Knowledge and Politics: Censorship and Whistleblowing

Lesson 3: Listening Task

Focus: *Is whistleblowing necessary to prevent corporate censorship silencing political perspectives?*

Objectives	**Analyze the role of power and bias in the censorship of information and whistleblowing cases** **Evaluate how censorship affects the dissemination of knowledge and how whistleblowers challenge power structures**

Activities	1. **Introduction (10 mins)**
	   ● Guiding Question: "*Is whistleblowing necessary to prevent corporate censorship silencing political perspectives?*"
	   ● Briefly recap the concepts of censorship (control of information) and whistleblowing (revealing sensitive knowledge).
	   ● Ask students to consider:
	     ○ Who decides what information is censored?
	     ○ Why might someone choose to blow the whistle?
	     ○ What are the risks of whistleblowing?
	
	2. **Listening Task**
	   ● Students watch the video [Inside Israel's Influence on Meta - YouTube](#) and take notes on the speaker(s)' key arguments and counterarguments. In the interest of time, videos can be assigned as homework prior to the class discussion.
	   ● During note-taking, students should analyze the strength of each argument presented, relating this to their previous research.
	   ● Students may also find this article useful: [Meta's Broken Promises](#)
	     ○ If necessary, students should seek additional sources to support their analysis.
	   ● **Key Points to Listen For:**
	     ○ How did Meta's censorship policies impact Palestinian voices?
	     ○ What were the arguments made by whistleblowers like Omar and Saima?
	     ○ How did Meta respond to the allegations?
	     ○ What ethical dilemmas arise in censorship and whistleblowing?
	   ● **Note-Taking Framework:**
	     ○ Main Arguments for Censorship: Why does Meta claim to remove or restrict content?
	     ○ Main Arguments Against Censorship: Why do critics argue that Meta is suppressing free speech?
	     ○ Whistleblowing Cases: How do whistleblowers describe their experiences?
	
	3. **Kialo Discussion (30 mins)**
	   ● In small groups, students create a **new** Kialo discussion around the guiding question.
	   ● Alternatively, if students require more structure, clone and share [this ready-made discussion](#) based on the claims below, using the suggested claims as prompts for students.
	   ● Students should use their analysis to ensure they select the strongest arguments from the listening task.
	   ● They should add these to the Kialo discussion as arguments, counterarguments, examples, and evaluations.
	   ● Encourage students to refer to the concepts of power, bias and perspective in their arguments.
	   ● Key areas to consider:
	     ○ What are the main arguments for and against censorship?
	     ○ How do power structures (e.g., governments, corporations) influence knowledge?
	     ○ How are whistleblowers portrayed (e.g., heroes or traitors)?
	     ○ What ethical dilemmas arise in both censorship and whistleblowing?

kialo

	Sample claims you can expect from your students:
	Starter claim: Whistleblowing can reveal internal biases within corporations.
	● PRO: Whistleblowing revealed that Meta's censorship is biased, favoring certain political interests.
	   ○ Example: Meta allowed hate speech against Russians during the Ukraine war but strictly moderated Palestinian content.
	● CON: Different conflicts require different moderation policies based on context.
	   ○ Example: Meta argues that Hamas is a designated terrorist group, requiring stricter moderation policies.
	
	Starter claim: Whistleblowing promotes corporate accountability.
	● PRO: Whistleblowing proved how Meta violated free speech and suppressed political knowledge.
	   ○ Example: Human Rights Watch found that Meta removed phrases like "Free Palestine" and censored Palestinian journalists.
	● CON: Content moderation is necessary to prevent misinformation and hate speech.
	   ○ Example: Meta argues that some content may violate its policies on incitement.
	
	Starter claim: Whistleblowing can be misused.
	● PRO: People can use whistleblowing to push personal grievances.
	   ○ Example: Meta claims Omar violated data policies by accessing information he wasn't authorized to review.
	● CON: The motivation behind whistleblowing is irrelevant if it reveals the truth about censorship.
	   ○ Example: Omar found that Palestinian journalist Motaz Azaiza's content was mislabeled as pornographic.
	
	Starter claim: Whistleblowing can endanger corporate security.
	● PRO: Internal moderation policies should remain private to prevent misinformation that could harm a company.
	   ○ Example: Meta said these were technical glitches and issued apologies, claiming they were not deliberate acts of censorship.
	● CON: If companies followed legal regulations, corporate security would be safeguarded.
	   ○ Example: Meta has uniform global policies, where moderation decisions are made by AI and independent content reviewers, not individual executives.

Reflection	**Whole-class discussion (10 mins)** ● What factors influence censorship and whistleblowing in politics and society? ● Does censorship protect society or hinder it? ● Who benefits from censorship policies, and who loses? **Example reflection questions:** ● Should there be limits to censorship? Who decides these limits? ● Can censorship be dangerous, such as in the case of authoritarian governments or political suppression? ● How does whistleblowing challenge power structures? Can it lead to meaningful change, or does it cause more harm than good? ● How do global power dynamics (e.g., between democratic and authoritarian states) influence the role of social media in censorship? ● What surprised you about how platforms like Facebook navigate free speech and content moderation? ● Should whistleblowers be protected under international law, or does this undermine national security? ● If you could reform one aspect of censorship or whistleblowing policies on social media, what would it be, and why?
Resources	Lesson Slides Debate video: Inside Israel's Influence on Meta - YouTube 27mins

TOK Concepts	**Bias:** How does bias shape social media policies and censorship decisions? **Responsibility:** What responsibilities do platforms and governments hold in maintaining transparency and trust? **Perspectives:** How do we balance free speech principles with a desire for stricter content moderation? **Power:** How do power structures shape decisions about what content is allowed and how whistleblowers are treated?

Critical Thinking Concepts	● **Confronting Biases and Assumptions:**
	    ○ Identifying Perspective Bias: Students recognize how bias shapes social media policies, whistleblowing actions, and censorship decisions, influenced by political, cultural, or corporate perspectives.
	    ○ Questioning Objectivity: Students analyze whether social media platforms and governments can ever maintain neutral stances or if all decisions are inherently influenced by bias.
	    ○ Challenging Authority Bias: Students reflect on how power structures (e.g., governments, corporations like Facebook) shape decisions about what content is allowed and how whistleblowers are treated.
	● **Exploring Contexts and Expert Opinions:**
	    ○ Power and Free Speech: Students examine how political and corporate power influences which voices are amplified, censored, or silenced online.
	    ○ Case Study Evaluation: Students compare the handling of whistleblowing cases (e.g., Edward Snowden, Frances Haugen) to understand how context shapes responses to ethical knowledge sharing.
	    ○ Assessing Credibility: Students evaluate how platforms and governments determine the reliability of content and the legitimacy of whistleblower claims.
	● **Responsiveness and Flexibility of Thought:**
	    ○ Adapting Arguments: Students refine their arguments about censorship and whistleblowing based on new evidence and counter arguments presented during class discussions or the podcast analysis.
	    ○ Weighing Contradictory Perspectives: Students compare viewpoints advocating for free speech principles versus those supporting stricter content moderation and reflect on the balance between the two.
	    ○ Recognizing the Role of Context: Students debate whether censorship or whistleblowing should vary based on cultural, political, or security contexts.
	● **Extrapolation and Reapplication of Principles:**
	    ○ Applying Concepts to Current Events: Students connect lessons from the debate to current controversies, such as content moderation on platforms, whistleblower protections, or political censorship in different countries.
	    ○ Transferable Skills: Students develop critical thinking skills to evaluate bias, misinformation, and power dynamics in real-world scenarios like media reports or online content policies.
	    ○ Ethical Reflection: Students consider the ethical implications of censorship and whistleblowing—who benefits, who is harmed, and what responsibilities platforms and governments hold in maintaining transparency and trust.