

# Communicating with Thumbs

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Video Credit: Tom Klabnik

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## Communicating With Thumbs

“On Facebook, I couldn’t post anything, comment back, and participate in a chat or any kind of activity. I also use Instagram a lot so that meant I couldn’t post any pictures or even any comments; there was just no social interaction,” said freshman Lisa Folli.

While this might sound like a quote from a technologically deprived castaway, students of Yvonne Bland’s Survey of Mass Communication experienced similar realities for 48 hours.

Bland’s class was given a unique assignment that challenged students to abstain from communicating with a social intent through the means of technology. This period of “powering down” lasted 48 hours and Bland participated in the event alongside her students.

“I really love that social interaction, the gratification of talking to friends and staying connected... I felt that it was only fair if I was asking them to stop doing something they love, for me to give it up as well. It’s just my style of teaching,” stated Bland.

Students were asked to refrain from popular social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, as well as any phone activity like text messaging or phone calling. In addition to these common forms of communication, any website where a comment or post could be considered social interaction were also prohibited. Youtube, Pinterest, and Skype are examples of this addition.

Bland explained that the purpose of this challenge was to build awareness of just how much society is dependent upon technology.

“Some people looked at it like I was punishing them, or that I was taking something from them but the real goal was to build awareness that we use technology like we breathe our oxygen,” said Bland.

According to Folli, a student who participated in Bland’s “power down,” the class discussed a slogan that displayed the message “nowadays we communicate with our thumbs.” This inspired Folli to improve her face-to-face communication rather than strictly relying on technological communication.