

## High-level student sample College Writing II

### Technology in the Classroom: Minimizing Creativity, Changing Learning Styles, and Removing Classroom Intimacy

Technology is penetrating every aspect of society. We are increasingly seeing technology being used within our classrooms at schools to enhance students' learning experiences. But, this technology is not just enhancing the learning process for students, it is altering the process. Not only is it altering how the material is distributed to students, but it is also altering the way in which students are expected to demonstrate their knowledge of the subjects. By challenging students and instructors to use up and coming technologies in the classroom society is demanding that the material be learned and taught through current technologies. The pressure to conform learning and teaching styles to current technology is minimizing creativity in the classroom, dictating a shift in learning styles and is playing a role in eliminating the ability for classroom teachers to approach teaching their students on a personal, intimate level that allows them to care.

As I have progressed through schooling in the United States, I have become increasingly aware of how similar my classroom experiences have become. Regardless of the course I am taking I often find all of my instructors standing in the front of the classroom reading off a power point. Where has their creativity gone? Are they forced to use power point? Surely no one can require an instructor to use powerpoint, but perhaps their minds have been shaped now such that they feel compelled to use the technologies available to them. It is apparent by the number of instructors teaching material through powerpoint that instructors feel a powerpoint is necessary to make a good presentation. All of the high-tech flash and dash is appealing, it looks good. Plus, for the presenters who get anxious about remembering their points, it is particularly appealing to have the points you plan on addressing right in front of you for yourself and those listening. However, in using powerpoints to ease some public

speaking anxiety, many fail to supplement with drawings on the chalkboard or additional explanations. It is quite easy for instructors to fall into the trap of reading directly from the slides, which frequently contain only an outline of the topic at hand. By reading directly from these types of slides, instructors fail to include specific details and fail to keep providing students with a need to focus. Using powerpoints in class puts students to sleep. There is no variety in our days. Though technology is supposed to make learning more fun and interesting I have found it to make it far more boring. More instructors than not fall into the powerpoint trap where they read directly from the slides. When this is the case, I have noticed that attendance drastically drops after the first week. In these situations students make the conscious choice not to continue coming to class because they can simply print the powerpoints off the instructors webpage and miss nothing. When instructors continue to incorporate extensive descriptions that are not included on powerpoint slides and supplement the powerpoints with diagrams on a whiteboard the students who do not come to class miss out on material and the students who are present are obligated to become more engaged. When instructors are dynamic, moving about the classroom, drawing and talking it becomes easier for students to pay attention than when students are staring at a screen with an instructor positioned slightly to one side or the other reading exactly what is displayed on the screen. I have had one instructor who has used powerpoint effectively. The effectiveness of her ability to use powerpoint to teach us material stems from her ability to deviate from the powerpoint and break free from the confinements that powerpoints seemingly have. She is constantly drawing on the board, incorporating videos, and using clickers to facilitate understanding and discussion among peers. For an early morning class revolving around powerpoints and dense material there is an immense amount of energy and active learning because of our instructors ability to approach the topic in an original way. When there is no creativity in the

teaching and instructors are bound to the constraints of technology, we are not continuing to progress with our ability to think and approach situations creatively.

By reducing the creativity in classrooms and seemingly standardizing how material is taught we are reducing variation in learning styles. By reducing the variation in learning styles and shifting it towards one generic style that everyone is expected to be able to process well, technology is triggering everyone to think and process information in the same way. By over using technology in the classroom teachers are, unknowingly, forcing students to think the same way. Students are expected to form linear, hierarchal connections quickly. We see this demonstrated through classroom technological tools such as powerpoint. Powerpoint generally forces connections to be made quickly with new facts coming one after another, slide after slide, building upon each other. Technology is forcing students down a more linear path of thinking. By doing this we are essentially making learning more difficult for some students. Society is becoming less accepting of "old school" learning styles and as a result lecturing is becoming less popular. Although lectures require students to become more adept at and reliant upon note taking, I have found myself more able to form my own connections. Through hearing the material and scrambling to write every last important fact down I am constantly thinking and engaging with the material. While taking notes in these types of classes I am frequently referring back to previous material and drawing connections amongst the material presented. Through instructing courses in this way all students have the ability to process the material in their own time rather than being visually rushed through it by transitioning to the next powerpoint slide. By thinking in a non-linear manner we are more able to establish broader connections that can be made across various topics. Because technology is designed to be linear we are unable to form connections quickly that branch and stem from the main topic at hand because, though technology appears to be multifaceted

and flexible, it is quite inflexible in terms of linearity. Technology is pushing our brains to think faster, yet our brains are all thinking in the same way. It is rare to come up with an original idea because we are all often brought through understanding and exploring a topic through the same step-by-step process. However, if we retain a variety of teaching and learning styles in our society we would be better able to solve more problems because of an ability to look at information and problems in a new way.

When teachers shift into a more technologically advanced classroom there is less interaction with their students and more interactions with the instructor and technology as well as with the students and technology. Teachers are spending more time creating power points, clicking buttons, and reading from a projector screen than they are making eye contact with their students. In my classes it has become a rare occasion for teachers to interact with students by addressing them personally, calling on them, seeking questions, and facilitating discussions. In some of my classes I have found my peers to be dumbfounded when a professor calls on them. It has become the norm for some classrooms to be based solely on the instructor presenting the powerpoint and when an instructor attempts to deviate from that pathway neither the student nor the instructor knows how to respond or navigate a discussion. It is in this way that technology in classrooms provides a barrier between teachers, students, and peers. Students feel reluctant to approach instructor who stand at the front of the room relying on technology because they are seemingly unapproachable. We, as students, become reliant on emailing or not even asking questions for fear of face to face conversations with our instructors because of it.

As the presence of technology increases in our classrooms we become more dependent on it as students. We become used to the lack of variety, although we don't like it. As creativity is lost in classroom instruction and boredom achieved we turn to our own technological vices, paying less and less attention. Students figure that the connections that our instructors are making for us are connections that we can make on our own time, without the need to communicate face to face with an instructor. As students, we have learned to study to the test. Since there is a lack of creativity in the classroom, there has also been a shift towards bubble and multiple choice tests. These types of tests are an example of how technology is making it easier and more efficient for instructors in terms of grading, yet is making it more difficult for students because they are unable to demonstrate all of the knowledge that they possess on a given topic. With the lack of creativity, shift towards linear thinking and learning, and lack of face to face interactions with instructors technology does not contribute greatly to new, divergent thinking. With how "systematic, and increasingly automated" technological systems have become, teaching and learning is beginning to trigger a change in our brains, a change in our thinking to become more systematic and automated, too (Carr, 169).

**Works Cited**

Carr, Nicholas G. *The Shallows: What the internet is doing to our brains.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010.