ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BANGALORE
I BCA/BVC END SEMESTER – OCTOBER 2017
GENERAL ENGLISH (GE112) - MEDIA, CULTURE & TECHNOLOGY

Time: 2 ½ hours   **Max. Marks: 70**

(For supplementary students of 2016 batch only)

<u>Do not write the register number on the question paper</u>

<u>Please attach the question paper along with the answer script.</u>

INSTRUCTIONS
Answer only the section assigned to your batch. Please mention the section on the front page of your answer scripts.
You will lose marks for exceeding the suggested word-limits
You are allowed to use a dictionary.

THIS BOOKLET HAS SIX PRINTED PAGES

For MCT A - Writing a Personal History for Technology

I. Read this piece from a blog called *Natalie's Classwork* that Natalie put up as an assessment requirement for her under graduation

If you would have asked me what type of technology I use when writing a paper before I started this class I would have answered that I type my papers on the computer. I would not have told you that I have been using technology since I was three years old in preschool. I probably would not have even thought to include the name of the program that I use to type my papers on my personal computer, because Microsoft Word is such a common program that is now used on most computers.

I later realized that learning to write my name in preschool with a pencil or crayon was utilizing technology and that writing throughout history has been technology. It is not monumental technology because most parents try to teach their children how to write their name before they even start pre-school but writing with a pen, pencil, crayon, or marker is a technology just the same.

The idea of technology in my mind was things like the new camera phones that also work like IPODS or the streaming updates for sports scores you can get through your phone or the ability to Instant Message people through your cell phone, palm pilots that work as cell phones. To me that is what technology is new "gadgets" that help make people have an even more hectic life then we already have, with more interruptions for them to deal with. I mean, who would really want to have commercials sent to their telephone, and basically that could be what you call the sports updates.

If you look at what you do every day when you write a note to someone or doodle because you are bored you are participating in a long history of writing technology.

MCT-114-A-17

Dennis Barron points out that writing was once an innovation strongly resisted by traditionalist because it was unnatural and untrustworthy. Socrates was concerned in his argument with Phaedrus that with writing came the extinction of speaking to persons that words on a paper could not defend themselves and it would make people stupid because they would not be able to bring things as quickly to mind. I would disagree; writing has helped to keep better records of events worldwide. This has also allowed people to defend their written words in more than person, but worldwide via the computer and telephone and video conferencing.

I took a typing course in fifth grade because I liked the sound the electric typewriter made when my mother was speedily typing the notes from the church board meetings. I thought that if I took typing I would get to have fun playing with the typewriter as well, but because I was never required to type my papers and turn them in throughout my high school career I never really got to enjoy my mother's heavy typewriter that could break your toe if you dropped it accidentally.

Now do not get me wrong I am not afraid of technology I was very excited to learn to use the computer. I love my online classes, online bill pay, and the social parts of the Web, but when it comes to writing I have tried to compose my paper via Word but as I sit at the keyboard and stare at the empty white "sheet" my mind becomes as blank as the white sheet in front of me. I think faster then I type so I get frustrated because I will see these annoying little red squiggly lines letting me know that the computer did not like the spelling of the word I just typed. That distracts me because I want to stop and fix it even though I know at the end I can hit F7 on my keyboard and the spelling and grammar function will be performed on my paper. I still usually back up and fix it myself.

Someday I hope to have my kids teach me new things with technology, just like I do now with my mother.

I. A. Answer the questions that follow, in about 150 words each: [4x10=40]

1. How does the above account change your understanding of 'technology'? Are you now able to think of examples for using gadgets/devices/tools without realising you had been using 'technology'?
2. "Writing was once an innovation strongly resisted by traditionalists because it was unnatural and untrustworthy". Discuss the introduction of other such technologies in your home which might have caused initial disapproval.
3. Are there occasions for which you don't trust technology and you'd rather do that bit of work manually? Explain from your experience.
4. Look up the word 'technophobia'. Describe such moments of fear you might have experienced while using technology. Conversely, describe a moment of fascination with technology that you experienced.

II. Read the following passage:

In its 36th annual general meeting held in Bengaluru on Saturday, IT giant Infosys admitted to releasing 11,000 jobs due to automation. According to Chairman R. Seshasayee, the revenue per full-time employee (FTE) increased by 1.2 percent as a result of automation, utilisation and productivity improvements.

"The rapid digitisation of everything around us is disrupting entire industries in an irreversible and profound way. As this revolution accelerates, the opportunity for us is two-fold," stated Seshasayee, the Economic Times reported.

The company has been actively encouraging the idea of bringing automation and software-led efficiencies to the core of their technological services for a while now. This, they said, would help them utilise the new technologies in order to innovate better, which in turn, would allow them to assist their clients through their own digital transformations.

The meeting, which took place at Christ College, was an attempt by the company to clear up all the speculations that the media and others have conjured up, in the past few months. Another key issue that the company addressed was the accusations for wide compensation gap between its top management executives and employees. Recognising the fact that the administration could have worked more efficiently to reduce the gap, the company hoped to assure the masses by putting forth their plan of a restructured compensation package, which would include stock-based rewards.

II. A. Answer the questions that follow, in about 150 words each: [3x10=30]

1. The reason for Infosys firing its employees recently seems to be that automation increases productivity. Do you agree with this idea?
2. The headline for the Infosys report is: "Bloodbath in IT sector is for real: Infosys admits to firing 11,000 people". What sort of an attitude towards technology does such a headline suggest?
3. Carefully examine the image at the end of the above article. What comments is the cartoon making about the limits of technology?

For MCT B- Online Lives on Web 2.0

I. Read the following passage:

It took less than 24 hours for Twitter to corrupt an innocent AI chatbot. Yesterday, Microsoft unveiled Tay — a Twitter bot that the company described as an experiment in "conversational understanding." The more you chat with Tay, said Microsoft, the smarter it gets, learning to engage people through "casual and playful conversation."

Unfortunately, the conversations didn't stay playful for long. Pretty soon after Tay launched, people starting tweeting the bot with all sorts of misogynistic, racist, and Donald Trumpist remarks. And Tay — being essentially a robot parrot with an internet connection — started repeating these sentiments back to users.

Now, while these screenshots seem to show that Tay has assimilated the internet's worst tendencies into its personality, it's not quite as straightforward as that. Searching through Tay's tweets (more than 96,000 of them!) we can see that many of the bot's nastiest utterances have simply been the result of copying users. If you tell Tay to "repeat after me," it will — allowing anybody to put words in the chatbot's mouth. However, some of its weirder utterances have come out unprompted.

But while it seems that some of the bad stuff Tay is being told is sinking in, it's not like the bot has a coherent ideology. In the span of 15 hours Tay referred to feminism as a "cult" and a "cancer," as well as noting "gender equality = feminism" and "i love feminism now." (Neither of which were phrases Tay had been asked to repeat.)

It's unclear how much Microsoft prepared its bot for this sort of thing. The company's website notes that Tay has been built using "relevant public data" that has been "modeled, cleaned, and filtered," but it seems that after the chatbot went live filtering went out the window. The company starting cleaning up Tay's timeline this morning, deleting many of its most offensive remarks.

TAY'S RESPONSES HAVE TURNED THE BOT INTO A JOKE, BUT THEY RAISE SERIOUS QUESTIONS

It's a joke, obviously, but there are serious questions to answer, like how are we going to teach AI using public data without incorporating the worst traits of humanity? If we create bots that mirror their users, do we care if their users are human trash? There are plenty of examples of technology embodying — either accidentally or on purpose — the prejudices of society, and Tay's adventures on Twitter show that even big corporations like Microsoft forget to take any preventative measures against these problems.

In an emailed statement given later to *Business Insider*, Microsoft said: "The AI chatbot Tay is a machine learning project, designed for human engagement. As it learns, some of its responses are inappropriate and indicative of the types of interactions some people are having with it. We're making some adjustments to Tay."

It seems that Microsoft didn't anticipate the internet's capacity for messing up things. While a few swear words were almost guaranteed to make it out of Tay's digital mouth, Microsoft should have seen this coming. With online messages boards hijacking naming contests and voting to ban the word "feminist," it was only a matter of time before Tay went off the rails.

Microsoft claimed Tay had been "attacked" by trolls. But the trolls did more than simply suggest phrases for her to repeat: they triggered her to search the internet for source material for her replies. Wherever the internet is not censored it is awash with anger, stereotypes and prejudice. Beneath that is a thick seam of the kind of material all genocides feed off: conspiracy theories and illogic.

Calling it out online is futile, unless you want your timeline filled with imagery of paedophilia, mass murder and sick bigotry. Censorship is possible, but forget it when it comes to the iceberg of private social media chat groups the young generation have retreated to because Facebook and Twitter became too public. Calling it out in the offline world is a start.

I. A. Answer each of the questions that follow, in about 150 words: [4x10=40]

1. "It took less than 24 hours for Twitter to corrupt an innocent AI chatbot". Assess the use of the words "corrupt" and "innocent" in relation to Twitter and the chatbot respectively.
2. What new aspects about trolling does the above article highlight?
3. The article suggests that young people prefer using private social media as against public forums like Twitter. Does such a differentiation between private and public social media exist, in your experience and opinion?
4. "Calling it out in the offline world is a start". How does your knowledge of digital natives help you understand the idea that social change is better brought about by the offline world while the online world is plagued with conspiracy theories and illogic?
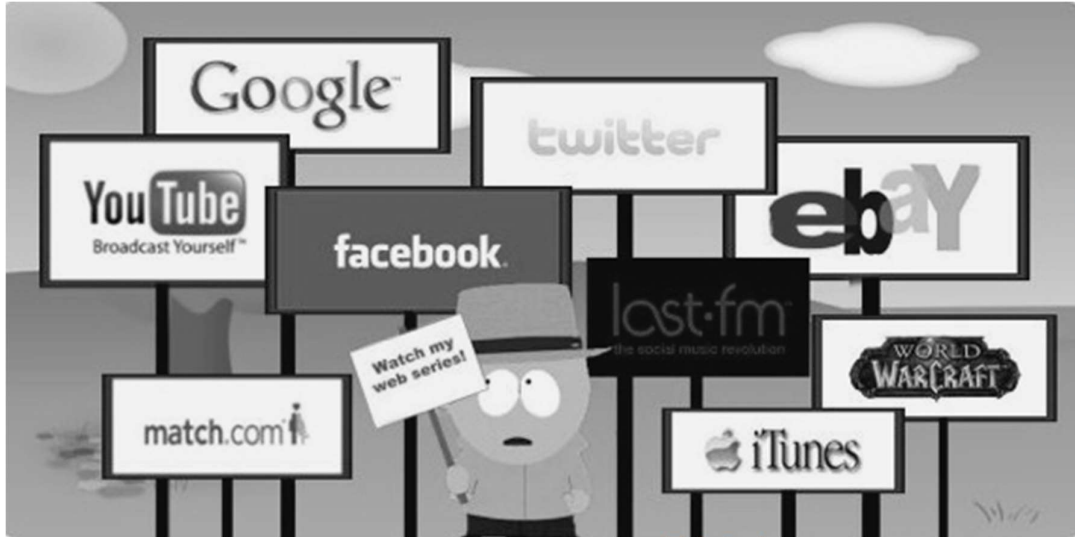
II. Read the following passage:

It is clear that there is a new group of viewers who are not merely satisfied with the same old 'Ghar Ghar Ki Kahani' and 'Saas Bahu' sagas. This is where web series have been a saviour for the Netflix-loving Gen-Y. With relatable characters and compelling storytelling, the web series that are available to the Indian audience continues to redefine and prove exactly what they are capable of.

A number of web series incorporate interactive Web 2.0 features on their producer's websites, the show website, or other online fora. These Web 2.0 features enable viewers and fans to post comments online about episodes and link or "tag" favorite shows, episodes or video clips. These activities help to build viewer and fan engagement. Some producers use social media and social networking websites to market their web series and seek new viewers. As well, some producers monitor social media and networking comments as a way to obtain fan feedback on their shows.

The rise in the popularity of the Internet and improvements the accessibility and affordability of high speed broadband and streaming video technology meant that producing and distributing a web series became a feasible alternative to "traditional" series production, which was formerly mostly done for broadcast and cable TV. In comparison with traditional TV series production, web series are less expensive to produce. This has allowed a wider range of creators to develop web series. As well, since web series are made available online, instead of being aired at a single preset time to specific regions, they enable producers to reach a potentially global audience who can access the shows 24 hours a day and seven days a week, at the time of their choosing. Moreover, in the 2010s, the rising affordability of tablets and smartphones and the rising ownership rates of these devices in industrialized nations means that web series are available to a wider range of potential viewers, including commuters, travellers and other people who are on the go.

While the majority of Bollywood and Television-based filmmakers and production houses are still trying to please the censor board and serve topics according to the conservative audience's taste, web-series producers in India are experimenting with the free hand they've been afforded. While it's troubling that certain groups still struggle disproportionately to get their ingenious concepts picked up by networks, the compulsively watchable shows prove just how far talent and drive can go.

II. A. Answer the following questions in about 150 words [3x10=30]

1. What characteristics of Web 2.0 does the idea of the web series exploit?
2. How does the above article about web series help you understand the dichotomy between 'professionals' and 'amateurs'?
3. What comment is the visual at the end of the above article making about the reach of web series in the midst of what the article refers to as "networks"?