

Teaching Tips

A Forum for discussion and tips for advancing teaching and learning at Mona

Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

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Special points of interest:

- The **Teaching Tips Newsletter** is a publication of the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) at the UWI, Mona.
- The Newsletter is published once per month and provides tips for improving teaching and learning in higher education. It is available online (<http://myspot.mona.uwi.edu/edu/>) as well as in the office of the CETL.
- If you have an area that you would like to explore using this medium, do not hesitate to contact us at the CETL.

Using Twitter in the University Classroom

You might think that the micro blogging Web tool, Twitter is not for classroom usage. However, educators in various levels of the education system have found ways to use it to advance teaching and learning and this is particularly true in colleges and universities. Yes indeed, it can be used effectively in the college and university classroom.



Two university professors from Michigan State University found that by using Twitter to engage students they witnessed higher levels of student interaction and better grades in the courses involved. In the research report, "Tweeteracy: Tweeting as a new literary practice," Christine Greenhow and Benjamin Gleason (2012) indicated that students who were engaging with their classmates on Twitter demonstrated greater levels of interest with course materials and scored higher grades.



Twitter is a web tool used to broadcast bite-size messages and even Web links. It is also used to read messages posted by others or to view links recommended by colleagues or just generally other users of Twitter who are connected with you, the user. It can be a source of news and it enables you to listen to what other persons in other groups are talking about.

Twitter also enables you to communicate with experts in various fields.

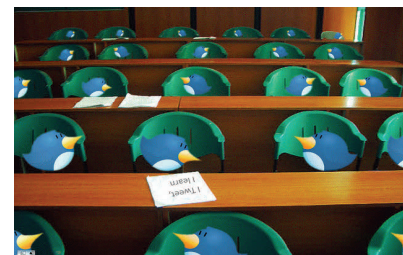
Twitter is easily accessed on the Web via computer, cell phone, email or instant messaging. It's a service that helps people stay connected and it is a powerful tool for establishing informal, free flowing, just-in-time communication between and among students and faculty and with the professional community at large. It is one approach that we can employ to help our students keep connected with their teachers by tweeting questions and of course, with their peers by tweeting about course content. For instance, a student is reading a text book and has a question about something in one of the chapters, s/he can tweet the question to the learning community to which s/he belongs. This might be a classmate or even the teacher.

In using Twitter in your classroom, please note the following:

- ♦ Have a clear purpose for the use of Twitter
- ♦ Show the student how s/he might benefit by using Twitter
- ♦ Define clear expectations for participation
- ♦ Model effective Twitter use for students

Tweeting in the Course/Tweeting in the Class

Indicate to your students that for the class or course they will need to have a Twitter account. This account will allow them to participate in class discussions



using Twitter and of course to follow scholars in the discipline who are tweeting about issues that are of importance in the course. If your students already have Twitter accounts, they might want to use them for the class or they might prefer to establish Twitter account specifically for the class. It might be best for them to sign up for new disposable account because they might not wish to share their personal information. You will also want to tell them about the hashtag they will use for the class.

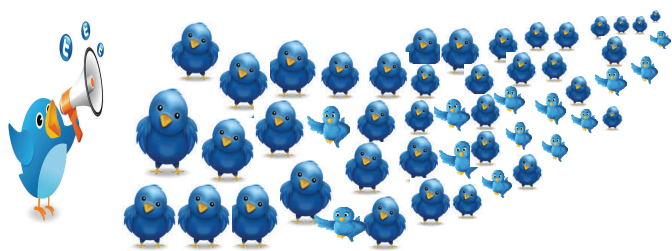


A hashtag is a word or a phrase that is used in the Twitter discussion. It is prefixed with the symbol #, hence a hash symbol will result in: *#hashtag*. Hence words on this micro blogging site, Twitter are prefixed with

a hashtag. Once you are on Twitter the pound sign (or hash) turns any word or group of words that directly follow it into a searchable link. This enables you to organize the content and track discussions based on the keywords you have established. In this regard, if you wanted to post about the French Revolution you would include *#frenchrevolution* in your tweet to join the conversation.

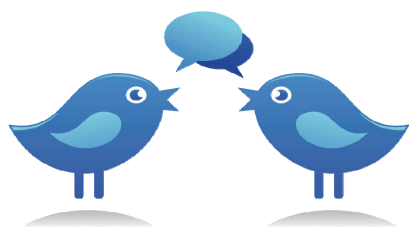


Twitter Town Hall Meeting



A Twitter town Hall meeting might be what you need to add an interactional jolt to your classroom and of course, you would be making use of 21st century technology tools. In a town hall Twitter meeting, there is a host and the participants tweet questions or concerns about the topic under discussion for the day using the permissible 140 characters per tweet. Participants are required to pose questions to the town hall meeting facilitator and of course the posts are expected to be succinct. Feedback will come from the facilitator and other participants can also comment. Everyone participating must write clearly and concisely. In fact as the student tweets and as the facilitator responds, all the persons participating in the town hall meeting will get the tweet as well and therefore responses could come from several persons in the learning community.

Questions, Comments and Feedback in the Classroom via Twitter



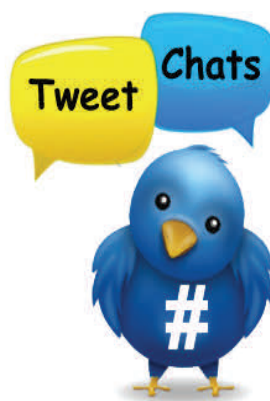
You might want to have your students post their questions, comments and feedback in the classroom using Twitter. For this, your students would need to have a Twitter account and you will need to set up a hashtag for the class to organize comments, questions and feedback posted by your student to the class Twitter account. One interesting approach might be to project a giant image of live tweets in the class for discussion. They can refer to these messages when they are studying. This is sure to get your students participating.

Professional Development Opportunities Using Twitter

Encourage your students to follow scholars in your field, politicians, thought leaders or other experts whose professional comments might be beneficial to their studies. They should also tweet questions and comments to some of these experts. This provides opportunities for them to possibly learn more about the field and the course content.



Collaborative Learning



Use the class hashtag to post information for the course and encourage students to follow one another (preferably using the hashtag each person created for the course). Encourage your students to post information about the course. They might post interesting links that they have found, pose questions to fellow class members, or they might share informative, important and interesting facts and analyses about issues raised in the course.

Twitter "Office Hours"



You might consider dedicating a particular time for your Twitter "Office Hours" and tell your students you will be online to answer questions. Of course, the questions must be clear and concise and the responses will be equally succinct.