

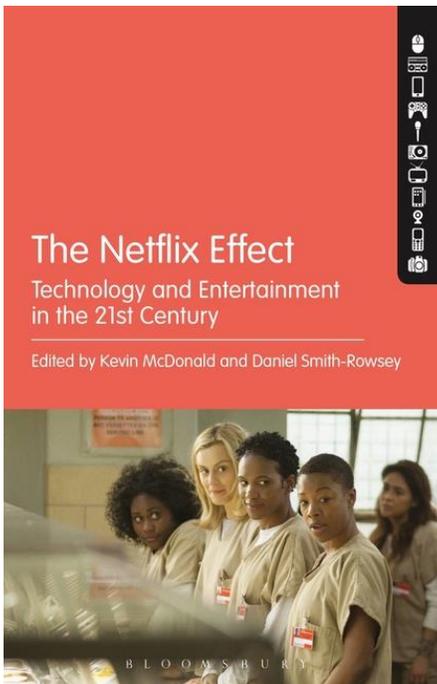


“Data speaks for itself through the algorithm... Data is knowledge itself” (Sarah Arnold)

“Everything is measurable, quantifiable, and — by extension — controllable and traceable” (Neta Alexander)

“The god resides in the machine”

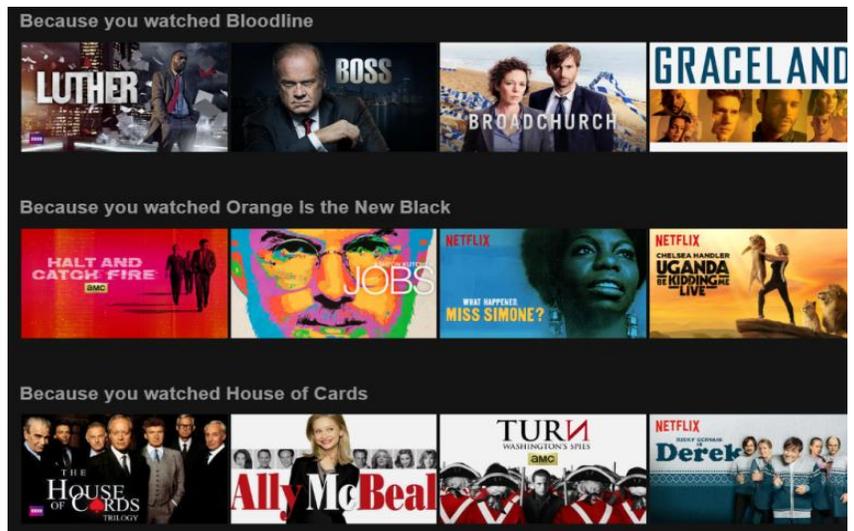
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER



In your second Canvas posting, you should engage the ideas presented in the two most recently assigned textbook readings (Sarah Arnold’s chapter “Netflix and the Myth of Choice/Participation/Autonomy” and Neta Alexander’s chapter “Catered to Your Future Self”). Both of these chapters concern the use of predictive algorithms and other audience measurement techniques to control consumers’ behaviors while promising greater personalization of online experiences. Like Amazon and other web-based media providers, Netflix has relied upon data-mining systems to claim knowledge about the tastes, preferences, and identities of its subscribers. Prior to the post-network era, how were television audiences of the past “measured” (in terms of their viewing tendencies, demographics, etc.)? What did those traditional techniques neglect to account for, according to Arnold? How does the hidden “datafication” of Netflix’s viewers differ from those earlier methods? Do you believe that, by taking actions on behalf of the user, Netflix’s algorithmic predictions reduce human agency? What, according to Alexander, are the negative consequences of customers staying in their “comfort zones”? How do you feel about companies using your purchasing history and/or viewing habits to gain a better understanding of your “profile” (rather than your “personhood”)?

In addition to reading the assigned textbook chapters, you should watch the 7-minute YouTube video “Your Netflix is Special,” which reveals how the streaming service adopts different artwork and designs in catering to the preferences of its users. What kinds of individualized customization does this video document? What, according to the narrator, is a “quality engagement,” and why is this sought by Netflix? How does the “Trending Now” row function, and why is it likely to change from person-to-person?

Post your response on CANVAS (in the Discussions area) before the 10:00 p.m. Tuesday, May 22



➔ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwHzqYNwTA>