THE TRANSITION TO AN ONLINE WORLD

FALL ACADEMIC WRITING COURSE
Fall 2020

Since the pandemic began, the entire planet was forced to transition to a virtual world almost instantly. Is working, socializing, and studying online beneficial to society and human development, or has this recent transition caused more problems than it has solved? Here, I have a collection of my writing students in Mexico reflecting on how the move to a virtual world has affected the world around them, and whether or not these advancements in technology are good for the human race.

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essay #1

IS WORKING AND STUDYING ONLINE MORE EFFICIENT THAN IN PERSON?

NATALIA RODRIGUEZ HERNANDEZ

According to “Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes” (Ministry of Communications and Transportation in English) “in Mexico only 52.9% of homes of the national total have access to the internet. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic most of the working and studying spaces had to close to stop the virus propagation. Companies and schools were left with two options: close their working spaces and stop all activities or move everything to an online platform.” The second option is the best, because they could keep doing their activities, but what happens when not everyone has the option to work or study online? In Mexico there are many towns where they hardly have a school or job spaces, people often have to move to a city to get a job and children would have some sort of homeschooling. Not everyone has the right infrastructure nor the tools to get their jobs or school activities done, that’s why I think working and studying online isn’t more efficient than in person.

Infrastructure is really important to be able to take online activities. In order for someone to have internet they have to pay a monthly fee and in some communities, paying for the internet is not a priority. I’m talking about low-income communities; they have many other things to worry about like having food, water, light and so. Having internet is not a priority nor something easy to have access to. According to a press release made by INEGI (National Institute of Statistic and Geography),” at the beginning of the year, 50.1% of users online identify slow transfer of information, which lowers the connectivity and productivity of the users.” I’ve been affected by this when taking online classes, sometimes I ended disconnecting from the class and missed a lot of information that later I had to ask someone for it; sometimes they would answer quickly, but others may not.

Not having internet is the main issue, but not having the hardware makes everything more difficult. In the same press release INEGI said only 44.3% of homes have a computer, so even if the workers could move to a place with internet, they still won’t be able to work online. Also they may not know how to use a computer because they never had the urge to use one, as most of the jobs they get require some sort of physical effort. So they are still exposed to the virus by having to take physical jobs. On the other hand, for students, the government at Jalisco made a program to help them buy a computer, they would give 2,000 pesos per household (in poverty conditions). This program helped many students, but they still had to move to a bigger city and be exposed to the virus, just to have access to the internet. So they may have resolved the hardware problem, but they don’t eradicate the problem from its roots.

In conclusion, not having the right internet infrastructure makes it harder for people to be able to have online solutions for schools and workspaces shuts downs due to COVID-19. Also, not having the hardware to get their activities done, forces them to move to a bigger city and have a physical job or, in student cases, stop studying and be exposed to the risk of getting infected. I believe the government is putting its grain of sand by making programs to help marginal communities, but it takes more effort than that to really help them. So maybe, private industries may take a call into action to help reduce this problem for everyone.

essay #2

IS HOME OFFICE BENEFICIAL?

MARCELA ROSALES

The working environment has changed over the past year after the outbreak of COVID-19 in China, and then in the whole world. Many employees have been forced to work from home in order to keep running the business for the companies they work for. This has raised the question of whether doing home office is beneficial or not. In my opinion, it is because it is cheaper for employers and also it lets the employees have more control over their time.

First of all, for a company it is very expensive to maintain an office building, even more if they want to run operations in many cities. Employers have to pay rent, electricity, water among other required services. Besides, they may choose to provide a parking lot for the employees, or to enable a cafeteria if they are located outside of the city. With home office it is possible to reduce to an extent many of these services, which causes the company to have extra money to distribute for other projects or to hire more people.

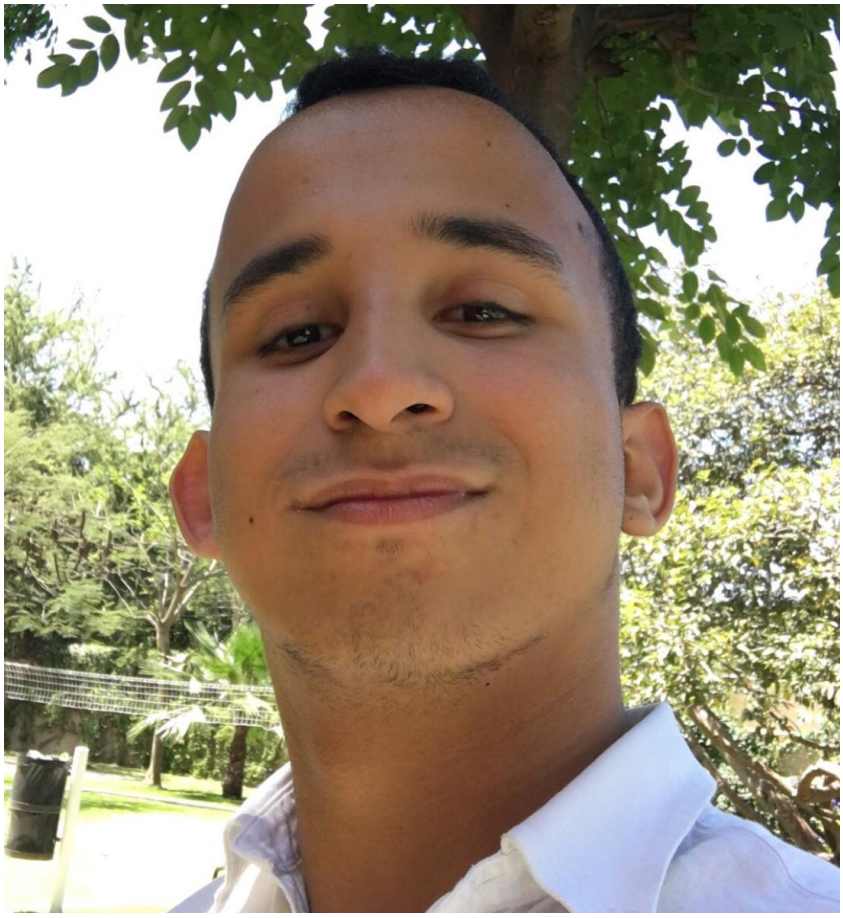
Moreover, employees may find working at home beneficial because they can manage their time with more freedom. First, they have a little bit more time to sleep or have breakfast because they do not have to drive or take the bus in order to commute to work. Also, now they can spend more time with their families. For example, they can decide to cook and have lunch together.

Some people are concerned about how employee's balance between work and personal life could suffer. They think that employees will use a lot of time working, and that eventually they will burn out. This is a valid opinion, although not entirely correct. It is true that at the beginning some people may struggle to organize their time appropriately, but in the long run, they will finally come to a schedule that they can follow and let them do their work efficiently and still benefit from working at home.

In conclusion, working from home is beneficial for both employers and employees. It lets employers save money, which they can use to increase their businesses. As it also lets the employees have more time to spend as they wish.

essay #3

SHOULD THERE BE FREE SPEECH IN SOCIAL MEDIA?



TADEO SEBASTIAN ALVAREZ REGALADO

Nowadays we are living up a hard time with opinions being shared everywhere, specially when it comes to using social media, It's unbelievable how easy one could share the first thing that comes to mind and thousands of members would visualize it in a few seconds, in the worst scenario we have seen world leaders sharing misinformation on Facebook. From my point of view, there shouldn't be free speech in social media only when it comes to important decisions.

First and foremost, decisions taken by important figures can affect a whole country, that's why these ones are checked by experts before being shared. For example, time ago on Twitter, the most important accounts got hacked, accounts like Bill Gates, Barack Obama, Jeft Bezos, Donald Trump and this made people believe in a fake post and donating thousands of dollars, this is a proof that people are likely to follow the lead of anything even if this is not correct.

Free Speech and misinformation don't get along, for this reason free speech must not be allowed for politics, those accounts had the freedom of sharing whatever, they made use of the free speech and it turned out to be something bad.

Giving own control to power members to say whatever they want with no measure can bring consequences, and the governments are aware of it and they do not allow them to take big decisions without consulting with the appropriate experts, but unfortunately this cannot be measured on social media where the presidents make own use of their accounts and by doing so making inappropriate decisions.

Opposers to my idea might say that we all have the right to free speech and say anything we want and actually we do.But it's also other people's right to get correct information and social media cannot assure us that the information available there is completely correct, that's the reason why people must not be free to share whatever we want, especially if this may involucrate important events.

In conclusion, Social Media is a great tool when it comes to socializing or goofing around a little, but it definitely can have a negative side such as allowing people to share whatever they want with no control of it, and there shouldn't be free speech in social media only when it comes to important decisions.

essay #4

IS IT A GOOD IDEA TO CONTINUE TO LEARN AND WORK ONLINE AFTER THE PANDEMIC?

MARIA MAGDALENA VILLA CISNEROS

Due to the COVID-19, not only Mexico but the world has been locked out; that is the reason why many people have moved virtuality. Some people agree it is a good alternative to continue learning and working at home. However, some others think it is not the best option, first of all, because not everyone has the means to do it. I believe that continuing to learn and work online after the pandemic would be difficult because it would only privilege people who have internet access and the lack of interaction and movement could affect mental and physical health.

First and foremost, it would be complicated for some people to continue to work virtuality because they have trouble with Internet access or do not have a computer, especially when it comes to education. Unfortunately, some students cannot afford it, so education has become a luxury for them. Some of them have to spend hours in a café which seems not to be the most effective atmosphere for studying or even when there is a computer at home, they have to share it with their siblings. Furthermore, there is still a lack of technological literacy, so this transition might affect, for example, the elders.

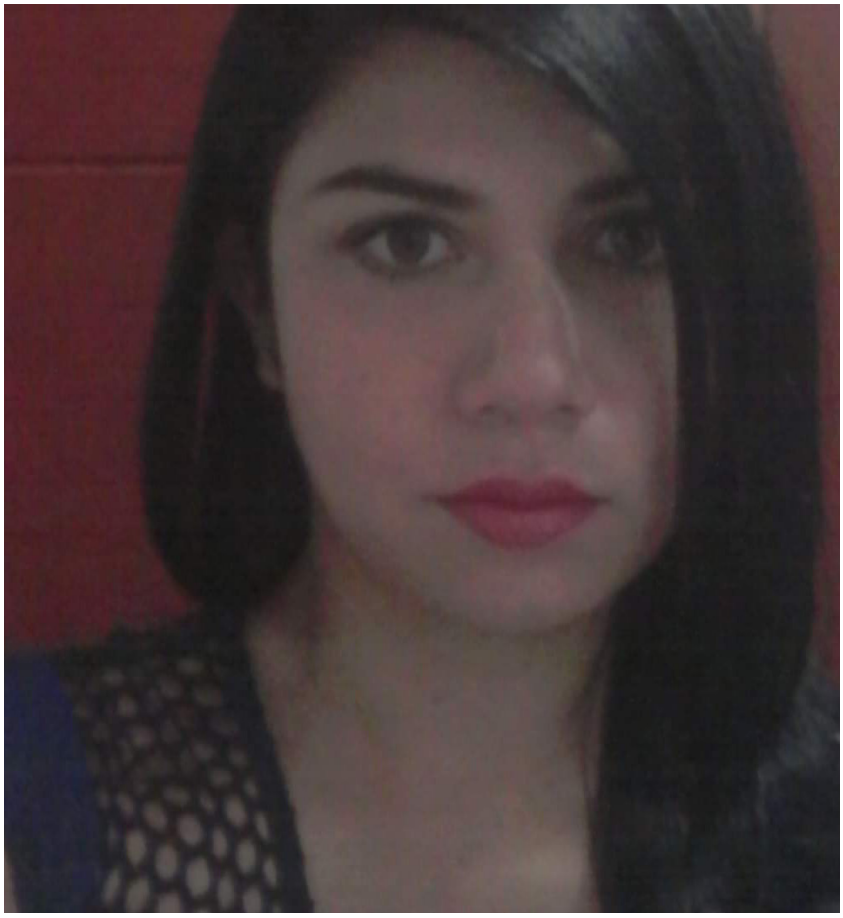
In addition, online classes or work can be exhausting for those who are not used to learn or work that way which can make people less efficient. Staying all day long in front of a computer and the lack of interaction has brought out anxiety, tiredness, and depression. For some people is it easy to work with no interaction, yet, most human beings need social relationships. Moreover, people are not moving, and they have been gaining weight.

Indeed, there are some benefits of working or studying online such as saving money on transportation or food, less time in moving around and traffic, and less pollution caused by cars. Nevertheless, while people do not agree or have the means to adapt to this modality, work and education will be affected and even some people's well-being.

In conclusion, online working and education is not suitable for everyone. As mentioned, some people have difficulties such as accessibility or adaptation problems. Moving to virtuality requires capacitation and a facility of means to do it. Besides, it must be optional for those who really like that modality so that they can feel and perform fine, either at school or work. I think it is great to adapt to change and that it has some benefits but it should not be imposed after the pandemic, that transition takes more time.

essay #5

IS SOCIAL MEDIA GOOD FOR SOCIETY?



ALEJANDRINA FIGUERA

Is social media hurting your mental health? I strongly believe that the use without measurement of social media hurts not only your mental health but your relationships with everyone around you. The fact that people feel more love or importance depending on the reactions on a photo or followers (friends) in social media destroys the real relationships in the real world.

When social media began with pages like Hi5 I believe that the motivation for these sites was to earn profits with advertising while people had fun sharing stuff like photos phrases with friends and acquaintances. With the huge technological advances the relations began to be base only on social media and the care or love you have for someone it seems that it can only be shown through facebook, tiktok or snapchat, if you don't want someone in your life you just have to "block" that person from social media and is not only reduced to personal relationships now these medias have so much power it can influence political movements.

In the Netflix documentary "The great hack" it is easy to see how these companies sell personal information. Anyone that has an account in social media willingly gives and allows to be shared and sold. An easy example of this is if you make a quick search in google or amazon you will quickly start seeing advertisements in all your social media about that product or similar ones and is not your phone spying on you, is that you allow that these pages share your interests with what they call partners.

Another huge impact that social media has is in teenagers, with social pressure this is a vulnerable age when a lot of them are looking for peer approval we have seen the so call "challenges" that started with prank phone calls and have gone so far to eating tide pods and many other that puts their life in danger.

On the other hand social media has helped many people to stay connected and has created a new way to bond between people. If it is used well you can develop real relationships with people around the world, other cultures and ways of thinking.

In conclusion I believe that if you allow yourself that all your interactions have to be measured through social media, you seriously have to evaluate your real relationships with your loved ones, quoting an old beer commercial "Everything with measure nothing with excess".

essay #6

IS TECHNOLOGY BENEFICIAL FOR THE HUMAN RACE?

CARLOS AHEDO

Has technology been affecting our life? I believe it has, in certain ways technology has change completely our life, but it has also affected it. The meaning of technology is the application of scientific knowledge for practical proposes, especially in industry. Countries like Russia, USA, China have invested in technology having amazing results. During the las two decades we have been witness of incredible technology advances, but is it too much knowledge? I mean nowadays, we have cars that can drive themselves, but doesn´t that make us lazier? Technology defenders think that technology comes just to make things easier, which I agree, but I think technology is encroaching our limits, so that's why I think technology isn´t being explored in a good way.

First of all, technology has affected social life, because now people prefer staying in home, playing video games, doing online works, etc. We have seen people that even in Christmas or important holidays, prefer to watch their cellphones than talk or being with their family, is technology a scape from reality?

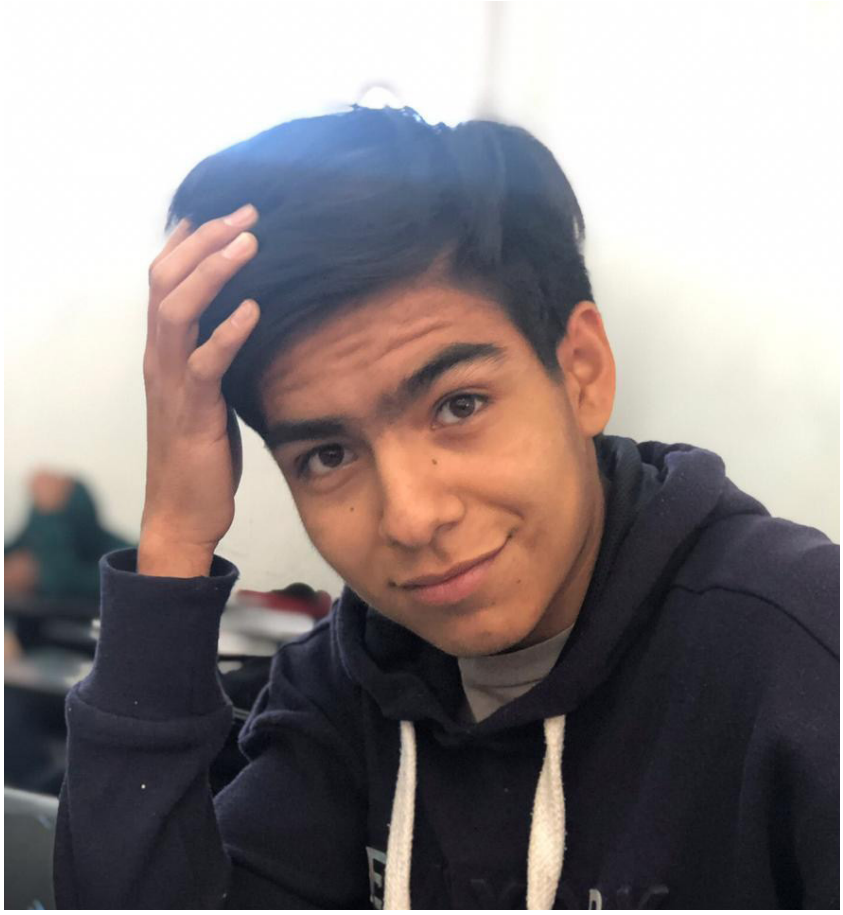
With this first point, we can agree that during this technological revolution, depression and anxiety has increased in most of the population, does that have to do with technology? I think it has, people now think that with social media your life has to be perfect, with these Instagram photos where public influencers have made people think their life it perfect, most of the audience thinks that the life needs to be like them, ignoring what they have and despise their own life.

Most of the people that work on technology, thinks it has come one of the most important things in earth, and it does, also they say technology comes to make better our life, which I disagree, because I think technology it´s a double edge knife, it has been a powerful tool for science but it has also been a tool for bad things, like hacking, murders and infinity of illegal things.

In conclusion I define technology as a thing we that we have to be careful and also I think we need to establish limits for it so humanity won't became dependent on technology. With that being said, I invited for you all to take care of your mental health, contact a psychologist and beware on having your mental health on a thing that doesn´t has to do with you directly.

essay #7

HOW TECHNOLOGY WILL AFFECT THE FUTURE JOBS



GENARO MARTELL

Imagine a world in the future where computers and machines "steals" people's jobs. Might this occur? The answer is yes. Nowadays there are lots of jobs which are performed by machines. For instance, the automotive industry has been an industry which has replaced the people's jobs for work made by machines. Many people think that technology should be limited due to machines have been leaving them without job, However, I believe that technology will help us to build a better world allowing us to have great jobs.There are a couple of reasons that support my point of view. My first reason is that technology allows us to be more efficient in our jobs. My second reason is that we can improve other roots of knowledge while the computers do the repetitive and boring work such as packaging a product.

In the last 2 centuries we have seen an enormous improvement in our lquaity of life. For instanc, many diseases have been cured thanks to lots of research, we have elongated our lifespan, we have reduced the poverty level in the world, and so forth. We could not have done all these things without technology. We have noted this exponential improvement since the second industrial revolution and it seems that it will continue.

I would like to highlight an important point before talking about the future jobs.

Nowadays we are using the same education system which existed since decades or maybe centuries ago, and the problem reside in that that education system was designed to develop certain kind of skills which was used in the past, not in the present. Now that the computers have exceeded the capacity of the human for solving some kind of problems, the education system shouldn't leave us to compete against computers, because we will never overcome them! It should teach us the skills which a computer can not overcome.

Once we have understood why the education system should be changed we can talk about the jobs in the future. Well, we don't really know what kind of jobs will be in the future, but we know what skills we will need: the ones a computer can not perform, such as team work, improvisation and creativity. With an adequate education system people will develop the correct skills to perform their job and succeed, leaving the machines doing the repetitive and boring work.

In conclusion, a change in the future jobs is imminent, we must be prepared to manage the unemployment due to the replacement of machines instead of humans. In addition, recognizing that technology has helped us to enhance our own species, will make us realize that it is necessary for a greater world.

ESQUINA FRANKILN

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