

4F “Tweet This! Using Twitter to Support Social Pedagogy Practices that Successfully Engage Students and Enhance Learning

Victoria Shropshire, Writing & Research (Previously with Elon Univ), Arts

The role social media should play in education remains unclear; some educators ban it, others embrace and integrate it, and a large number of stake-holders remain uncertainly positioned somewhere between these two extremes (Bowen, 2012). As a writing instructor at a small four-year liberal arts university in America, I found Twitter, specifically, to be an innovative and effective tool for engaging students and enhancing learning in a course with social pedagogical approaches to writing and research outcomes.

Researchers at Georgetown University are credited with first labeling what they call “social pedagogies” which they define as “design approaches for teaching and learning that engage students with what we might call an ‘authentic audience’ (other than [solely] the teacher), where the representation of knowledge for an audience is absolutely central to the construction of knowledge in a course” (Bass and Elmendorf as qtd in Bruff, 2012). Twitter is a natural fit to this “peer-based” social pedagogy, as it is “not the transfer of information or status messages that are crucial factors, but rather, the opportunity to be a part of someone else’s process by reading, commenting, discussing or simply enhancing it” (Ebner, et al 2010). Microblogging helps users be a part of a larger community that is working on a specific problem without restrictions on time and space.

During a three-year study (from 2011-2014) I found that Twitter aided in improving student motivation and engagement, helped students strengthen relationships, develop a more social/collaborative view of learning, added new dimensions to student research and rhetorical analysis, and helped them make inspiring connections between the world and their writing and research processes. This presentation details the motivation, planning, and execution of Twitter into a writing and research course that effectively increased student engagement and increased active student learning.

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