



10-17-2016

## Those Crazy Millennials!: Some Thoughts on the Vast Majority of our Students, or, Why Did the Millennial Cross the Road?

John C. Bird  
Winthrop University, [birdj@winthrop.edu](mailto:birdj@winthrop.edu)

Teaching and Learning Center

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.winthrop.edu/weeklyreader>



Part of the [Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Bird, John C. and Teaching and Learning Center, "Those Crazy Millennials!: Some Thoughts on the Vast Majority of our Students, or, Why Did the Millennial Cross the Road?" (2016). *The Weekly Reader*. 96. <https://digitalcommons.winthrop.edu/weeklyreader/96>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) at Digital Commons @ Winthrop University. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Weekly Reader by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Winthrop University. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@mailbox.winthrop.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@mailbox.winthrop.edu).

October 17, 2016  
Volume 8, Issue 7

# The Weekly Reader

*Teaching and Learning Center, Winthrop University, Rock Hill, SC*

## UpComing Sessions

Virtual Reality  
Level 2 10/20  
FLSA Changes  
10/24  
Foster Care and  
Adoption in SC  
10/25  
Hosting Journals/  
Conferences in  
Digital  
Commons 11/1,  
11/3  
Formative  
Assessment  
11/15  
External Funding  
in the Social  
Sciences 11/17  
Blackboard  
Training,  
various topics  
and times  
Register at:  
<http://www2.winthrop.edu/login/tlc/default.asp>

Dr. John Bird  
Professor,  
Department of  
English  
Bancroft Hall 260  
(803) 323-3679

Director, Teaching &  
Learning Center  
Dinkins Hall 211B  
(803) 323-2447

EMAIL:  
[birdj@winthrop.edu](mailto:birdj@winthrop.edu)

Winthrop University

## Those Crazy Millennials!: Some Thoughts on the Vast Majority of our Students, or, Why Did the Millennial Cross the Road?

I was driving across back campus a few weeks ago. A young woman entered the crosswalk, so I stopped. She was wearing earphones, crouched over her phone, her thumbs busy texting. She never looked up, never looked left or right, but just kept walking, slowly, through the crosswalk. Those crazy millennials!

I mentioned this incident in my 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Novels class. My students, all but three of them themselves millennials, did not react the way I expected, with a knowing laugh, but with this statement, from several of them: “She wanted to get hit!” Astonished, I asked, “What?” “She wanted to get hit,” one student repeated. “If you get hit by a car on campus, the university will pay your tuition for the rest of your time here.” Many students nodded, and several said they had heard the same thing. And, smart though they are, they seemed to believe it.

Those crazy millennials!

Demographically, millennials are those born 1982 and after, into the early 2000s. (They were originally called “Generation Y,” but “millennial” has replaced that term. Good thing—we were about to run out of alphabet!) Our traditional-aged students were born between 1994 and 1998. And we know all about what they are like, right?

They are tuned out and turned inward, obsessed with their phones, addicted to texting, gaming, tattoos, piercings, and Red Bull. They don’t care about politics, they don’t know nothing about history, they have attention spans shorter than Matt Lauer’s hair, they are not as academically oriented as their Generation X predecessors, and they certainly can’t hold a candle to those of us who are called Baby Boomers.

Ah, the good old Baby Boomers! What did the wise older folks say about us?

They’re ungrateful wretches who don’t realize just how good they have it! They’re hedonists who only care about sex, drugs, rock and roll. They need to grow up and face reality. They don’t have the persistence and dedication our generation had. Their music is just screaming! They are naïve optimists who mistakenly think they can change the world. And dadgum it, cut your hair!

[I have now finished channeling Jake Bird, rest my father’s soul.]

A few facts about millennials: the average millennial carries \$45,000 in debt. Their unemployment rate is 16.3%. Half of them don’t believe Social Security will exist when it comes time for them to retire. 48% of employed millennials who are college graduates work in jobs that don’t require a college degree. 63% of them know someone who had to move back home because of the economy. 40% of millennials say their stress has increased since last

*"I have been teaching for nearly 40 years, since 1977. I have seen many changes in students and many changes in the world. I have shared my despair with colleagues about declining standards and skills and commitment among students—but I was already doing that 35 years ago. I am nearing the end of my time as a teacher, and despite my occasional pessimism about 'these kids today,' I remain at my core just as optimistic about teaching and learning. The kids are all right!"*



## Continued from page 1

year.

But also this: 80% of millennials have donated money, goods, or services. 75% see themselves as authentic and are not willing to compromise their family and personal values. 61% are worried about the state of the world and feel personally responsible to make a difference. They are on track to become the most educated generation in American history.

They make up 36% of the workplace, and by 2025, they will make up 75% of the global workplace. 41% do what their managers tell them to do, which is higher than previous generations. 84% say that helping to make a positive difference in the world is more important than professional recognition. 92% believe that business success should be measured by more than profit. Millennials say they do not deserve special treatment and are equally as committed as non-millennials.

[Taken from "74 of the Most Interesting Facts About Millennials"--  
<http://tinyurl.com/knmxvs8>

I must admit that on first glance, my millennial students do seem to be tuned out and turned

inward. When I walk into class a few minutes early, the majority of them are wearing earphones, staring down at their phones, thumbs flying in that amazing way they have. Only rarely do I walk in to find them engaged in conversation with each other. And as soon as class is over, the phones come out, the earphones get plugged in, and they file out, silent zombies in their own little cocoons.

But once class starts, if I am engaging and if what we are reading is engaging, they get just as engaged as the generations of students that preceded them. They often astonish me with their insights, their passion, their knowledge, their skill.

I have been teaching for nearly 40 years, since 1977. I have seen many changes in students and many changes in the world. I have shared my despair with colleagues about declining standards and skills and commitment among students—but I was already doing that 35 years ago. I am nearing the end of my time as a teacher, and despite my occasional pessimism about "these kids today," I remain at my core just as optimistic about teaching and learning. The kids are all right!

But this idea that they want to get hit by a car—oh my! Those crazy millennials!

A few more websites with good information and comments about millennials:

From NPR, "Amid All the Stereotypes, Some Facts About Millennials"  
<http://tinyurl.com/og3lhva>

From *Business Insider*, "15 Facts About Millennials and the Economy That Everyone in Business Should Know"  
<http://tinyurl.com/p2a644y>

From *Forbes*, "Study reveals Surprising Facts About Millennials in the Workplace"  
<http://tinyurl.com/hyqpynu>

From *The Huffington Post*, "Stop Stereotyping Millennials"  
<http://tinyurl.com/hllj7dp>

From NPR's "Here and Now," "The Average Millennial is Nothing Like the Stereotype"  
<http://tinyurl.com/govf78m>



## Thanks For Helping Make the Teaching and Learning Center Work!

Winthrop's Teaching and Learning Center offers a wide variety of sessions each year for faculty and staff, on teaching, technology, professional development, and personal development. From leading class discussion to mastering the Smart podium to tenure and promotion to cooking soufflés, the TLC tries to make sure that all faculty and staff receive

the kinds of professional and personal development that will make them better teachers, administrators, and employees.

To offer this programming, the TLC depends on the talent, expertise, and generosity of our faculty and staff. We do not have a big budget to bring in outside speakers and experts. Even so, we are able to offer engaging,

timely, and valuable sessions every year on a variety of topics. We thank those who have offered their time and talent in past years.

If you have a request for a session you would like to see, please email me and I will try to arrange it. And if you have a session you would like to present, please email me. We will set something up as soon as we can!

## A Service From the TLC: Teaching Consultation

The TLC for several years has been offering a service: teaching consultation. At the instructor's request, I (or another agreed-upon person) will visit your class to observe and consult with you afterwards about your successes and challenges. This consultation has nothing to do with the tenure and

promotion process, and no reports will be made to department chairs or deans (unless you so request). The invitation to the consultant can only come from the instructor, not from a dean or chair or any other person. All conversations will be private and confidential. If you don't want me to visit your class and observe your teaching, we could

just meet and talk about your teaching. If I am not available to visit your class because of my schedule, I will find a qualified person to do the consulting. So please let me know if you would like to invite me into your class or for a consultation. Call or email me (803) 323-3679 or [birdj@winthrop.edu](mailto:birdj@winthrop.edu).

## Go2Knowledge—Learning On Demand!

Go2Knowledge is a website that offers a variety of video presentations on faculty and staff professional development. You will find presentations by nationally-known experts in seven categories: At-Risk Populations, Campus Safety, Organizational Development, Student Success, Teaching and Learning, Technology,

and Open Educational Resources. Within each category, you will find a number of excellent and informative videos. The Office of Academic Affairs has provided us a subscription to this service.

People often tell the TLC that they would like to go to sessions, but they don't have the time or they can't

at the times sessions are offered. With Go2Knowledge, you can attend sessions on demand, anywhere, 24/7. The TLC will also have frequent Go2Knowledge Groups, where we meet to discuss a presentation. Log in here: <http://www.go2knowledge.org/winthrop> See you there!

Register for a TLC Session  
At

[www.winthrop.edu/tlc](http://www.winthrop.edu/tlc)

## The 4th Annual Winthrop Conference on Teaching and Learning

Watch this space for information about the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Winthrop Conference on Teaching and Learning. The call for papers and proposals will be coming soon!

### Thought For the Week

“Consider well the proportion of things. It is better to be a young June-bug than an old bird of paradise.”

--Mark Twain