optimization**
- **Choice Architecture**

So after you have drafted your Final Exam Essay #3, find **two** articles and take notes on them as you have been on all your readings this term. (Post your research notes for Reading Notes Week 10) Then you can integrate what you learn in these researched articles into your REVISED Final Exam Essay #3.

6. Ask Doc McGrail questions about your draft in the OPTIONAL: Ask Your Instructor drop box by Sunday Week 11 (June 5) at midnight if you want some feedback before you turn in your final draft. You can also meet with Doc McGrail during Week 10 and 11—set up a conference on the Google doc.

7. Keep track of your revisions and changes and turn in your Reading Note #11 with your final revision.

8. Turn in your Revised Final Exam Essay #3 in the drop box by Thursday June 9 at NOON. I will be holding Final Exam Studio Hour in our classroom from 10-12 on Thursday June 9 so that you can complete your final essay/ask questions etc.