

# Scrolling Between Classes: Hunter Students Grapple With Social Media

By Sarah Grimsted

During a classroom break at Hunter College, many students reach for their phones. In the hallways, some sit along the walls typing or scrolling. Outside, small groups linger together, eyes fixed on their screens. National trends reflect what students at Hunter College describe. Research from the Pew Research Center shows that nearly half of teens reported being online almost constantly in 2024, and roughly one in five say social media has negatively affected their mental health. At Hunter, students say those patterns show up in lost time, strained focus, and distorted ideas of connection.

Alejandro Arroyo, a 28-year-old team lead at a clothing store and a Hunter College student, said he often uses social media to stay connected to the news or as a break from stress. He said Instagram is his most commonly used app and that he spends about four hours a day online, adding that social media is difficult to get away from. "I feel like, as long as the app is on my phone, there's almost no way to go around that, because people will send you memes, reels, they'll message you on there, maybe because they don't have your phone number."

He also feels he could be more productive in the time he spends on social media. "I'd be a lot more productive that's what I think I would be doing, whether it's working on homework assignments or just like creative endeavors or just like maybe even focusing that time into being more fit," he said.

Logan Reyes, 21, is a home health aid from Fresh Meadows Queens and a Hunter College student. Reyes said tracking his screen time made the scale of his social media use harder to ignore. He said social media can “eat away hours of his time,” and that when he looks at his screen time he sees that “upwards of nine hours a day can be spent on social media apps.” He sees social media use as dangerous to young people’s social lives. “I think that it provides a convincing simulacrum of social interaction. I don’t think that young people realize just how damaging it is to engage in that simulation instead of actual, meaningful face to face interaction,” he said.

Liz Grayson, a 25-year-old manager at a physical therapy office and a Hunter College student, said social media contributed to a difficult period in her life. “Social media was a huge part of why I felt so shitty because I was watching other people’s lives. And it really didn’t help that in college I would stalk other people in school and feel really alone,” she said.

Some students worry the effects they’re seeing now will intensify. Camilla Hajallie, 19, a Hunter College student from Ridgewood, said she fears social media will push people further into isolation. “I think the future of social media is going to become even more isolated and socially atomized,” she said.

Others remain cautiously hopeful. Grayson said she hopes younger generations will reshape how they interact online. “I hope kids reach a threshold where they revolutionize the way they interact online and find a freer and safer way to connect,” she said.

Faverio, M., Anderson, M., & Park, E. (2025, April 22). Teens, Social Media and Mental Health. Pew Research Center; Pew Research Center.

[https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2025/04/22/teens-social-media-and-mental-health/#:~:text=And%20roughly%20one%2Dthird%20say,%25\)%20and%20grades%20\(51%25\).](https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2025/04/22/teens-social-media-and-mental-health/#:~:text=And%20roughly%20one%2Dthird%20say,%25)%20and%20grades%20(51%25).)

Faverio, Michelle. "Teens, Social Media and Technology 2024." Pew Research Center, Pew Research Center, 12 Dec. 2024, [www.pewresearch.org/internet/2024/12/12/teens-social-media-and-technology-2024/](https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2024/12/12/teens-social-media-and-technology-2024/).