16. Technology and Cognition

Nicholas Carr, *Is Google Making Us Stupid?*

1. Explain the author’s argument that Google is making us stupid. [Tammy T]

2. What do you think would the author’s take be on the contention we have previously heard that technology is not neutral but has tendencies? What are the tendencies of Google and the Internet? [Nick VK]

3. How much time do you spend with your computer recreationally, playing games, chatting, browsing the web with no particular purpose, etc? How much time do you spend reading long books or thinking hard about a single subject? Do you think computers and the Internet interfere with reading and reflection in your case? [Everyone—answer in critique]

4. What do you think—if our ability to engage in extended concentration on a single subject is declining, would anything of importance be lost? What? Would there be any gains? [Mark VS]

5. The author says that “Never has a communication system played so many roles in our lives—or exerted such broad influence over our thoughts—as the Internet does today. Yet, for all that’s been written about the Net, there’s been little consideration of how, exactly, it’s reprogramming us. The Net’s intellectual ethic remains obscure.”

What do you think is the Net’s intellectual ethic? Formulate guidelines for use of the Internet you might prescribe for your future children that would keep most of its benefits but minimize the harm. [Arie vL]

*Your critique*: please reflect and write honestly about how you use the computers and the Internet and what effects you think it may be having on you. Do you read books and concentrate without distraction for long periods on one topic? Does use of computers and the Internet interfere with that? Then say how you will use it going forward—will there be change? What?