

Social Media Tools for Teaching and Learning

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According to Wikipedia, “social media is the media designed to be disseminated through social interaction, created using highly accessible scalable techniques. Social media is the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into interactive dialogue.”¹ Social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, contain millions of members who interact to create social media. The ubiquitous nature of Facebook and Twitter has the attention of educators. In this column I will present tips on using Facebook and Twitter for teaching and learning.

THE PROBLEM

An athletic training instructor is challenged with utilizing Facebook and Twitter for educational purposes. Unlike other universities where she has worked, Facebook and Twitter are embraced at all levels of her current university. Recently the university president has charged each department to develop a strategy to expand and enhance cutting edge learning technologies. Her students are loyal users of Facebook and Twitter. The instructor seeks to understand the mechanics of Facebook and Twitter and their educational implications.

GETTING STARTED WITH FACEBOOK

Facebook is a social networking service that allows users to connect with friends, family, co-workers and others who have a similar interest and backgrounds. To get started using Facebook, follow this step-by-step process:

Set up your Facebook account. Direct your browser to www.facebook.com. You are required to enter your name email address, gender, and birthday. Unlike other social networking sites, Facebook has strict privacy policies. Upon logging into your account you can change or hide your email address, gender, and birthday. You can even change your name. I recommend using your real name, especially if your goal is to use Facebook for professional purposes.

Set up your profile. Before logging into Facebook for the first time, you must complete email verification, find friends, edit your profile

information, and upload a personal profile picture. In your profile, you may add information on work experiences, education and special interests. Setting up a thorough profile will allow others to find you on Facebook. I strongly encourage you to create an account for personal use and one for your classes and educational program.

Edit your privacy settings. By default, Facebook shares certain information about you to everyone, even users who do not have Facebook accounts. There are three levels of privacy: Everyone, Friends of Friends, and Friends Only. For example, you may set your spring break photo album to only be shared with Friends. To access your privacy settings, log in and then click on the Account > Privacy hyperlink in the top right hand header of the page.

Create groups. Setting up groups allows you to separate your personal and professional content. For example, you may want to create an “Athletic Training Student” group. In doing so you will be able to engage the athletic training students in a professional environment while also staying in touch with your friends and family. You do not want your personal information to be a distraction to your students. An alternative to groups is to create a Facebook account specifically for education purposes.

FIVE FACEBOOK IDEAS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

- 1. Use as learning management system (LMS).** If you do not have access to Blackboard, Moodle, Desire to Learn or other LMS, you can use Facebook to share documents, poll/quiz your students, and conduct group discussions.
- 2. Reference citations.** Facebook has hundreds of applications (apps) that can be used for educational purposes. Worldcat.org's CiteMe is an app that provides formatted citations for books. Currently, CiteMe provides APA, Chicago, Harvard, MLA, and Turbrian formats.
- 3. Announcements.** Send out reminders, upcoming, events and schedule changes.

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4. **Post class notes.** Post documents with descriptions in any file format on Facebook.
5. **Create group discussions.** Split your class in to smaller study groups for class projects. You can keep track of student's participation, provide guidance, and monitor progress.

GETTING STARTED WITH TWITTER

Twitter is a social networking service that allows users to connect via microblogs, also known as tweets. A tweet is a text-based message up to 140 characters in length. Twitter is the most popular microblogging service, allowing users to connect by posting short messages called "tweets." To get started using Twitter, follow this step-by-step process:

Setup your Twitter account. Direct your browser to www.twitter.com. You will be prompted to enter your full name, username, password and email. You can use any username as long as it does not include "twitter."

Setup your profile. Your Twitter profile is limited to your picture, location, name, webpage and brief bio.

Setup your mobile device. Twitter is a mobile application that is designed for use anytime and anywhere. You may use your mobile phone to send and receive messages. There is also a host of third party applications designed to work on iPhone, Android, and Windows Mobile devices. To setup your mobile device, click on Setting > Mobile. You will be asked to enter and verify your mobile number.

Find and follow people. In order to interact with other Twitter users you must "Follow" them. If you are logged into Twitter, you can follow a user by clicking on the Follow icon located directly beneath the profile picture. Alternatively if you are using a mobile device you may send a text message to Twitter with "follow username" as the message. You will not receive tweets (messages) if you do not follow other users.

Learn the Twitter lingo. Understanding the following terms will enhance your twitter experience:

- a. **@(username)** - symbol used to refer to a twitter user (ie, @drronwagner).
- b. **Tweet** - to send a message.
- c. **Retweet (RT)** - to forward a message from someone else to your followers.
- d. **Message** - a private message sent to one of your followers.
- e. **Hashtags (#)** - used to identify topics. For example if you are posting a tweet related to athletic training education programs, you may tweet "Athletic training programs are cool #ateps." A search on the #ateps will reveal all tweets tagged with #ateps.

FIVE TWITTER IDEAS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

1. **Log a teachable moment.** Athletic training students can tweet about variations of skills they learn during their clinical experiences, such as modifications to a Lachman's test.
2. **Quiz.** Send quiz questions to your class and provide bonus points to students who respond within a given timeframe.
3. **Track a concept.** Present a concept in class and ask students to tweet about the concept when they read about it in the professional literature.
4. **Track time.** Athletic training students can use Twitter to keep track of their time spent in their clinical settings.
5. **Learning Diary.** Students can keep a journal of the things that they learn during their clinical rotations. At the end of the week, a weekly reflection journal exercise can be submitted.

****Note:** Be sure students remember patient confidentiality and to not tweet about current athletes or their conditions at their site.

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

Facebook and Twitter are two applications that have educational implications. One may challenge the value of using these applications for educational purposes; however, before doing so it is important to consider your students first. Today's students have grown up with Facebook and Twitter. They are comfortable using them and are using them in their daily lives. Facebook and Twitter offer an opportunity to connect with students outside of the classroom in a way that is unprecedented. The days of sifting through stacks of reflection journals weeks after the student logged the experience are behind us. Facebook and Twitter allow for real-time collaboration and everyday teaching and learning.

REFERENCES

1. Wikipedia Contributors. Social Media. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media. Accessed: March 17, 2011.