



The Detriments of Social Media

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Technology dictates much of our current lifestyles, mainly as a remedy to aid or even avoid everyday tasks in an increasingly lazy generation. Social media, while not a solution to society's obstacles, has many benefits. Teenagers seek the distracting qualities of social media and enjoy deflecting from school work and other life stressors. On the other hand, users experience the detriments of social media as it prohibits in-person interaction while permitting toxic behavior due to its anonymity. Users do not experience the repercussions of their harmful posts or comments first-hand due to the confidentiality of Instagram, Facebook, Tiktok, and Twitter.

How often have you seen mocking comments made by strangers who desire validation of their opinions without having any true facts? The confidentiality of such platforms compels users to insert their opinions on controversial topics such as political affiliations. Adults or politicians on social media may disagree with others, and with the protection of a phone screen amplifying their confidence, they respond by posting overly judgmental, rash comments. Users experience heightened courage which ensues from the anonymity of these platforms. This hurts its users as the typical accountability of interacting in-person disappears.

The growing prevalence of cyberbullying on the internet is mainly due to the increased availability of technology. Cyber-bullying is evident on the popular app Tiktok, a site that successfully grabs our attention and compels us to spend hours mindlessly scrolling through our for-you-pages. While scrolling, users can easily criticize other creators by leaving a quick comment before scrolling to a new video, likely to never see that creator again. Users write these comments without filtering their words, as they usually would in person, and attempt to make a joke at the expense of the creator. Users also write backhanded compliments as they give the illusion of kindness upon first glance. Backhanded compliments are disproportionately directed to larger creators and may say "Wow, I love your confidence!" or "We have the same body type and I'm insecure but you look so good." Then, other users show their agreement with the comments by "liking" that comment which encourages the continuation of body-shaming as people have the innate desire to seek validation from others.

The promises of secrecy on the internet can be deceptive; the lack of in-person interaction allows the bully to harass without realizing the adverse effects of their actions. Additionally, without a face-to-face dispute, cyber-

bullies need less courage and can't comprehend the damage that they will inflict upon their victims.

Since social media is open to public scrutiny, people often perceive the political content differently. The publicization of politics in the current era amplifies individuals' knowledge of current events but can also produce public criticism of such decisions. Adults with differing viewpoints, especially in regard to political affiliations, are susceptible to online conflict. The increasing polarity of opposing political parties - left and right, Republican and Democrat - makes the problem more divisive.

People feel required to use social media platforms to argue in support of their own beliefs, while also arguing against rival opinions. In addition, politicians on social media frequently attack the character of their opponent, resorting to the logical fallacy of ad hominem. Politicians may use irrelevant information to sway their potential voters in this unethical technique.

Opposing presidential candidates subconsciously use ad hominem in their debates and social media posts to boost their own popularity. In the most recent presidential election, Biden and Trump attacked each other's characters to distract their supporters when they lacked a response. When they called the other "stupid" or "dumb," they removed logic from their argument while destroying the validity of their original claim. Users are frequently exposed to misinformation and are distracted by irrelevant claims due to the prevalence of ad hominem attacks on social media. Fervent Republicans may use personal attacks of Biden to support their political beliefs, while Democrats act similarly with Trump.

The enjoyment of social media prevents users from focusing on its many flaws, which include both cyberbullying and ad hominem attacks. Creators that are cyber-bullied may abandon their accounts until rejoining the platform later on, producing a temporary solution to a complex issue.

Many of my friends use their phones for almost 10 hours each day, therefore it is essential to discuss the detriments of social media's anonymity. Users must refrain from commenting unnecessarily on other posts, especially if their argument doesn't bring up a valid counter-argument. Unless someone is striving to respectfully provide an opposing opinion, it is usually better to stay silent. People should combat online conflict by creating awareness of the faults regarding social media or avoiding negativity in comments.

JWST Passes Final Major Mechanical Milestone

Michael Piper, Junior

On January 19th, the last two mirror segments of the James Webb Space Telescope's primary mirror transitioned from their launch stowage positions into a deployed configuration.

This is not the end of Webb's commissioning, however. Still short of the velocity needed to orbit the Earth-Sun L2 point, Webb must fire its propulsion thrusters at apogee before beginning scientific work with instruments like the Mid-Infrared Instrument, which will be chilled to below 50 Kelvin after orbital insertion. The first images Webb sends back to Earth will be blurry, reminiscent of Hubble before its servicing missions. The blurriness of Webb's images will not be the result of an optical defect, however: because the primary mirror has 18 independent segments, aligning and focusing the entire telescope to nanometer precision is expected to take up to 6 months.

Once Webb is operational, it will shed light on - or more accurately collect light from - the early development of the universe. Not only is Webb more powerful optically than Hubble, with a primary mirror diameter of 6 meters instead of 2.4, but it also sees primarily in the near-infrared and infrared wavelengths of light instead of visible and ultraviolet.

Infrared allows for Webb to see farther out than Hubble because objects farther from Earth move away at a greater speed, stretching light wavelengths as perceived on Earth. Stretched wavelengths become more red, or "redshifted," so at great distances what is visible light at a galaxy becomes infrared light at Earth.

To see infrared well, Webb carries the Mid-Infrared Instrument, MIRI. This instrument must be cooled down to below 50 Kelvin to avoid seeing its own heat, a major reason why Webb is 3200 times farther from Earth than Hubble is. The Moon and Earth radiate a lot of heat, so having substantial distance away from both keeps Webb cool. Out at L2, the five-layer sunshield beneath Webb's mirror assembly can block not only the Sun, but also the Moon and Earth.

It has been a nerve-wracking ride for astronomers and space nerds for the past few weeks as Webb has made its way from the US to French Guiana and now out towards its intended orbit. With the sunshield, secondary mirror, mirror wings, and now individual mirrors successfully deployed, a sense of relief is tangible amongst fans. Webb's myriad of complex unfolding sequences having been performed perfectly seems to foretell a fruitful future for the most powerful space telescope to date.

Filibuster Confusion

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President Biden opened a can of worms in his speech last Tuesday, January 11 - the filibuster. In his speech, he advocated for more equal voting rights. As the Democratic party has the majority in the Senate right now, the filibuster is slowing down the process of passing voting rights bills like The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and The Freedom to Vote Act.

But what is the filibuster? It's an act taken by the minority in the Senate in order to block and delay voting on a bill. And this is literally senators refusing to give up the floor and simply talking for hours on end. This gives the minority time to slow things down and maybe move the vote in their favor. If you are in the minority group, the filibuster is an expression of free speech. To the majority party, filibusters slow down the voting process and grid-lock the Senate. So, opinions on what to do about filibusters are always changing.

We, the people, like to say that our lawmakers can't get anything done. That, in part, is due to filibusters. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, "There have been more than 2,000 filibusters since 1917; about half have been in just the last 12 years. Critics argue that this increased use has slowed business in the Senate to a

halt, often entangling the chamber in procedural maneuvering instead of substantive debate and, ultimately, lawmaking." In other words, there has been a major uptick in filibusters in the last decade, which slows down the lawmaking process. So it's not that our representatives are useless, rather that they cannot pass laws.

Take the current situation in the Senate. The Democrats hold the majority, and yet the voting rights bills they want passed aren't getting passed because the Republicans are constantly filibustering. In the 19th and 20th century, filibusters meant holding your own on the floor of the Senate for as long as needed. However, more recent rules bypass this and simply halt debate for a while. As the Brennan Center observes, "Critics of the modern filibuster have argued that the maneuver undermines the Senate as a governing body and its reputation as a consensus-building chamber. The mere threat of a filibuster silences debate and removes incentives to work toward compromise." So instead of the filibuster serving as a means to amplify the voices of the minority, it is truly grid-locking the process.

It is ironic that Biden's goal is to increase voting equality but wants to achieve it by removing the minority Hail Mary from the Senate. However, one could also see removing the filibuster as paving the way to a more equal and democratic system. At the heart of it all, it's a question of Senate procedures and how they affect each and every bill. But the question remains: will Biden have enough support in the Senate to pass these bills, with or without the filibuster?

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