

Pens are a real pain for generation laptop

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As a theology professor Kevin DeYoung teaches young Americans about ancient texts set down before the advent of the printing press.

But what often proves more challenging to this crop of digital natives is his idea that they must take down his lectures using a pen and paper rather than a laptop.

"I know there is a case to be made for allowing computers into classrooms," he wrote in a blog post announcing his decision to ban them. He anticipated his students' outraged objections to the policy: "Our hands will cramp up," they would say. "We won't be able to read our own writing. The lead on the pencil will break."

Professor DeYoung, at the Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina, is one of a host of professors and lecturers who have announced similar bans as they confront a generation that can type like lightning but struggle when they are reduced to a Biro. The complaints he has predicted have been raised by students all over the country.

"My hand is yelling at me, basically," said Chris Seeley, 22, an undergraduate at the University of California, Berkeley who is studying economics and French. He told *The Wall Street Journal* that he just about could cope with an hour-long class, but a 90-minute lecture, let alone

a two-hour seminar was excruciating. He said he would feel obliged to review his notes soon afterwards while he could still remember the abbreviations he had used in the heat of the moment.

An undergraduate at the University of Connecticut told the paper that he considered claiming a disability which might have allowed him an exemption to a sociology professor's laptop ban. "The class was ridiculously hard to take notes in," he said. "I was thinking: 'Hmm, do I have a disability?' I was very close to making something up."

Bans on laptops in some university lecture halls and classrooms have been implemented by professors who complain that students transcribe their words automatically, on a keyboard, without having to wrestle with the thrust of their arguments. Studies have suggested that students taking notes on a laptop retain less than those who are pushing a pen. There is also a suspicion that many might be using their screens to chat with friends on Facebook or make purchases on Amazon.

"How can an hour of lecture possibly compete with catching up on email, texting with a friend, and getting the latest 'breaking news' on Twitter and Facebook?" Professor DeYoung asked on his blog. "Will students daydream and doodle and draft other compositions even without a laptop? Of course. But at least they won't have the world at their fingertips and world-class entertainment a minimized screen away."