

Faculty Center for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching Spring 2010

The Multitasking Generation:

Can Students Divide their Attention and Still Study for the Exam

Discussion Points:

1. Can we truly multitask? If so, what circumstances determine whether or not we (or our students) can multitask effectively?
2. How is multitasking affecting our students/younger generations? Consider the benefits, costs, and neutral effects.
3. How is multitasking affecting our culture?
4. Are students/younger generations better at multitasking than older generations?
5. How have faculty accommodated “the multitasking generation” (or have we?) What can we do to prevent the negative effects of multitasking (via any practices or policies)?

“Over the past few years I’ve had an uncomfortable sense that someone, or something, has been tinkering with my brain, remapping the neural circuitry, reprogramming the memory. My mind isn’t going—so far as I can tell—but it’s changing.....Immersing myself in a book or a lengthy article used to be easy..I get fidgety, lose the thread, begin looking for something else to do.”

-Nicholas Carr “Is Google Making Us Stupid?”

“People are going to lectures by some of the greatest minds, and they are doing their mail”

-Sherry Turkle, Professor of the Social Studies of Science at M.I.T., “The Multitasking Generation”

“The breadth of their [students] knowledge and their ability to find answers has just burgeoned, but my impression is that their ability to write clear, focused and extended narratives has eroded somewhat.”

-Donald Roberts, Professor of Communications at Stanford, “The Multitasking Generation”

“I tell my students not to treat me like TV. They have to think of me like a real person talking. I want to have them thinking about things we’re talking about.”

-Aaron Brower, Professor of Social Work, “The Multitasking Generation”

Web examples of the limits of attention: [http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-](http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-7040824133636328423&q=visual+attention&total=273&start=0&num=10&so=0&type=search&plindex=0)

[7040824133636328423&q=visual+attention&total=273&start=0&num=10&so=0&type=search&plindex=0](http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-7040824133636328423&q=visual+attention&total=273&start=0&num=10&so=0&type=search&plindex=0)

http://viscog.beckman.illinois.edu/djs_lab/demos.html (click one of the flash videos under “Gradual changes to scenes”)