

Discussion Questions and Quotes for *The Circle* (Eggers, 2013)
Information Ethics (Info 679) at Drexel University
Dr. Tim Gorichanaz, Summer 2018

What are the benefits and drawbacks of complete information?

Where do you see the seeds of the Circle in today's infosphere? What parts seem exaggerated or impossible to you?

The TruYou system Ty created uses your real name across all platforms. What are the pros and cons of this? (p. 21)

Mae says something embarrassing ("I fuck you not" rather than "I shit you not") to a new colleague, then thinks he thinks that everyone should get some of their embarrassing moments forgotten. ("these mistakes should be allowed to be forgotten") (pp. 34-35). How does she change over the course of the novel?

The Circle keeps talking about itself as a human company. They say they value understanding, that "Humans Work Here" (p. 47). How does this bear out over the course of the novel?

Customer Experience employees are rated in their transactions (p. 50ff). What does this remind you of?

Lollipop cameras are basically invisible and they get very high definition and they are cheap. What are the dangers? (p. 62ff)

"All that happens must be known." [Reminder of NSA? "Collect it all."] (p. 68)

Mae's experience having all her preferences, etc., "revealed" on stage. Why is she mortified if the data is already all public? (p. 126 and before)

Francis says, "You don't own history, it's part of the collective record now" (p. 238). What do you think?

If there are no photos of the event, did it happen?

Would the world be a better place if no one kept any secrets? "Secrets are lies." (p. 300)

Mae's decision to be transparent ends up revealing her parents' intimate lives (p. 371ff). Do we have the right to reveal things we experience about others?

What are the pros and cons of compulsory voting? Should people vote on every issue? What about the time-limited aspect of it? (p. ~372, p. 406)

“What happens then? What happens when they control all the searches, and have full access to all data about every person?” (p. 488)

Do we have a need for ignorance? The balance between knowing and not. (p. 272)

What do you think of Ty’s *Rights of Humans in a Digital Age* (p. 490)?

“We must all have the right to anonymity... Not every human activity can be measured... The ceaseless pursuit of data to quantify the value of any endeavor is catastrophic to true understanding... The barrier between public and private must remain unbreachable. We must all have the right to disappear.”

Do you see these themes applying to your own work?