Social Media as a Public Utility.

Traditionally, the public square is an open public space that is used to hold community gatherings and exchange ideas; it is a place where people can organize, debate, and freely express themselves.  Since the advent of the Internet, the public square has moved from the physical world to the digital world, and today, the term “digital public square” is used to describe websites that rely on user-generated content that ranges from video to commentary to audio to news articles, etc.  The websites that make up most of the digital public square are social media sites — Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and many others.  For a long time, people could freely express themselves on social media — the modern day public square — but in recent years, many have noted that they are not as free as they once were.  Social media companies are considered “platforms,” but increasingly behave as “publishers” and ban users for engaging in speech that they deem “offensive” and “hateful” — even if that same speech is legally protected by the First Amendment.  Currently, social media companies are private entities, so they are free to censor as they please.  However, because social media sites have come to play such a vital role in how people communicate with each other in the 21st century, some now question whether these companies should remain private.  In an essay, argue whether large social media sites should or should not be declared public utilities.