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# Online Teaching at the University of Puget Sound

Lili Stevens  December 2, 2020  No tags



Written by Hadley Polinsky and Lili Stevens.

Many people are often drawn to liberal arts schools because of the experiences one obtains in classes and interacting with their peers. With online classes, this is virtually impossible. Not only are many students missing out on the quintessential college experience, but classes have proven to be challenging over the online format.

“I think this semester has been harder for me cause I have lost a lot of motivation by being in the same space all the time. For me,

classes kept me somewhat sane,” fourth year Anna MacLeod said.

This has been an issue for us as well. With online classes, there is no separation between space for class and space for relaxing. Classes, homework, eating, sleeping and watching Netflix all take place in the same room. It has been challenging for us to separate leisure from work. Our classes are enjoyable, but it is hard to enjoy them when there is no break from schoolwork.

In order to limit the spread of COVID, the university’s administration decided to take fall break away and give us the entire week off for Thanksgiving. This decision, however, has proven to increase feelings of burnout. Without a break part way through the semester in which we get to spend time with friends and enjoy a few days without classes, the semester feels as if it is dragging on.

“I did not enjoy not having a fall break. I feel pretty burnt out and tired from just being consistently on my computer and having to be ready to be back in class. ... I have not been able to take a break as much and also have not really been able to not be ‘on’ in that I have to show up to class and have not decompressed from school,” MacLeod said.

From the perspective of the professors, it seems they are just as upset about it as we are.

“It didn’t affect my teaching and schedule, but it certainly was a terrible idea. Students \*need\* a fall break to catch their breaths, catch up, process the work they’re doing and get rest. (And faculty need the time for rest and grading, too.)” professor Brett Rogers of the Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies

With students across the world learning online at all levels of education, it's easy to find another person of your own age struggling with similar experiences of exhaustion and burnout, but little attention is placed on the teachers whose classes are contributing to these feelings. While at the college level, professors teaching courses online is not new, as online colleges such as the University of Phoenix were around pre-pandemic, nearly all United States colleges as well as primary education institutions of public and private elementary through high schools are hosting online courses. At the University of Puget Sound, our education has persisted through the pandemic, thanks to the staff and professors.

Catching up with some professors and discussing the topic of online learning at a secondary education level, it seems that while teaching styles may not have changed too much, their routines and sanity levels have changed drastically.

"I'm not just burnt out: I'm fried to crisp," Professor Rogers said.

"I would say that my teaching style has remained true to its original form. ... For my classes, I am also able to replicate the same structure, organization and content that I would if we were in person," professor Dawn Padula of the School of Music said. She also mentioned some struggles with technology in this process, something everyone has experienced in some form or another in the last eight months.

"Maybe it's all the blue light exposure, but I find myself much more exhausted at the end of a teaching day that is on Zoom. I think it's also because everything takes longer, and things that were once easy and routine are now all new and have to be re-thought," Professor Padula said. The concept of 'Zoom fatigue'

that arises out of continued exposure to computers and blue light. This has been a problem mentioned by both students and professors but is a problem where the solution, spending less time in front of a screen, seems more and more unreachable with every day we spend learning in an online format.

It has been a hard semester for all of us, students and professors alike. With Thanksgiving break coming up in a few days, the semester is starting to come to a close. We just have to survive finals.

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# TikTok superstars at the University of Puget Sound – “It knows.”

Editor-in-Chief    🕒 November 18, 2020    🏷️ No tags



Written by Daniel Pollock.

Chris Moore, a third year at Puget Sound, broke his foot because of TikTok.

Moore (@prettyboyswagchris on TikTok) was filming a video while longboarding when he fell and injured himself. He’s been on crutches since September; his surgery is scheduled for January.

Being immobile and on painkillers allowed Moore to spend more time on the app. His phone analytics show there was a point when he was on the app seven hours a day.

Moore says he's addicted. He uses almost religious terms to describe the app.

"TikTok is the answer."

"It knows."

"It consumes me."

And Moore isn't alone. Since its birth in 2016 (the result of a merger of three apps, including Musical.ly), TikTok has been downloaded 2 billion times, it's quickly rising the ranks of the most used apps globally, and it's the most downloaded app in the Apple App Store.

The rise in TikTok's popularity can be measured by the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic globally, and subsequent lockdowns. Many Puget Sound students expressed that they really didn't interact with the app until the pandemic hit.

Amo Arado, a second year student who's taking the current semester off, downloaded TikTok after the lockdown. It was March; he was back home after the campus shut down, and bored.

On Tiktok, he's known as @ayyymo and his most popular video — he's shirtless and wears oversized gourds on his arms — has amassed 1.1 million views.

For Arado, TikTok started as a joke. But the app quickly took on a new shape. Now, because of TikTok's Creator Fund, the app

pays Arado for his videos based on the number of views he receives.

Moore says he was intoxicated when he downloaded the app in the winter break of his first year at Puget Sound. He started seriously posting videos and spending time on the app after COVID-19 restrictions limited his social interaction.

Unlike other popular social media apps, TikTok offers limited forms of communication between users. An inbox feature allows users to message each other, usually to send videos back and forth, and users can also comment on videos, but the focus on the app is the videos.

Facebook and Snapchat were created for direct communication between friends, but on TikTok an algorithm decides who gets to see your videos.

TikTok's defining feature is the For You Page, an endless scroll of videos, curated by the algorithm based on your prior interaction with videos. No two For You Pages are the same.

"Their master algorithm has me pinned down," Moore said. "It knows exactly what I want to see. It knows I want to see a cat video and right after that it knows I want to see a sixty-second video about the history of the Great Lakes."

This is where the "sides" of TikTok come in.

It's a question that many young people today have heard or asked: *What side of TikTok are you on?*

The sides of TikTok are as varied and diverse as TikTok's user base, and just as varied and diverse as Gen Z. There's straight

TikTok, gay TikTok, frog TikTok, Ratatouille the Musical TikTok – just to name a few.

For Kelsie Neumann, a second year student, her curated For You Page is a positive and happy space. She opens her TikTok app to feel good.

Neumann thought the algorithm would be restrictive and she wouldn't hear new voices, but she's had the opposite experience.

"I feel like I learn something new everyday on TikTok," she said.

Arado says his FYP shifts with his interests. For a while he was seeing a lot of videos about mens hairstyles, but now Arado says, "I've been on the alt, artsy, 'we don't know if you're gay, bi or lesbian' side."

For others, the algorithm has had far greater ramifications.

"The algorithm will tell you who you are," Moore said.

The app changed the way he viewed and expressed himself and he believes TikTok helped him better understand facets of his identities and beliefs.

"I had no idea where I was a year ago politically," Moore said. But watching the political videos that came through his FYP helped him gain insight into his own stances on political issues.

He also said he picked up embroidery after watching TikTok videos about it. Now, he says embroidery is part of his personality.

With its huge number of downloads, 41% of TikTok users are

TikTok easily turns into a conversation about a generation.

Open up the app, scroll through the videos and read the comments: It won't take long to find someone talking about Gen Z, the generation born between 1997 and 2012.

It's also an app defined by a global pandemic and the resultant social isolation. Videos discuss masks, coping with loneliness, and thirst traps seem to hint at our collective horniness.

TikTok also gets political. In September of this year, President Trump announced he would ban the app nationally if a U.S.-based company didn't buy out the current owners, ByteDance, a company based in China. He claimed the app was a security risk.

Some believe the president was simply annoyed by the young TikTok users mocking him.

Neumann was sad at the thought of losing the community she had built through TikTok. And she viewed Facebook as more of a security threat than TikTok.

"I could almost see it as a way for the president using his power to shut down the many views of him that were portrayed on the app," Neumann said. "So I almost felt like it came from a place of not security, but opinion."

In the spring, news agencies reported on TikTok-ers joining forces to sabotage a Trump rally in Tulsa. Later, publications, such as *The New York Times* and *Vox*, questioned whether TikTok-ers really had that much sway over the event. But whether or not TikTok was the reason, the moment solidified a national myth of the app as a social and political force to be reckoned with.

Before TikTok, Arado hated to be grouped with Gen Z.

“I thought of them as little kids,” Arado said. “10 year olds with iPhones who were mean to me on Instagram.”

But on TikTok Arado found a generation invested in politics and activism. He realized the “cool” people he saw on the app were also Gen Z.

TikTok has given a generation a platform to communicate with itself, not only politically, but aesthetically as well.

Scroll through Arado’s videos and you’ll find a lot of the hallmark traits of a Gen Z TikTok-er: vintage T-shirts, Carhartts, dyed hair, obscure jokes.

“Alt” styles are so prevalent on the app that they almost can’t be labeled as alternative, moving into the mainstream.

Arado is quick to say his style is more indie than alt, however. When asked, he struggles to define his own aesthetic.

“My friends are more edgy than me, but I’m not not edgy, but I’m a little edgy, then I’m a little artsy but I’m not really artsy, then I have a little bit of STEM in me but I’m not really, and I dress like I came straight from Grease,” Arado said.

His response is as varied as a For You Page. Thankfully, though, he doesn’t have to have a clear answer; as Moore said: “The algorithm will tell you who you are.”

Arado appears shirtless in most videos. He calls his TikToks thirst traps.

“Whenever I talk about it, I’m like ‘damn I hate this,’” Arado said.

views.”

Arado says the intention of his videos is split 50/50.

“It’s either me trying to be hot or me trying to be silly,” he said.

He admits feeling “icky” while making some videos. One example, he said, was when he decided to take off his shirt to film a video about his bikes.

Arado says he posts videos partly to receive validation.

“There’s this expectation on me, even though it’s so dumb, doesn’t matter.”

But he also believes the app has given him a platform to express himself.

Moore felt a similar desire for validation, and initially started creating videos in hopes that they would go viral, but finally decided he just wanted to have fun with the process.

Despite its apparent interest in “alt-ness,” TikTok is built around trends: dances, lip-syncs, outfit recreations and more.

Arado’s Halloween costume was inspired by a trend. He wore a cheerleader outfit that looks straight out of the “I Say a Little Prayer” Glee performance (sidebar: Glee is another active side of TikTok). He said he decided to follow a trend he’d been seeing where male TikTok-ers donned maid dresses.

In conjunction with the desired alt aesthetic, there’s been a rise of straight TikTok-ers borrowing queer aesthetics. (Another popular trend: straight male best friends kissing each other).

Moore believes being queer is commodified on TikTok.

He is hesitant with straight people adopting certain facets of queerness.

“There’s a real struggle out there, and they’re getting just a glimpse of what it is to be gay, and they’re doing it for views,” Moore said.

But simultaneously he appreciates how these videos can deconstruct masculinity.

Arado also calls this a form of cultural appropriation, but he believes it has also helped people become more comfortable with their identities.

Moore also believes LGBTQ representation on TikTok is beneficial. He tries to represent his experiences as a young gay man through his videos.

“It’s good to show young people that yes there are adult gay people, we’re alive,” Moore said. “I never had that image when I was growing up and that would’ve helped a lot.”

Neumann (@kelsieneumann on TikTok) is known for her videos about her experiences as a Starbucks barista.

Through the app, she has formed a community of other baristas; they check in with each other about their work, and share work stories.

“It’s really crazy to have such a deep connection with these people that I’ve never met in person,” Neumann said.

As a working student — she’s worked two jobs on top of her full-time courseload — Neumann feels like some members of the Puget Sound community see her as a “mythical creature.” But

through TikTok she's found other baristas with similar experiences.

People have started to recognize her because of TikTok. One of Neumann's videos appeared on her co-worker's For You page, and at a different Starbucks location, the barista recognized Neumann from TikTok.

She's connected with a broad range of Starbucks-related TikTok creators and she believes Starbucks should be compensating the baristas on TikTok who are creating what are now called "TikTok drinks" — drink combinations that have become so popular Neumann and other baristas have had to memorize the recipes like regular menu items.

"I swear if I have to make another one of those I might quit," Neuman said.

Neumann calls these videos "free advertising."

Unlike Instagram and other popular apps, TikTok has yet to see a huge surge in advertising. Ads aren't nonexistent, but their presence is minimal, and only the biggest TikTok-ers create sponsored content.

But TikTok still has a definite sway on the economy. Neumann said that some Starbucks locations ran out of certain ingredients after TikTok drink orders went viral. In one of Moore's videos, he wonders where all the TikTok boys are buying pearl necklaces. With the rising popularity of thrift-flip videos, it's safe to assume thrift stores have also seen increased sales. And barbers have probably stayed busy giving more and more young people the ubiquitous TikTok mullet.

The Trump administration, in its last days, is still working on banning TikTok.

For Moore, that would partly come as a relief.

“I feel like my life would be better without it, as much as I love it.”

When Trump initially attempted to ban the app, Moore was partly hopeful.

“I was relieved and happy at the notion that this app would be out of my life,” he said. “I still wish someone would take it from me.”

Without a ban, Moore won't delete the app. He feels too attached.

“It's really dirty what they're doing to our brains,” Moore said. “It knows you, and the more you know it, the more it knows you and the more you'll become addicted to it.”

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EDITION 2

# How to stay motivated: study tips and tricks for virtual finals

As we approach the most stressful time of the year, here's how to stay motivated with regular homework and manage new challenges

Chloe Daugherty-Brunak  November 13, 2020  Edition 2 , Fall 2020



Written by Chloe Daugherty-Brunak.

As students everywhere are facing a lot of unknowns amidst the pandemic, staying on top of schoolwork may feel overwhelming. This is not uncommon. Results of the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium student survey at UPS found that 20% of students rated their ability as “poor” in terms of pushing themselves to stay motivated in a pandemic. 40% reported this ability as fair, and only 37% of students who took the survey

reported their abilities in this area as good. In terms of finding healthy ways to manage the challenges, 32% of students reported their abilities as “poor”.

One student reported that their professor had decided not to do virtual classes and instead sent documents of their lectures four times a week. This meant that they had to teach themselves much of the material. Notwithstanding difficult experiences like this, the simple reality of being in college during a pandemic is why studying properly and being organized can have a major impact on your ability to succeed in this difficult time.

I spoke to a few students about the challenges of the pandemic, and they agreed on the following strategies as being most applicable for this challenging time:

**Take care of your wellbeing first.** Making a plan and adjusting your studying may help you feel even a little sense of control. Another key suggestion is to set a schedule. As the pandemic continues, you may have fewer social commitments, group meetings or work hours. Setting a schedule for yourself can help provide structure and keep you motivated. If you don’t already keep a weekly or daily calendar, doing so is immensely helpful. Including time for exercise and self-care is also crucial.

If you usually study in a coffee shop or library, **rethinking your study environment** at home is helpful. See if you can recreate that at home. Maybe it’s studying in a chair, rather than on your bed or couch, or moving to a new spot when you change tasks. If you feel you need background noise, consider using white noise.

One of these issues that I and many other students have struggled with is **getting on a daily routine**. Following a routine as similar as possible to your normal day in college can help, but

if work and other things get in the way, creating any routine that you can stick to weekly helps immensely.

Having a routine will help you procrastinate less. When you stick to a routine, you end up completing your tasks habitually, without needing to summon the determination and willpower that can be so hard to find.

In these house-bound times, **finding communities and participating in them** is more important than ever. If you can, keep in touch with your friends and course mates regularly. You can create a group chat for students studying a particular module, or even a group study session on Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

Because we are spending hours staring at a screen, whether it is for our classes, meetings, or doing homework, it can be hard to **break away from the computer**. One thing that I and other students have found to be useful is to write essays on paper, as opposed to writing them by hand. This helps to give yourself a brief screen break. In addition, writing things by hand can help one process information when studying for an exam, so giving yourself a break to take notes by hand, while more time-consuming, can help you both retain and regurgitate information more easily.

**Setting daily goals** can help you to make your day as productive as possible, but be realistic with the goals you set. Big goals may seem insurmountable right now; instead, focus on small goals for each day that you can cross off your list. Get through the assigned articles for your upcoming class. Finish the first draft of a paper. Read half of your assigned writing, and then do the second half the next day.

Setting aside **time to relax** is also very important. Scheduling when you will work and when you will relax can help you to manage a healthy work-life balance at home. Even giving yourself a small period of time to relax at the end of the day, whether it's 30 minutes or two2 hours, can help you reset for the next day. Delaying gratification over time helps improve your self-control, which in turn will help you achieve your long-term goals. Ideally, you should give yourself some time at the end of the day, before you go to sleep, to relax. However, for students with jobs that end later in the day, or for students who run out of time, taking any kind of break, whether it's at 12 p.m., or at 3 p.m., can be useful to recharge your energy.

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# Three-dimensional art piece, The Girl House, takes students' experiences on a tour of the Tacoma area

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Written by Nicole Steinberg.

You've probably noticed the little yellow house parked across Safeway on N. Adams St.

The Girl House is the summer research project of Emma Piorier '21 and Miranda Karson '21. The installation is a resistance to rape culture through the telling and sharing of experiences of coming of age, gender, sexuality, and sexual injustice to create community in a society that seeks to isolate narratives of girlhood and womanhood. The installation, a 7' x 14' tiny house on a trailer, creates a physical space for the submissions they received on anything related to gender, sexuality, and coming of age. Submissions were encouraged in any form such as anecdotes, poems, essays, etc.

Inside, the house is playful and welcoming with brightly painted shelves, framed photos, and a small table and couch on the far side of the house. The submissions are printed out and displayed throughout the space: peeking out of a drawer, hanging from the wall, and bound into a booklet that sits on the shelf.

*The Trail* sat down with Miranda Karson to hear a little bit more about the process of creating the Girl House and her intentions and takeaways from the project.

*The Trail:* How has putting together this project and interacting with narratives of coming of age, gender, sexuality, and rape culture added to your own understanding of girlhood?

M: The biggest conclusion I came to—after reading all of the submissions multiple times, engaging with the diversity that is present in the stories, and seeing where the common threads are throughout stories, is that there are common themes that can be identified throughout stories—but there is no one girlhood.

This was kind of the basis of this project — to create collective biography — and share experiences that aren't talked about, instances where we haven't been able to benefit from the collectivity. To actually be able to name and identify what rape culture is, and therefore, be able to resist it, was a guiding question throughout our project.

It was very impactful to have my experiences and beliefs validated. Our stories have overlap and can find community, but community does not mean the same. Narratives about race, or from older women that grew up in a very different time than now, really solidified the idea that there is no one girlhood.

*The Trail:* What is the most surprising or unexpected thing you have learned throughout this project?

M: We found the ways we put the submissions throughout the house, tucked away in drawers, hanging from clotheslines, and bound in booklets on shelves, revealed a really beautiful metaphor — these stories or narratives are everywhere. People that have had these kinds of experiences walk through the world and see little things, “triggers” that bring up their narratives and experiences and there is no way you can’t interact with them. We found the way we placed the submissions in the house was a metaphor for how people interact with these stories in our everyday lives.

*The Trail:* If you had to tell your younger self one thing after doing this project, what would it be?

M: I still struggle with school, and feeling like I can accomplish things with ADHD and anxiety. [The project] was a ton of work; we were doing a lot of things we hadn’t done before, like building a website, and curating a social media presence on Instagram. I wasn’t in a structured working environment, like the university or a job, just working intimately with one of my friends where we were setting our own schedule, and own goals, and it was a project I cared about.

Despite doing a lot of things for the first time, I felt very capable and accomplished and had a lot of fun doing it.

I would tell myself that being a student in the classic academic system we are placed in doesn’t have to be an essential part of my identity, that there are other ways to be a student. I want her to know, she is capable of doing things on her own and to resist the gendered and patriarchal aspects of the personal shame that I felt growing up.

I spent a night curled up in the chair in the corner of my living room, reading through the submissions on my laptop. I didn't have to read all of them at once, but once I finished one submission, I had this unexplainable urge to read more, to continue to add to the collective narrative that became more robust with each submission. The submissions were diverse in both experience and execution. I realized, it was one of the only times I had encountered narratives and stories of rape culture, gender, and sexuality in one place where I could identify common themes. I think about how isolating stories and instances of sexual injustice and patriarchal power takes away the power of collectivity in processing and reconciling those experiences. The Girl House seeks to reject a culture that silences and isolates experiences of rape culture and to find power in the collective.

If you would like to submit to the Girl House Project, their website is [thegirlhouseproject.com](http://thegirlhouseproject.com). Or follow their instagram [@thegirlhouseproject](https://www.instagram.com/thegirlhouseproject).

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