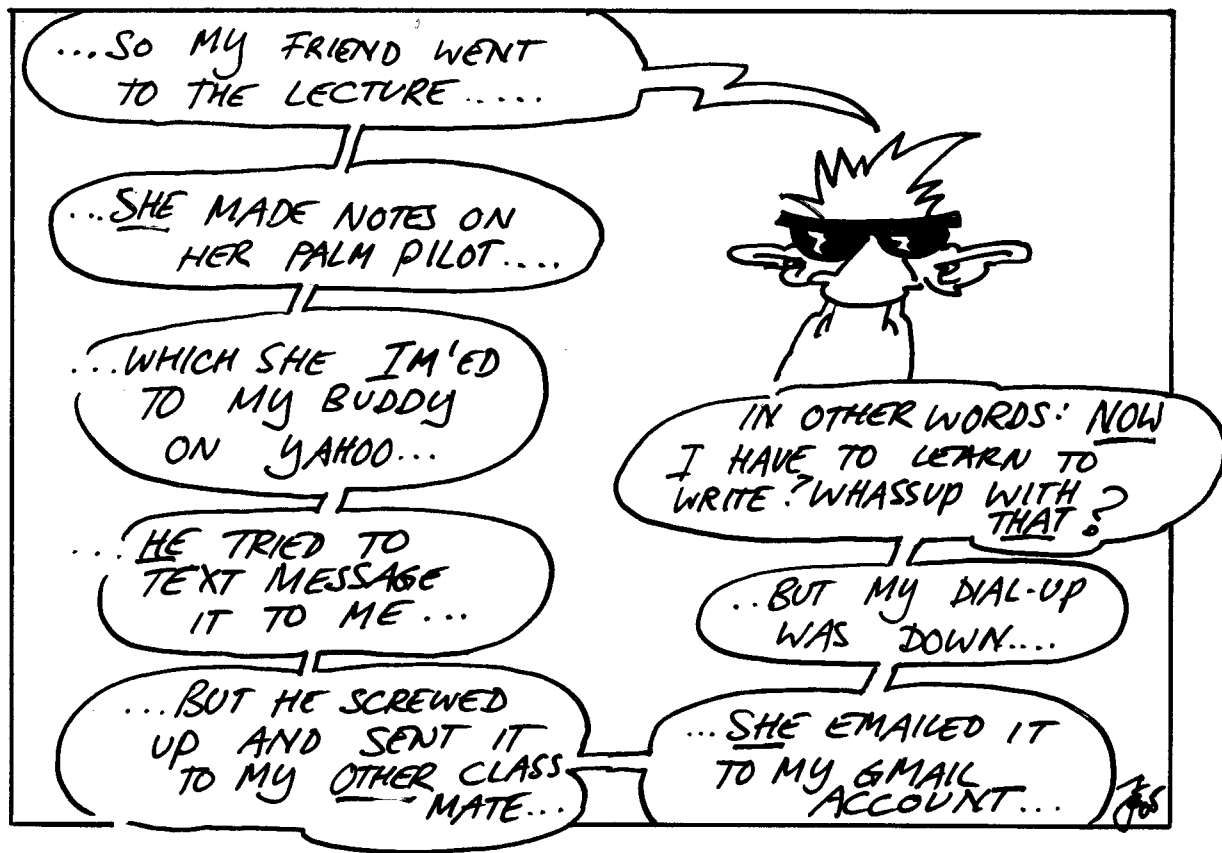




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OPINION

# How plugged in are we really? Is that all we know?

By **JEROME ENGELBERTS**  
*Opinions Editor*

Is it just me, or has anyone else noticed that the communications skills necessary for having an actual conversation face-to-face are withering on the vine?

Technology enables us to stay in touch in many electronic and convenient ways - but are we actually staying in touch? Take cell phones. Everyone (yes, me too) has one. But because it's ever present, people tend to use them as a conduit to the world, rather than using them to communicate when other options are out. Cell phones seem to urge

their owners to deliver status reports.

Tell me if the following sounds familiar: You're next to someone in the check-out line at your grocery store. Their phone rings (as in: suddenly you hear the rap version of "Hava Nagilah"). They pick up. This would be what you'd hear (if you're impolite enough to eavesdrop, or alternatively, if they're talking loudly enough for everyone to enjoy it) "Oh, hi. 'Sup? Eh-nooo.... I'm just standing in line at the store. What? Eh...broccoli, bagels, toothpaste. Mm-hmm... no, I'll just go over to the Jiffy-Lube next. Drop off the car; then go have a coffee.

Okay. You too. Bye."

This conversation conveyed nothing except the most mundane stuff that we all do, without sharing anything personal, making a connection, or even - relating to what is discussed. It's talking without communicating. And our electronic age has a way of sucking us into these patterns.

There are people who, by now, live completely through their virtual on-line identities. They're a handle on an Instant Message window. Life has become what you can download, buy online, or read a blog about. Body language is becoming a dead language, and man-

ners will soon be obsolete, too. There are only a few activities left that we actually physically have to get together for - and one of those may be falling by the wayside if Woody Allen's "Sleeper" was on track with the "Orgasmotron" (It's a scary thought - "Ooh baby, show me your USB port...!")

Sad to say, there is a growing group of people who live almost entirely through handheld electronics and the services of their ISP, their voluntary isolation slowly turning into an involuntary one caused by lack of personal and social skills outdated by technology. Although I thoroughly enjoy the

fact that I have email, a mobile phone, and a computer at my disposal - I would wither away if I couldn't interact with real people. See a real concert, and NOT download the MP3 file. Walk into a store and ask questions before I buy something. Actually make time to meet with someone that I like, sit down, turn my phone off, and have a cup of coffee and talk about how things are with me and my friend - without having to type "brb" or "lol" or even "ty" and "yw". If you, too, feel you need to shed the burden of living life through your personal electronic devices, visit my web site at <http://www....> (kidding).

# Midterm stress? Try hard, do your best, mellow out

By **KRISTA MARTINEZ**  
*Staff writer*

Midterms making you far too stressed out? Calling in sick to work because that course with three hours of homework every night just doubled the workload to cover up all the material? BUCK UP AND TAKE IT!

Midterms can't really be that

bad for all of you, can they? I hear all this stressed-out whining about how much work you have to do and all I can think is "If you have to work so hard for the test, you really must not be learning anything."

Let me explain my point of view. I have always learned in class. I was never the note-passing, back-row-sitting, whispering kind. I sat in class diligently listening, taking notes if we were covering lots of material and basically using my

class time for what it was for: learning. Having teachers take an extra week out of my time to go through reviews insulted me. What was all my work for? Why did I try to independently gain an understanding of an idea when the teacher would work us through each question that might show up on the test individually? Why don't we just skip all of our regular classes and show up for the review weeks and tests because obviously that's all

that matters, since learning isn't necessarily the biggest priority for most students.

"Will this be on the test?" is the worst question I have ever heard; I am a firm believer in "The only stupid question is the one you don't ask." Of course you should know everything the teacher mentions in the lectures. If it is covered, it is relevant. Therefore, you should know it. If it is something you should know you should know it for the

sake of gaining a full usable knowledge of the subject of the course.

Tests are not designed to find out how much you can learn in a week. Tests, midterms, finals are all meant, at least originally, to find out what you retained, what you now know for sure about the subject. Learn what you can in class and hopefully, if you aren't a totally TV brainwashed deadhead, you can retain enough to achieve that C+ in your classes.

CAMPUS COMMENT >>>

## What adds the most stress to your life?



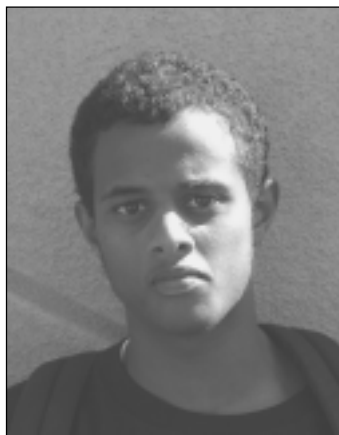
**MICHAEL WIETecha**  
History

"Financial problems. Paying for school and trying to get good grades at the same time."



**ZARGHOONA JOYAA**  
Psychology

"Nothing. We stress out too much-that's not what life's about. Just find a way to deal with it."



**KAMAL AHMED**  
Teaching

"Family - when they expect you to do more than you can do. And just nagging."



**SAIRA SIDDIQUI**  
History/Political Science

"My family and culture. People always asked me (even in kindergarten) 'why don't you date?'"



**SANDY SILVA**  
Nursing/R.N.

"Kids. They stay out all night and worry you."