Digital Detox

70 points.

In this project, we will reflect on what is important to us and assess how we spend our time, with a focus on electronic devices. Although digital technologies have much to offer, there is something worrying about the compulsive checking, fear of missing out, and other anxieties they occasion. The aim of this project is to become more aware of our actual use of these technologies and to experiment with controlling their grip on our lives. You should modify the challenges to better fit the specifics of your life, but you must explain the reasoning for each change in your journal.

Deliverables:

1. Self Assessment
   a. free write
   b. SLIDE
   c. collect tracking data
2. Notifications journal & collect tracking data
3. Wake & Sleep journal & collect tracking data
4. Choose a preset journal & collect tracking data
5. Design your own
   a. SLIDE
   b. research mini-essay
   c. journal
   d. collect tracking data
6. Voted up journal & collect tracking data
7. Tracking and reflection
   a. 2-page reflective essay
   b. Tabulate tracking data (graph? spreadsheet?)
   c. Journal about data
   d. SLIDE

Key Resources:

- Bored and Brilliant website and podcast series
  (http://www.wnyc.org/series/bored-and-brilliant/)
- "Nosedive" Black Mirror (Netflix)
- Lupton, Self-tracking cultures
- Sauter, What's on your mind?
- Schüll, Machines, Medication, and Modulation
- Herzog, From one second to the next (Youtube)
- Tufecki, Is the Internet Good or Bad? Yes.

- Zomorodi, How boredom can lead to brilliance (TED Talk)Schedule

Self assessment and goals (complete by Friday 7 September)

1. Start your journal with a **20 minute free-writing** self-assessment reflecting on these questions:
   a. What is most important to you?
   b. What do you spend your time doing?
2. **Add a slide to the class deck representing the conclusions of the self-assessment exercise.** One idea is two charts: what's important vs. what you actually do.
3. Choose one area of mismatch, preferably having to do with your mobile, computer, or media use, set a goal, and begin to measure your actual behavior. **Use an automated tracker to help you with the digital stuff — we're notoriously bad at self-tracking.**
4. Visit the website (http://www.wnyc.org/series/bored-and-brilliant/) and check out the listed challenges. This will give you a preview of what we will be up to for the next couple of months. Be sure to click on the title of each challenge to expand the detailed description.

"NO"tifications (14 September)

1. Systematically review your notification settings on your various devices. Who are you allowing to interrupt your mental space? Who do you want to hear from?
2. Come up with a notification policy that takes advantage of "Do Not Disturb" settings, think about the difference between banners, dialogs for you. Consider when you want apps to use badges and when they should show up in your notification screens.

"Wake and sleep" (21 September)

1. Deconstruct your wake and sleep routines. What do you do? What do you wish you did? Where does your routine sometimes go off the rails?
2. Redesign your wake and sleep routines. Examples: Set alarms. Put your phone in another room. Don't look at social until after breakfast or exercise or a phone call to mom.

Choose a preset challenge AND Design your own challenge (5 October (Recommended deadline: 28 September))

1. Choose a preset challenge
   a. Complete Challenge 2 (no photos or no texts) OR
   b. Challenge 3 (delete that app) OR
   c. Complete Challenge 1 (put it in your pocket) AND Challenge 5 (observation). 1 asks you to put your phone away and 5 gives you something to do instead of looking at the phone.

2. Reflect! Was it difficult? Did you slip up? If you modified the treatment, what did you do instead? (a) what did you feel you were missing out on? What did you actually miss? (b) did you re-install? (c) Were you bored with 'observing'? Is this a fun habit? Was "observation" a useful exercise? Is it something you might repeat on your own?
3. Design your own Challenge. It helps to think back to your personal goals here.
   a. **Write a mini research paper (2 pages) based on at least one reasonably scholarly or authoritative source related to your goal/idea for the challenge. See "short essay" instructions for guidance on the research process**. In this short paper, focus on the argument, evidence, and whether you are convinced by it. Explicitly relate it to your goal(s). Include the bibliographic info. **I recommend checking in with me by 21 September with your research question and plan.**
   b. Devise reasonable journal prompts for your challenge. Figure out how to evaluate your performance. Write a short "prompt" in the style of the podcast introductions to each challenge. **Add a write up of your challenge to the class slide deck**.

"Your own challenge" (5 October):

1. Complete the challenge you designed. Reflect on how well it worked using the prompts you devised.

"Voted Up" (19 October)

1. Complete one of the top two challenges voted up by the class. Reflect on how well it worked.

Tracking AND Reflection (26 October)

1. Tally up your tracking. Create a graph or other visualization to indicate your progress. Add this to the class slide deck.
2. Journal about the tracking process. Does the data match your impressions? Did collecting data change the process you were trying to measure? Did you learn anything unexpected?
3. Reflect on the project as a whole and write a 2 page essay about it. Did you reach your goal(s)? What worked? What didn't work? Have you developed new habits that you will continue? What did you learn about your relationship with technology? How did you learn it? What would you change about this project?