Disconnect Paper

Sociology 167: Virtual Communities/Social Media

Due: Friday, November 19 at 11:59pm on bCourses

In this paper you are being asked to forgo engaging with all digital technologies (smartphones, texting, email, internet, or social media) for a full 24 hours. You will record your feelings about this experiment and any difficulties you encounter completing it. You will reflect on the role that digital technologies/the internet play in your life.

You will need to apply concepts and theories from the course in your analysis.

To prepare for the experiment: Choose a 24 hour period of time where you will completely disconnect from all forms of digital technologies—yes—all forms. That means **no email, no texting, no messaging of any kind, no social media, no online games, forums, podcasts, apps, music streaming, fitness trackers, smartwatches—no internet at all!**

This will require you to plan ahead so you can minimize disruption—though the point is that this will be at least somewhat disruptive to your daily life. Obviously, avoid days where you are required for class or work to be online if possible. You may not be able to fully disconnect due to work, for instance, and this will be something that you will need to discuss in your paper.

Next: Record your thoughts, feelings, and experiences during the 24 hour period. **Keep a detailed journal so that you will have "data" to analyze in your paper.** Pay attention to how many times you reach for your phone, tablet, or computer to get on social media or to text, for instance. Do you feel like you are missing out on anything? Are you completely cut off from friends or family? Why are you going to the Internet? If it is for information, is it information you could get any where else? Why or why not? How do you spend your time while not engaging with technology? Think about how this disrupts personal connections to family and friends as well as any virtual communities of which you are part.

What are the positive and negative consequences of this disengagement?

Structure of the Paper

Introduction: Briefly describe the disconnect experiment and include a **thesis.** Your thesis should be an **argument** that reflects the insights you gained into your experiences/feelings during the disconnect.

Discussion: Discuss your feelings and experiences before, during, and/or after disconnecting. Reactions from others, if applicable, should also be discussed. Be sure to account for any failure to stay disconnected for the full 24 hours.

Analysis (most important section-should be the bulk of your paper ~ 2 pages): What sociological conclusions do you come to based on your "data"? What role do digital technologies/the internet play in our lives? **Use course readings for your analysis.** You may focus on only one reading or bring in a few. Choose from the list below.

You may draw upon lecture, but you must engage with at least one course reading. In other words, you cannot rely upon lecture material. Remember that you should **define all concepts in your own words and use quotes sparingly**. Do not summarize the readings; draw strategically upon the ideas in those readings to draw conclusions about your experiment. Go back to the readings and think about them in light of this assignment. What might be useful?

An analysis requires an application of the course materials that leads to insights about your experiences. An insight should be a conclusion or realization that is illuminated through the application of course concepts or theories. **Just because you are writing about your personal experiences doesn't mean this paper is just a reflection or an opinion piece. It should be *sociological*—you must apply theory. Subjective interpretation should not be used in lieu of sociology**.

Do not rely on individual or psychological explanations of your experience. **Explicitly tie your findings to sociological concepts**—clearly and accurately. In other words—explain your findings by utilizing course materials. What insights do these materials help illuminate?

Conclusion: Reflect on the experiment and what you learned.

Mechanics

- Essay should not exceed **4 pages double-spaced**
- Should be a cohesive essay with short introduction and conclusion
- Should be your own work; you may not collaborate. Must be original.
- Quotes can be used *sparingly* (should not be used to define concepts)
- Pages should be numbered
- No title page or title necessary
- Be sure to carefully edit your paper for spelling, grammar, and typos
- Cite your sources! (Use in-text citations to indicate not only where a direct quote is coming from, but also where the ideas are coming from that you are summarizing and paraphrasing in your own words. You must include page numbers). See the citations resources on bCourses for guidance. Use ASA (American Sociological Association) format.
- Include a bibliography (does not count as part of the page limit)

Course Readings

You must choose at least one of these readings for your analysis:

Baym: "Chapter 2: Making New Media Make Sense"
Baym: "Chapter 4: Communities and Networks"
Marwick: *Status Update* —any chapter
Lupton: "Chapter 8: The Digitized Body/Self"