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Appendix

Our Device Policy

British Literature Survey II

In this class we will spend the majority of our time engaged in activities that depend upon you being present and attentive to one another, and of course to the works of literature we will study. We are all challenged these days by the ways in which our digital devices—including laptops, tablets, and phones—can steal our attention away from our immediate surroundings. In this class we will have a technology policy that is designed to support your attention to one another and to the course material. I have developed this policy for three reasons.

1. A significant body of research demonstrates that when students engage in off-task behavior on their devices, it **hurts the learning of the peers sitting near them**. In one study, students who were *not* using a device in a class lecture, but were seated *within view of a peer with a device*, performed 17 percent worse on an exam based on that lecture material than students who were not within view of someone else's device. Hence the first purpose of this policy is to ensure that your devices are not harming the learning of your peers.

Appendix

2. This class depends upon everyone's active engagement. My job is to provide you with exposure to the course material and organize class so that you develop your own ideas about what that material means. Your ideas will become richer when they are articulated and engaged in dialogue with the ideas of your peers. If you are focused on your device, instead of our work, **you are depriving the entire class of your ideas and questions—both of which we all want to hear.** Your attention contributes to *all* of our learning.
3. Finally, since so much of the course depends upon discussion, I want to make sure that we all **show respect for one another by listening to each other.** We all have likely had the demoralizing experience of trying to speak with someone who was focused on their phone, and feeling hurt by their lack of attention to us. In this class I want us to respect everyone's voices by being present and listening to each other.

In order to achieve all of these objectives, the device policy for the course is as follows:

1. You *may* use laptops to read the texts and take notes in the course as you wish and as needed. If you use a laptop, **close any tabs that are not related to the course.** Remember, off-task behaviors can hurt the learning of your peers.
2. If you choose to read the works online and use your laptop in class, **get an app or program that can help you take and save notes directly on the texts themselves.** You can use the online tool Hypothes.is to do this, but I can provide you with other ideas, depending upon how you are getting access to the works.

3. You *may* have your phone out on your desk, but **keep it facedown so you are not continually seeing new notifications that steal away your attention.** Those continued flashes of light have been engineered to hijack your attention, and can hurt both your learning and the learning of your peers.
4. There will be times in class when I want everyone to put their devices away and focus on some activity: a quick writing exercise, a discussion circle, a worksheet. In those activities, we will all be device free.
5. Finally, in order to show everyone that we are listening respectfully to one another, please remove any AirPods or earbuds at the start of class.

If anyone has an accommodation that would make any of these policy items challenging in any way, please let me know by e-mail prior to Wednesday's class. I will make sure I modify the policy accordingly. *I am very happy to do this.* If you have any other hesitations or concerns about the policy, for any reason at all, please let me know that as well. I want to ensure that this policy supports our work while meeting your needs as a student.

We will revisit this policy at the midterm, to check and see whether it is still working for everyone. For now, please indicate that you understand the policy and agree to abide by it with your signature below.

Signed: _____ Date: _____