More of a Chore than a Pastime

It is now exceedingly rare to find a student on a college campus reading a book that is not required for one of their classes. Many college students only read in order to complete their school assignments and rarely participate in any reading for pleasure. Unfortunately, reading is necessary for further intellectual development. A decline in reading will only have negative effects on students’ future career prospects and result in a less educated society. Although required reading is frequently assigned in college classrooms, many factors have caused reading for pleasure to become increasingly uncommon among college students.

Some may say that college students do not read for pleasure because they think do not think it is important, but this is not true. Throughout elementary, middle, and high school, both parents and teachers constantly stress the importance of reading. In English classes, which are required at all levels of education, readings are frequently assigned and reading for pleasure is still emphasized. College students are especially aware of the importance of reading – their minds have been inundated with the idea that they must read in order to be successful, both in their academic lives and their personal lives. College students know that reading for pleasure is important but simply do not dedicate the time to it.

One of the causes of college students not reading for pleasure is that they find reading to be unenjoyable. Reading is assigned as homework since the very beginning of a student’s educational experience and, consequently, has become associated with being a tedious
assignment rather than a satisfying activity. Although students may read for pleasure at younger ages, they are assigned more complicated and lengthy readings as they grow older and start to develop a disdain for reading. Reading becomes mentally associated with assignments forced onto the students by teachers – mentioning reading brings up memories of studying a hundred pages of U.S. History a week or of a 500 page novel that made no sense even after the second read. Since reading is such an integral part of the college learning experience, it is unlikely that a college student would choose to increase their amount of weekly reading by adding on pleasurable reading. Although some students may still find reading to be enjoyable, they have their limits. Without a change in the perception of the entertainment value of reading, it is unlikely that students will begin to read more for pleasure.

Another cause of college students not reading for pleasure is that they do not have enough time. College student life is busier than ever – students barely have time for sleep, so they are unlikely to have time for pleasurable reading. As student debt increases, more and more students are taking on part-time jobs which consume a large amount of a student’s hours. At the same time, many students participate in student organizations that require significant amounts of time commitment. Meanwhile, students must simultaneously balance both their social life with their friends and their family life with relatives. While struggling to balance potential job responsibilities, campus organization commitments, and personal relationships, students are still expected to maintain a strong academic performance. With all of these responsibilities to juggle, students barely have time for themselves. College student responsibilities are time-consuming and are both physically and mentally draining, leaving students with little time to spend on reading for pleasure.
Even though finding reading to be uninteresting and lacking time are important causes, the most significant cause of college students not reading for pleasure would be that students have many other options for spending their free time. Students are likely to prioritize more important and worthy pastimes. Although students are constantly bombarded with responsibilities that must complete, college students still find time for themselves to participate in enjoyable and relaxing activities. When compared to all of the other exciting events available to college students such as attending a campus performance or participating in intramural sports, reading can be perceived to be a lackluster alternative. If reading for pleasure was deemed to be the most appealing option that college students had for their free time, they would find the time for reading. However, the problem is that students are unlikely to choose reading for pleasure as something they will do in their spare time. With so many other technological distractions such as texting, internet surfing, movies, and video games, college students are more likely to choose one of these other activities. Due to the presence of many other options for personal leisure, college students will quickly go towards simpler and less intellectually-stimulating forms of pleasure.

Reading for pleasure has unfortunately become an incredibly rare occurrence in today’s college students. Despite its many well-known benefits, reading is typically only done if forced. It has become a horrendous chore that students must complete rather than an activity they look forward to at the end of a tiring day. This mindset towards reading for pleasure needs to be changed as soon as possible or else the intellectual capacities of society’s future leaders will suffer.