

Classes that go off the grid help students focus

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Los Angeles Times:

USC professor Geoffrey Cowan is a scholar of free speech and communication. But Cowan, the former dean of the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, insists that students sometimes should be cut off from the social media and websites that are so prevalent in their lives.

Cowan bans the use of laptops, cellphones and wireless devices during the freshman introductory class “The Changing World of Communication and Journalism” that he co-teaches in the fall with current Annenberg Dean Ernest J. Wilson III. Like a growing number of professors nationwide, the USC professors say that electronic equipment, even just for note taking, causes students to mentally disconnect from lectures and distracts them from class discussions.

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Other research published last year in the Psychological Science journal suggested that students learn concepts better if they take notes in longhand than if they type them on a laptop. Students who type too often try to transcribe lectures verbatim, which is “detrimental to learning,” while students reframe and distill ideas when they write notes by hand, said the study, titled “The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard.”

Read the whole story: [Los Angeles Times](#)