
English [course]

28 October 2009

Undergraduate I

Surrounded by an endless supply of books, college students are crammed into their respective spaces. Some sit at tables by themselves, some in pairs, while others cluster together in groups. Whether working as one or with peers, all have a driven purpose to accomplish the task set before them. Each table is filled with textbooks, scattered sheets of paper, and a student attempting to finish his or her studies. An aroma begins to creep in, as students take in their daily dosages of caffeine. The measures of coffee are the driving forces keeping the lids of eyes open. With the continuous clicking of keys, constant chatter and turning of pages, the room is a chaotic dominion. Headphones, attempt to drown out the noise, as students work into the evening and morning hours.

The hands on the clock to the left are ticking. They are the constant reminder to all occupants in the room that their time is dwindling away. Deadlines are waiting to be met within the next couple of hours, as papers are due, and midterms are at hand. It is the beginning of another week, and with the each tick of the clock, freedom is diminishing.

Analyzing the room on the first floor of the Undergraduate Library through the glass pane windows, a bystander examines that students appear to be working diligently. Sitting behind computers typing, flipping through books, and writing down notes, an observer would conclude that each and every student is working hard. Upon entering, the onlooker notices that many of the students are not actually studying, rather socializing, either on their technological devices or with the peer groups that they are in.

A mysterious man sits with his computer, earphones, textbooks, pen, and large size coffee in place. He is intently working on a Word document, and with the scrambling motion of his fingers, one could conclude that he is approaching a deadline. Every moment or so the man happens to become distracted by the people around him, as he picks up his head, and his eyes wander about the room. With the click of a finger, the paper he has been working on for the past fifteen minutes disappears and another program appears: Facebook. He begins chatting with old friends, perusing through the photos from the past weekend, and as he glances over his left shoulder he realizes that he has wasted the past several minutes on a subject that is completely irrelevant to his paper. He frantically says goodbye to his friends, and opens his Word document with the loss of some precious study time. Delete. Type. Delete. Type. Backspace. He struggles to continue his paper with fluidity.

To the right, a group of students is working with one another preparing a presentation. With a collaboration of ideas at the table, each and every slide is produced. Ten minutes into the group project, girl one picks up her blackberry and begins to text, while the other two continue working. One minute later, girl two picks up her cellular device and laughs. Responding quickly, she puts her phone down. Just two minutes later, girl three answers her phone; it happens to be her boyfriend. She gets up, leaves the table, and returns several minutes later, only to find the other two girls are three more slides into the project. The stares from the other girls project their feeling of desertion, of anticipation to be finished and their frustration toward the project, if not also toward one another.

To my left, a girl seems to be moving to the beat of her music, as she begins to dance in her chair. Her mouth is moving to the words in a rhythmical manner, and she begins to sing silently. After further analysis, it is clear that she is recording a video for one of her

friends. A couple minutes later, she stops, laughs, and then begins to repeat the process. Upon staring at the girl, she finally makes eye contact with me. I approach her and ask, "I couldn't help but wonder what it is you are doing." She responds, "Oh! (She laughs) I am just playing around on my computer. I was writing this paper for my English class (points), but then I was on my laptop and got distracted by the fact that I was also on the Internet and I had the urge to do something special for my friends, so I recorded some of them videos." I replied, "How long is your English paper and when is it due?" She answered, "It is a six page paper that is due tomorrow, and I am only on page two. So, I better get cracking." I wished her good luck, and then sat back down.

Undergraduate II

Venturing up to the stairs to the second floor, the sign on the door says: "Study Area. Quiet Please." Before entering, one already feels that this floor will present a different level of experience than the one resting below it. Peering through the windows on the doors, there are cubicles sitting in the middle of the room. The cubicles provide a sense of solitude, concentration, and diligence. It allows the student to close himself off from the distractions of others in the library more efficiently. However, each cubicle is still equipped with textbooks, computers, cell phones, and coffee. Traveling to the back of the library, there are shelves of books, surrounded by more cubicles and many desks. The clock to the left is still ticking. It is the constant reminder that everything is pressed in time. Students are seen being studious, but the question is: Are they really as hard working as they appear to be?

To the right, two girls are actively working on their physics homework. Eavesdropping upon their conversation, they are talking about reversible and irreversible formulas. Their computers are open, and the girls are doing their assignments online to receive credit for their homework. Each of them are studiously typing problems, recording results, and answering the questions, while asking for help when necessary.

To the left, a man is diligently working on his laptop typing a paper. He stops midway and opens up an Internet browser. Instead of clicking on a distracting website, he goes to Ctools to view his homework assignments. He browses through each one of his classes, and records his daily assignments for the week and any upcoming tests in his planner. He exits the Internet page and continues to work on his paper. This man spent minimal time on the Internet, and the minutes spent were not only necessary but also vital to his success in the upcoming days and weeks.

In one of the cubicles, one cannot help but overhear that a man is making a phone call! Upon eavesdropping, the man is formally asking if he can schedule a time for an interview in the upcoming week. "Monday at six sounds good? Meet outside Espresso Royale? Okay, I will see you then. Thank you for your time." The man hangs up the phone. He smiles and crosses the name off his list of people to call for interviews. He mutters out loud, "Thirty-two down. Only twenty-eight more to go!"

The Undergraduate Library

After observing the first and second floors of the Undergraduate Library, one could conclude that it is not only a place for studying, but also a place for socializing. The social

aspect of the library is induced by the world's increase in technology. Technology has impacted the social lives of college students by shaping their study habits. How is it that the technologies that we use to study are often the same items that are the cause of our distraction? The educational tools that are given to succeed in the present day are all electronically driven.

Laptops are a common piece of equipment for a college student. They serve as a tool for doing research, writing papers, and taking notes in classes. However, they also operate as a utensil of distraction. Facebook, Skype and other popular online websites are often to blame for why many students are procrastinating their homework and becoming distracted while studying. If computers are important to a student's academic success, how is it that they are also the things that are the cause of distraction from important work?

College students need to find a respectable balance between their studies. They need to learn how to prioritize their social and academic lives. The two floors of the library are examples to how media has impacted the social and study habits of students. Floor one has prioritized their social networking above their academic studies. Those on the second floor, who seemed diligent, have made their academics superior to their social needs.

In a larger sense, technology has ultimately shaped the way that many people work. From businessmen to students, they are alike. They are all working to accomplish tasks, but are constantly being bombarded and distracted by modern day technological advances.

Technology is what the world has come dependent upon. From computers to cell phones, people are constantly using them to help them succeed in their classes and lives. The problem with technology is not technology itself; it is the user's lack of self-control that is the cause of all distraction.

