Social media usage *infiltrates* academia

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From Instagram to Snapchat to TikTok, internet users spent a daily average of 147 minutes consuming social media in 2022, according to Statistica.

Though the study shows social media has increased users' access to information and ability to communicate, these platforms have also simultaneously exacerbated procrastination and issues with mental health.

Productivity & learning

Aris Perrotis ('25) said the temptation to continuously scroll through social media often interferes with his ability to complete work.

"Social media definitely makes me less productive," Perrotis said. "Whether it's Instagram, TikTok or Snapchat, it's kind of hard to leave the platform because you just want to keep on texting or watching videos."

Counselor Royce Wallace said he echoes the notion that "when students get distracted with social media, there's less productivity and less efficiency in work ethic."

In addition, English Teacher Christopher Moore said the constant influx of messages from social media apps can easily distract students from completing their assignments.

"If a student is reading something and they're continually getting notifications on their phone, even feeling that buzz of your phone takes your attention away from what you're doing," Moore said.

> "We have all been in situations where we are lying on our beds, scrolling through our phone and the next time we look at the clock it's past midnight."
>
> **– Technology Support Specialist Dennis Njenga**

said. "It takes much longer to complete the assigned work."

Technology Support Specialist Dennis Njenga said the stream of information from social media platforms obstruct student efficiency.

"They definitely do hinder students' productivity because if you're more focused on messaging or posting than using your time to be productive, you begin to hand in assignments a bit later than they should have been," Njenga said.

Furthermore, Olivia Holmberg ('25) said she does not "actively want to procrastinate," but when she receives a notification on her phone, she "can't really resist."

"It's difficult because on one hand, you want to finish your work and stay on track, but, you know, you also have fear of missing out," Holmberg said.

Similarly, Gabi Dawson ('24) said she views social media as a source of distraction and a method of avoidance for completing dreaded work.

"I either procrastinate by being on my phone or by avoiding going back to my desk and working," Dawson said. "The main reason I'm not being productive is social media."

Recognizing the potential for procrastination, Dawson said she has begun to switch off data for social media apps in order to curb her social media usage.

"I try to keep my data off for social media," Dawson said. "So if I really want to go [on social media], I would have to turn on data for that app, and that usually makes me think, 'Am I really going on social media because I want to or just to waste time?'"

To combat the threats of distraction from course content, Moore said numerous measures have been put in place to ensure students do not use their phones in class. Despite these regulations, Moore said he has noticed some students continue to use their phones.
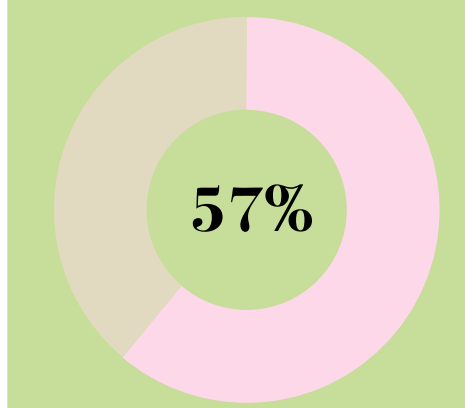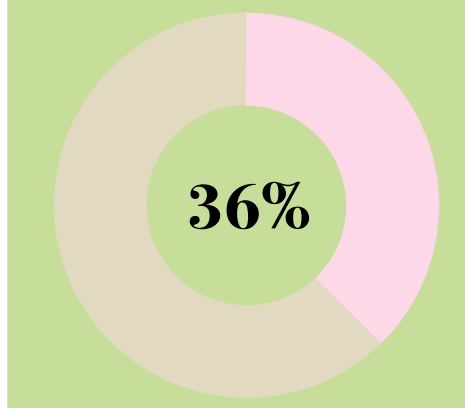
"We have a policy in the English department where students must put their phones away," Moore said. "But, as the school year progresses, there is a lack of that, and students are definitely going to get distracted more easily."

Moreover, Perrotis said social media can also impact student learning and understanding by spreading false information in an academic setting. He said absorbing false information can change a student's view on a particular issue, inhibiting the learning process.

By the numbers

57%

of teens agree that using social media distracts them from doing homework.
Source: Common Sense Media

36%

of teens say they spend too much time on social media.
Source: Pew Research Center

Similarly, Dawson said "social media has made everyone realize you definitely have to check your sources" as "not everything is true."

Furthermore, Njenga said any information from social media must be taken with a grain of salt, especially when utilized as an academic source.

"It's okay to use social media as a source of information on occasion, but there comes to a degree where you can't rely on it," Njenga said. "Sometimes, social media does have the information, so it's important to fact-check everything that you're reading before you start putting it in your work."

Mental health

Njenga said technology's interference with sleep patterns and continuous brain stimulation has been shown to "create immediate harmful effects on both school and social life."

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> "Even feeling that buzz of your phone takes your attention away from what you're doing."
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> **– English Department Head Christopher Moore**

lying on our beds, scrolling through our phone and the next time we look at the clock it's past midnight," Njenga said. "Students will go to school tired the next day and have very little of the energy they need to properly complete assignments and won't have the interest in socializing, maybe isolating them."

Wallace said the manner in which phones and social media pages are designed contributes to symptoms of insomnia and a continuous lack of sleep due to "bad night-time routine patterns."

"It's crucial to be mindful of the amount of time spent on devices, understanding that it's important to put it down 30 minutes before bed," Wallace said. "All of the lights and the colors can be very stimulating to the eyes, which makes it more difficult to sleep and can be a factor for insomnia in severe cases."

To prevent the potentially harmful consequences of excessive technology use, Holmberg said she strives to follow certain techniques for protection against the adverse consequences of excessive social media she learned in her classes.

"We have been taught since middle school health class to follow some safety regulations that allow us to know how to ask for help if something is pressingly wrong or generally taught how to handle harmful situations," Holmberg said.

Benefits

Njenga said despite the numerous procrastination and mental health dangers social media holds, it can also present several learning strategies and tools always available for student use.

"Study groups and joint documents are an example of a great way of sharing work with each other," Njenga said. "Whether that's creating a group on Whatsapp or Snapchat, there is always a platform that can definitely help with collaboration between students."

Moreover, Moore said the notion of "spreading awareness" has now been "completely remodeled" with the uprise of social media platforms. He said the media can now reach large audiences that "would otherwise be left uninformed."

"The best promise of social media is its ability to share and connect, and to put a message out to the world," Moore said. "Lots of organizations working for causes like social justice or politics have very strong social media outreach, and they can reach a lot of people that way in just a few seconds."

Additionally, Perrotis said social media is important both as a source of information and for entertainment, specifically in relation to subjects that often feel disinteresting.

"There's a lot of quick information on social media that you can access," Perrotis said. "As I'm interested in finance, and a lot of financial news can be very boring to read, I now follow finance accounts on Instagram that I trust and they'll just tell me like three pieces of information that I need to know for my day."

Dawson said social media is often used as a source of information as traditional forms of mass media and communication fall into obscurity.

"I'm definitely keeping myself updated with news through social media since I'm not the type of person that would sit down and read a newspaper or watch the news," Dawson said. "Therefore, when I am bored, or during those times in between classes when I'm on social media, I can see the reports and all to keep me informed."

Moore said it is important to recognize "social media is an alternate world" to which users step. He said although it holds the potential to catalyze global change or even help in the learning process, it can ultimately "take you away from the world that's happening in the classroom."

Moore said a comprehensive understanding of social media is crucial to prevent digital issues.

"Teaching how to stay safe online and use these platforms appropriately is so important," Moore said. "It's all about how we are helping people navigate the harm that social media can cause."

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Guidelines for productivity

📷 **Instagram**
One: Set time limits on applications to prevent excessive use.

🐦 **Twitter**
Two: Turn off notifications when doing work.

👻 **Snapchat**
Three: Remove electronic devices from the bedroom.

🎵 **TikTok**
Four: Take frequent stretch breaks during screen time.

Source: Victoria University