Teaching with Twitter: A Collaborative Experiment using Twitter in the Classroom

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A COLLABORATIVE EXPERIMENT USING TWITTER IN THE CLASSROOM

Librarians: Makiba Foster and Brian Vetruba @WUSTLlibraries

Faculty: Prof. Kristina Kleutghen @kkleutghen
Research on Twitter in the Classroom

Pre-Health course at Lock Haven University (2009)

• Analyzed student engagement and GPA
• Experimental (Twitter) & control groups
• Used Twitter for discussion on lectures, readings, videos

• RESULTS
  • Higher student engagement for Twitter group
  • Mean GPA 2.8 (Twitter); 2.3 (control)

• More info:
  • Article by Junco, et al. (2011) in Journal of Computer Assisted Learning
  • YouTube “Academic Excellence in 140 Characters”
Research on Twitter in the Classroom

Cities of Medieval Europe course at Univ. of MN (2010)

• Simultaneous tweeting during in-class films
• Instructors provided discussion questions before films
• Students created Twitter accounts specific to the course
• Hash tags (#) so students could view other’s tweets
• 157 to 207 tweets per film ; 61 students participated

• Instructors saw greater student engagement using Twitter during movie days than previous semesters (Higdon, et al. (2011))

• More info:
  • Article by Reyerson, et al. in History Teacher
  • Article by Higdon, et al. in EDUCAUSE Quarterly
Research on Twitter in the Classroom

Cities of Medieval Europe course at Univ. of MN (2010)

Peer-to-peer conversation during one Film (Bottom to Top)

Higdon, et al. (2011)
Research on Twitter in the Classroom
Cities of Medieval Europe course at Univ. of MN (2010)


Higdon, et al. (2011)
Research on Twitter in the Classroom

Introduction to Women’s Studies online course (2010)

• Instructor used Twitter for updates to class, discussion questions
• Students tweeted responses to feminist works of art
• Students commented on other classmates’ tweets
• “Backchannel” feedback on course for instructor

• More info: Enszer, Julie R. (2011) in Feminist Collections: A Quarterly of Women’s Studies Resources
Research on Twitter in the Classroom

Bibliography on Teaching with Twitter
http://bit.ly/zEe2Bg
Why should academics use Twitter?

• Public presence in the global digital age

• Evolving relevance of academia, especially humanities

• “It’s a conversation, not a monologue.”

• Improve personal tech literacy

• Enjoyment!
Higher education review of 2011: the 10 best blogs of the year
http://www.guardian.co.uk/higher-education-network/blog/2011/sep/12/twitter-revolutionise-academia-research

How Twitter will revolutionise academic research and teaching

You may have gathered by now that we’re fairly fond of Twitter. Perhaps our micro-blogging addiction is what drew us to this post by Ernesto Priego.

Reminding us all of the scholarly web’s mantra; it’s a conversation not a lecture, Ernesto argues for academics not only to consider Twitter as a publishing tool, but to look beyond its use in promoting work and recognise its ability to engage new audiences.

It was our biggest blog of the year and, suitably, it did well on Twitter too with 881 retweets.
What tools to use?

www.twitter.com
What tools to use?

**Tweetdeck** (free Mac/PC application or Google Chrome extension)
Download from www.tweetdeck.com
Why use Twitter in the classroom?

Generally:

1. Increase student engagement and grades
2. Teaches information synthesis and critical thinking
3. “Continue conversation outside the classroom”
4. “Encourage” students to prepare for lecture class
5. Classroom command
Why use Twitter in the classroom?

Specifically for Art 3442 (Chinese Painting):

1. Modernize perceptions of the topic
2. Hook
3. Consistent digital humanities pedagogy
4. Create seminar feeling in lecture class
How I implemented Twitter

On Blackboard

- Twitter Widget with #Art3442 dedicated search stream

https://twitter.com/about/resources/widgets
How I implemented Twitter

For Students

• Twitter Guide

• Firm assignments on syllabus

Week Eleven: 24. 11/10: Painting Under Mao Zedong

• Three Thousand Years 323-347


Propaganda posters: http://chineseposters.net/

Writing Assignment #11: Find a poster from between 1949 and 1976 on chineseposters.net and write one double-spaced page of visual analysis on it. Title it [YourSurname11].doc and submit online before class by 10am on November 10.

Send a thick tweet with the poster you’ll be writing on.
How I implemented Twitter

**In classroom**

- Resource presentation by Brian and Makiba on Day 2
- Consistent use at beginning of class
Successful Assignments

Answering questions as preparation for in-class discussion

“Based on the evidence, do you think the Qingming scroll was produced during the Northern Song or Southern Song dynasty? Does this difference matter?”

Attr. Zhang Zeduan, *Going Upriver at Qingming* (12th century)
Successful Assignments

Answering questions as preparation for in-class discussion

Is *One Hundred Horses* more Chinese or European? Why?

Giuseppe Castiglione (Lang Shining), *One Hundred Horses* (1728)
Successful Assignments

Close readings and visual analysis

Consider Fan Kuan’s painting from the perspective of the travelers in the lower right corner. What emotions do you think Fan Kuan wanted you as the viewer to experience when looking at this landscape?

Fan Kuan, *Travelers Amid Streams and Mountains* (c. 1000)
Successful Assignments

Close readings and visual analysis

Which of these artists should be considered the #1 Yuan Master and why?
Successful Assignments

Most successful:
independent “thick tweet” assignments with in-class “expert analysis”

Send a thick tweet about a work by any contemporary Chinese artist that incorporates a modern take on calligraphy.
Successful Assignments

Most successful:
independent “thick tweet” assignments with in-class “expert analysis”

Send a thick tweet with the Cultural Revolution poster chosen for your writing assignment.
Unsuccessful Assignments

External contact assignments

Solicit the opinion of a Chinese art twitter user on the issue of copying, authenticity, or forgery in Chinese painting. Be sure to send your tweet early in the week to allow the person to respond to you before class.

Problems:

• Students tend not to read ahead in syllabus

• Can feel extremely awkward to reach out to “expert”

• No guarantee contact will respond
Unsuccessful Assignments

Overly general questions about complex topics

Are the morals and values depicted for women in the Admonitions scroll applicable to the present day? Are the gender roles still applicable?

What Worked

• Specific questions
• Debate/discussion prep
• Initiative assignments with in-class “expert analysis”
• Internal assignments

What Did Not Work

• General questions
• Assignments that required students’ advance planning
• External assignments
Actual and Potential Issues

Actual Issues
- Disjunction with Art History technological/pedagogical methods
- Students
- Time
- Junior Faculty conundrum

Potential Issues
- Distractions
- Class size
- FERPA
Benefits and Results

Overall assessment of Twitter experiment: POSITIVE

• Major course goals reached

• Independent student engagement with particular topics of interest

• Student responses

| Did you feel that the Twitter assignments enhanced your understanding of topics covered in the course? If so or if not, why? |
|---|---|
| 00 | Yes. I really enjoyed taking the time to think about what I read. It was also very interesting to read the comments from my peers. |
| 01 | I don’t think they necessarily enhanced by understanding of topics, but they did provide a good starting point for discussions/class presentations. |
Benefits and Results

Overall assessment of Twitter experiment: **POSITIVE**

Unexpected benefit: gender and technology

would use Twitter again for similar smaller lecture courses

- Early Chinese Art: from Human Sacrifice to the Silk Road
- Later Chinese Art: from Imperial Courts to the Olympics