

Example Thesis Outline

Topic: The Role of Social Media Algorithms in Shaping Political Polarization

I. Introduction

- A. Background: Rapid growth of algorithm-driven news feeds across major social platforms
- B. Research question: How do social media algorithms influence political polarization among young adults?
- C. Thesis statement: Algorithmic curation intensifies political polarization by reinforcing selective exposure, amplifying emotionally charged content, and reducing cross-ideological visibility.
- D. Scope: Users aged 18–29 in the United States
- E. Overview: Review of prior research, explanation of methods, analysis of collected data, and final conclusions

II. Literature Review

- A. Core concepts: selective exposure, algorithmic filtering, confirmation bias
- B. Findings from political communication studies
- C. Gap: Limited empirical evidence linking user behavior to algorithmic design features
- D. Contribution: This thesis connects behavioral patterns with platform-level mechanisms

III. Methodology

- A. Research design: Mixed-method approach combining survey data and platform interaction logs
- B. Participants: 400 young adult users across three platforms
- C. Data collection: Self-reported political engagement, content exposure records, frequency of cross-ideological interactions
- D. Analytical approach: Correlation analysis, sentiment coding, and algorithmic audit techniques
- E. Limitations: Self-report bias and platform restrictions on data access

IV. Results

- A. Exposure patterns: Increased frequency of ideologically similar content
- B. Emotional amplification: Higher engagement with negative or provocative posts
- C. Reduced cross-views: Meaningful decline in interactions with opposing viewpoints

V. Analysis / Discussion

- A. Interpretation: Algorithms shape political information flow in measurable ways
- B. Link to thesis statement: Evidence supports the argument that design choices influence polarization



C. Comparison: Results align with communication theories but challenge earlier assumptions about user autonomy

D. Implications: Platforms may need transparent settings or exposure-balancing tools

VI. Conclusion

A. Summary: Algorithms reinforce polarization patterns among young adults

B. Answer: They influence political attitudes through selective exposure and emotional amplification

C. Contribution: Adds empirical data to an expanding area of digital politics research

D. Recommendations: Encourage platform-level interventions and media literacy programs

E. Future research: Long-term studies tracking shifts across election cycles

