Digital Nation (2010)

For this week, we will be screening Frontline's documentary *Digital Nation* (2010). The documentary explores what it means to live in the digital age, to be "distracted" by digital technology, and the benefits and problems of always being connected. The Frontline website describes the film,

> Over a single generation, the Web and digital media have remade nearly every aspect of modern culture, transforming the way we work, learn, and connect in ways that we're only beginning to understand. FRONTLINE producer Rachel Dretzin (*Growing up Online*) teams up with one of the leading thinkers of the digital age, Douglas Rushkoff (*The Persuaders, Merchants of Cool*), to continue to explore life on the virtual frontier. The film is the product of a unique collaboration with visitors to the *Digital Nation* website, who for the past year have been able to react to the work in progress and post their own stories online.

Watch the full film here: https://www.pbs.org/video/frontline-digital-nation/

To get our conversation started, I want to offer a few framing questions (and things to pay close attention to). Briefly answer the following (with examples from the documentary or even from the current popular culture):

- How might we talk about "flow" (Genova Chen) and the "immersive fallacy" (Salen & Zimmerman) in regard to the use and dependence on digital technologies?

- How does the film define twenty-first century education or work? How might we think about education, learning, reading, writing, and problem solving as a constellation of practices and knowledges that include digital proficiencies without abandoning "older" skills?

- Think about how the US digital cultures are compared to/contrasted with other digital cultures. This will get us thinking about how virtual worlds and video games intersect with definitions of nation, nationalism, and so on. How might the US be figured against other countries?

- What are the benefits and costs of digital technology? What is gained or lost when much of our attention, memory, and cognitive process is externalized to our devices?

- What are the stereotypes and norms presented about digital users, gamers, and even "non-users" or "non-gamers"? How does the film define digital "addiction" or gaming "addiction?

- Define "digital natives" vs. "digital immigrants" (see Barlow and Prensky)? How might these tropes be problematic?