Summarizing Creatively & Critically: Example
Color Code: Summary, Creative Illustration of Article, Critical Questioning of Article

In a self-published blog post entitled "Addicted to Addiction," cultural theorist Christopher Lane argues against psychiatrist Jerald J. Block's proposal that "Internet Addiction" be included as a formal mental disorder in the DSM-V (the official book of diagnoses used by psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health practitioners). Lane cheekily pokes fun at Block and his fellow psychiatrists at the American Psychiatric Association, suggesting that they are suffering from "Diagnostic Creation and Exaggeration Disorder." In other words, Lane is calling out the APA for routinely—and unjustifiably—expanding the number of diagnoses included in the DSM. However, his main claim against "Internet Addiction" being a legitimate diagnosis is that "the line between compulsive behavior and sheer hard work is so hard to determine...[especially in a] faltering economy where conditions are so precarious that many work online far into the night and weekend just to hang on" (Lane).

Here, Lane observes a fundamental problem with pathologizing anyone using the internet an excessive amount in our day and age: for many (if not most) jobs and services, the everyday use (and often even "excessive" use) of the internet is assumed to be part of the work. For instance, to get to work, I open an (internet-based) app called Waze to find the route with least traffic. At work, I share ideas with colleagues and students via e-mail and other online services; after realizing I've forgotten to bring lunch, I hit up Google Maps to find a lunch spot with good reviews. When I'm exhausted after a long day, I resort to Uber. This brief hypothetical summary of "a day in [someone's] life" portrays what I would argue is the everyday life of your average, urban, American worker—so we're not even talking about the thousands (if not millions) of online entrepreneurs who have learned to make a buck off of online services ranging from Bitcoin to YouTube. Rather, the internet is necessarily ingrained in the fabric of nearly everyone's work day, and using it in ways that may seem "excessive" to older generations who grew up without it is now assumed to be a necessary part of many (if not most) people's work life.

With all that said, I do think it may be possible to draw a line in the sand between "excessive" and "tolerable" internet use—and Lane could be justly critiqued for not even entertaining this possibility in his essay. It certainly is true that many people suffer from the hours they fritter away on Facebook, Instagram, and other forms of social media; thus, it would seem important to develop a useful definition of what, exactly, amounts to too much internet use. Then again, why not leave it up to each person to decide for herself whether her internet use has become a problem—and to decide accordingly to seek the help of a therapist if needed?