

GOAL: To assess skills in **effective communication** skills in student populations, notably their ability to:

- Comprehend, interpret and analyze written and oral information
- Express ideas and provide supporting evidence effectively in writing and in speaking
- Communicate effectively in a group or team situation

METHOD: Structured and moderated discussion involving student populations with contrasting levels of college experience: Year One and the Honors Seminar.

TOPIC: **SHOULD WE BE MORE CAREFUL ABOUT SMARTPHONES?**

Introductions (5 minutes).

Welcome! Let's introduce ourselves, and get some pizza.

Thank you for participating. Our goal today is simply to hold a discussion. It's the kind of discussion that might precede a writing assignment. But it's not part of an assignment, and we're not going to judge you, grade you, or give you homework. The topic is something that touches on our everyday experience, but is also something that inspires a lot of academic discussion and research in a variety of disciplines.

As students, you can use this as an opportunity to discuss an interesting and important subject *outside* of a classroom setting. As faculty, we want to eavesdrop! Our question to ourselves is, How effectively are we helping you express your ideas?

Opening (5 minutes): Do you have a smartphone? And how often do you think you check it every day?

Moderator prompt: The average person checks their phone 150 times a day, and spends about 5 hours on their phone. Does this surprise you? Does it sound like a lot?

Video (10 minutes): Tristan Harris interview, "Your smartphone is trying to control your life" (PBS) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MacJ4p0vITM>.

Moderator prompt: Here's a brief discussion on some of the issues raised by smartphone use. Please listen, and be ready to talk about it.

Question 1: Standout ideas? (10 minutes). Take a minute to pick one specific thing Harris said that stood out for you – that you connected with or disagreed with, or that just got you thinking. Then share out.

- Why did this fact or statement stand out to you?
- (in response to any claims of fact or references to evidence) Where did you come across that?

Question 2: Smartphones in the classroom (10 minutes). Most of us sneak a look at our phones in class. Do you think that dividing your attention helps you stay focused in class? Or does it get in the way?

Moderator prompts:

- If you do glance at your phone, what are you looking for?
- (in response to any claims of fact or references to evidence) Where did you come across that?

Question 3: Solutions (20 minutes). In pairs or threes, brainstorm some ways to make sure that smartphones don't get in our way – in the classroom, or in life generally. You could think of institutional policies, or phone design, or ways to keep ourselves disciplined. When you've discussed a few, choose the one you all like best, and present it to the group.