

# 'The Social Dilemma' highlights technology addiction

The newly released documentary on Netflix discusses the ways in which technology controls people's lives. Students and faculty share their initial thoughts about how the movie has changed their phone usage.

Gabrielle Meidar | News Editor: Print • Eva Marriott-Fabre | Staff Writer

Netflix's newly released documentary drama "The Social Dilemma," directed by Jeff Orlowski, explores the behind-the-scenes of technology and the detrimental effects that technology overuse has over society, specifically young people.

Technology experts provide research. They highlight the psychological aspects of technology used to draw viewers in.

Health Teacher Bambi Thompson watched the film and said it confirmed all of her thoughts on social media.

"As a parent, we knew early on that we needed to exercise caution around social media use," she said. "Once kids get an iPhone, sometimes parents don't realize that they are not supervised."

Sufan Wasu ('22), who initially heard about the movie through his Spanish class, said he has never been a user of social media platforms, and the movie profoundly affirmed his choices in doing so.

"I am glad now of the choice I made," he said.

In addition, the film influenced Helena Hansen ('21) to limit her intake of social media instead of getting pulled into the vortex of modern technology.

"Immediately after the film, I was struck by what it said about phones kind of controlling us," she said. "I

wanted to see if I could take my own power in the situation, so I deleted TikTok and Instagram for like a week."

The documentary features computer scientist Tristan Harris, who speaks on the hidden business side of technology and how large corporations use certain algorithms to attract users.

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Health Teacher**

Thompson said with such a profit-driven model of iPhones, there is a lack of concern for the impact technology overuse has on people.

"Unchecked capitalism that fuels social media causes casualties that are ultimately the health of the people," she said.

Similarly, Wasu said he was startled after watching the computer scientists expose the truths of the corporations' main objectives.

"What most surprised me was how much they monitor you and the extent

of all the data they know about you," he said. "Most people don't realize how extensive all this data collection is and how it is all manipulated."

Hansen said one message from the movie that stuck with her was the effect of technology on people's mental health, especially considering the tremendous lack of caution around social media use.

"Social media, specifically TikTok and Instagram, can be pretty harmful to young people," she said. "There is a lot of emphasis on appearance on both of those apps, and there is a lot of praise for beauty."

Mental health was also one of the main components of Thompson's takeaways from the movie. She said she worries people's demeanor and mood swings can be due to an excessive amount of technology use. She

said she attributes this overuse to the lack of knowledge and conversation about how detrimental it can really be.

"The most frightening point brought up in the movie was how much power social media has over our behavior," she said. "If a lot of people left their phone at home, they would feel that a part of them is incomplete."

Thompson said she especially noticed this in her students during her 10 minute in-class breaks.

"It is really sad to see that during the 10-minute break, everyone brings out their phones," she said. "How powerful is it that any free time or dull moment has to be filled with a phone?"

On the other hand, Hansen said she notices her friends being reasonable with the time they spend on their phones.

"My friends are pretty good about having our phones away while we are hanging out and like really spending good time together," she said.

The film highlights the truths of the design of social media platforms, which are catered to each individual user, manipulating and predicting their future actions.

Wasu said he found this particularly frightening, and he will now pay more attention to his screen time.

"I am going to be more careful now

with how and where I share my data, and also be more aware of how addictive social media and our computers are," he said.

Hansen said she drew parallels to other types of addictions, and emphasized the importance of being aware of the loss of control we have, in this case, specifically over our social media platforms.

"With alcoholism, there is a small portion of people addicted, but everyone is a social media addict," she said. "It's crazy to imagine that we are a global population of social media addicts. We couldn't stop even if we tried."

Ultimately, Thompson said she wishes that students wouldn't feel the need to constantly have their phones out.

"I would love to be in a school where people aren't scrolling during their 10-minute break," she said. "I would love to be in a school where during class, people's phones are in their bags."

Hansen said she has ultimately lost a certain amount of control with her phone and is frightened by the power that technology holds.

"I really feel like I have lost a degree of autonomy in my life," she said. "My phone knows me better than I know myself."



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**Helena Hansen ('21)**



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