

2019 Syllabus Part 2

DEVICES & MULTITASKING v1

(Jan 9)

The contents of this document are valid for all classes I am teaching Spring 2019

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1. Devices

1.1. Laptops and other devices are prohibited

The use of laptops, tablets, phones and other electronic devices are prohibited.

Laptops and all other devices should be silenced and put away during class unless I say otherwise. Feel free to have devices in use until class begins. (At that time, please put away devices even if I forget to mention this.)

Devices are often used during group work. Do not message or otherwise multitask during group work, even a little bit.

If you are a DSP student who has given me an accommodation letter, or if you are a note-taker for a DSP student, please let me know. You will be allowed to use your device, for the purposes of the class. There may be other possible exceptions. Please contact me.

1.2. But bringing the correct device is required

All students are expected to bring an appropriate device to class **for every session**. While I might make in-class announcements that make adjustments to the below, these are my basic expectations.

Connectivity:

- your device can connect to the room's smart panel and project content
- your device can log on to bCourses
- your device can be used to create content on Google Forms, Google Docs, and Google Sheets

Screen size:

- Your device is large enough to read academic PDFs, work with images, and perform similar complex viewing and reading tasks.

Please note that there are apps available for bCourse for mobile devices. Search "Canvas" on your app store.

2. Multitasking

2.1. Not best practice but we do it anyway

I have always been interested in the intersection of neuroscience discoveries and my own work in the humanities. So, from early on (maybe around 2008 or so), I was reading research about the inefficiencies of multitasking. This portion of my syllabus used to roll out an argument, with links to research and games, to try to persuade students about this. However, now I think it is widely shared that multitasking is not efficient and I no longer feel the need to argue the point. That being said, if you happen to not be convinced, search "multitasking in the classroom" and you will find an abundance of articles that share the basics of the problem.

Still, like the very wise advice that sufficient sleep is the better approach to learning, students choose to multitask or, in cases, feel that the situation is compelling them to multitask. Whether or not it is best practice is not the point. It feels necessary and might indeed be necessary at times.

2.2. Impact of your course grades

Nevertheless, despite that, **I prohibit devices. I also lower the engagement grades of students who multitask in class whether by device or book or paper and might lower other grades as well when I am in an ambiguous position (because of how you have written something) of trying to decide if you have understand the topic at hand or not.**

This is a key element in my construction of you as a student—how engaged you are and how much I think you are attending to the details of the class. I assume that if you have multitasked and I have seen it, there are many other times when I have not seen it. And I assume that when you are doing outside reading, you are probably multitasking while reading. It is best for you to not let this chain of thoughts get started by putting away your devices and focusing during class.

2.3. Reasons for my "no multitasking" policy

I respect you as an adult. When possible, I will defer to your own choices as to how and when and how much to study. But ...

1. Since my classroom is built on active learning, I need students to engage with one another and so multitasking is no longer just an individual choice by you. It directly affects the learning environment of everyone. It is from this angle that I feel compelled to insert my own needs.
2. Additionally, a frequent component of my classes is for you to notice, subvert, and overcome implicit bias. When multitasking you are not attentive enough to notice that these prejudices are shaping your thinking.

3. Additionally, in literature we deal with nuance and complexity, not basic facts. Multitasking tends to capture only main points, not the color or feel or hard-to-notice facets of the topic at hand. Part of what I teach is the turning of attention by students to these small and subtle things. And multitasking is a huge impediment to that.
4. Finally, I must confess that I lose the inspiration to teach when I look out into the classroom and see students alone with their monitors. I have tried to get beyond this but it seems to be part of who I am. My lectures or other communications are just better for everyone when devices are put away.