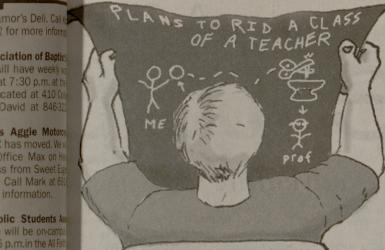
AGGIELIFE

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Wasting the time away Students find inventive ways to keep eyes open during class

Story by Susan Overcash • Graphics by Michael Wagener

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Internet during class.

of our work on Maple, on the computer," Fiurito said. "I would dreams through boring lectures. watch the World Cup over the Internet instead.

Many modern classrooms are equipped with laptop computers, mics, when tuition most of which have Internet access and e-mail.

Fiurito is not the only student who passes class time on the Internet.

Larry Lumpkin, a junior chemical engineering major, said Inter-net games, such as "Home Run Rally," keep him awake in interminable classes.

Nora Rangel, a senior political science major, said class is often a good time to plan her week.

Rangel said she most often day-

why are students turning their nose up at acadeand fees average over \$100 per class hour.

Fiurito said after spending a certain amount of time in school, students find it difficult to continue paying attention. "You reach a point

where it doesn't make a difference," Fiurito said. "After six years of school, I've realized there's more to life."

Fiurito said a difficult class or a professor who is hard to understand also makes it difficult to pay attention.

"I mean, you're sitting there in class, trying to pay attention, and nothing makes sense," he said. "So instead, you start sitting there plotting, 'How can I kill this bastard?"

Brent White, a junior biomedical science major, also said an uninteresting professor makes class time a waste of time

"I hardly ever pay attention," White said. "In most classes, the

Carrie Cardon, a senior infor-

teacher's not worth listening to

anyway

mation systems major, said a professor's ineffective presentation style also contributes to a

short attention span. 'Most classes, the teachers just Power have

notes," Point Cardon said. "There's no point in paying attention; the notes are available on the Web. I mean, I can read."

Stephanie Knight, associate professor in the Department of Educational Psychology and Director for the Center of Collaborating Learning Communities, said many profes-

sors, especially in large lectures, try to present students with too much information. "We know in educational psy-

chology that humans can only process information at a certain rate," Knight said. "If they're overloaded, they

can't retain what they've learned. Students tune out like a machine that is overloaded.

What can a professor do to re-solve this dilemma? Knight said adding variation to a lecture and getting to know students extends attentions spans.

"My favorite example of this is

Ferris Beuller's Day Off every professor should see that," Knight said. "Professors need to vary what they're doing, in chunks of five to ten minutes.

"Vary voice tone, movement and content and interject activities that allow students to be active physically and mentally. Also, allow questions and know student's names. I think a good sense of humor also helps.

Knight said students have a difficult time paying attention to subjects not directly relevant to their lives.

"Recent learning theory sug-gests that people listen to what they think is relevant," she said. "The professor needs to know their students and maintain relevance.'

Rangel said she agrees that professors who focus on student needs, as well as academics, help her pay attention.

"I think a better sense of humor and more interaction with students help me pay attention," Rangel said. "A lot of times, they'll come in with a set agenda and have to 🐜 cover specific points, and that can be very boring. I have one class,

human sexuality, and our professor is the best. He's very open, and our class can talk about anything.

Knight said in lecture, profes-

sor's should extend material covered in the book through examples and anecdotes.

On the student side, Knight said students should try to develop better note-taking skills and get involved in class by asking questions.

"Use various kinds of note-taking strategies, changing the information format when writing it down," Knight said.

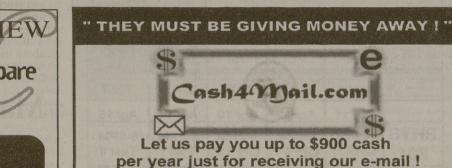
"The more you transform information, the better you remember it later. If you're writing notes



verbatim, you're not thinking about the information. If there's opportunity, ask questions and think of examples of what the professor is talking about. If all else fails, have a cup of coffee before class.

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vho might have be Mike Fiurito, a petroleum engi-"I usually pull out my planner ering graduate student, said he and start scheduling," Rangel en sketches or searches through said. "My roommate is also in a couple of my classes, and we'll 'Last summer, I was taking difwrite back and forth to one anential equations, and we did all other.

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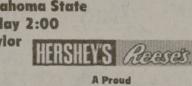
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