BEST PRACTICES FOR
Social Media in Teaching and Learning

Social media is now a prominent avenue for personal and professional communication, with exciting educational uses emerging in stride. The interactive nature of these networks can enhance learning environments when thoughtfully deployed. Outlined below are some of the opportunities and considerations for using social media in education.

WHY GO SOCIAL?

Social media presents many opportunities for teaching and learning including:

- Building community
- Applying lessons to open, digital spaces
- Reaching beyond classroom walls to engage with the world
- Facilitating real-time discussion across boundaries
- Relating course content to relevant current events
- Exploring the opportunities and issues in social media communication
- Learning appropriate social media skills for professional and personal use

TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

- Develop a strategy for your social media implementation.
- Determine how these platforms support your course goals.
- Use social media only if it offers features not available in existing platforms (e.g. Carmen discussions).
- Make time to post regular, meaningful content.
- Establish use guidelines.
- Articulate clear expectations.
- Review and monitor student contributions.

BEST PRACTICES FOR PRIVACY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

1. **Establish a social roster.**
   - Ensure each student is accounted for in the social media channel of your choice, and keep a log of usernames.
2. **Do not post grades in social media.**
   - FERPA prohibits posting of grades in public spaces. Be mindful about your feedback to stay FERPA compliant.
3. **Ensure students are aware of social media policy prior to enrolling in the course.**
   - Recognize that students may opt out of course if they are uncomfortable participating.
   - Accommodations must be made for concerns regarding religion, accessibility, terms of service agreement, etc.
4. **Limit social media activity to course enrichment.**
   - For most classes, social media utilization will not be a core competency, and the core criteria should not rely too heavily on such platforms.
   - The most successful implementations have been instances where social media interaction was voluntary and supplementary, for community building and extra study help.
5. **Recognize students' right to privacy.**
   - Be familiar with the privacy functionalities of your chosen platform.
   - Offer private participation/submission alternatives: Private Message in Facebook, Twitter Direct Message, Instagram Direct.
   - Assure students that they can create new profiles for course participation—they do not need to combine academic and personal accounts.

Social media can enhance your course in a number of ways if implemented properly.

Below is a limited list of platforms and examples for implementation.

INSTAGRAM exists as a live stream of published photos and videos with optional filters. It functions much like Twitter but with a visual focus rather than text. Potential Uses:

- **Scavenger Hunt** - Students indicate their progress through an exhibition or learning module. Students could share their interpretations of concepts taught in the course by snapping photos of corresponding images. Participants could use the same #hashtag on their posts to contribute to the class collection and make it searchable.
- **Study Abroad** - Students can capture and share their experiences throughout the trip. Connections with assignments or content may be incorporated. The posts also provide evidence of participation at the site assigned.

FACEBOOK works best for programs and organizations, rather than classes. Consider using it for major or minors, or special interest groups. Once users have "liked" the Page or joined a Group, they can see updates while browsing Facebook in their personal time. Potential Uses:

- **Pages** are used for public outreach purposes. Posts from the Page make up the feed of updates. Individuals can also write updates, which are summarized in a Recent Posts box. Pages can publish events that sync to mobile calendars, sending reminders to anyone who RSVPs.
- **Groups** offer privacy options, providing a more controlled space where members can communicate and share files. Posts by members of the group make up the feed, rather than posts from a "Group" account. Groups can also host events, which are restricted to group members only.

TWITTER is highly communicative, fast-paced and live, rather than stagnant. Twitter's character limit and use of @Mentions facilitate public dialogue. #Hashtags make it possible to collect public discourse and search topics. Potential Uses:

- **Study Groups** - #Hashtags can be used for remote study groups. Students can share questions and responses, or add helpful information to the feed, by using the designated #hashtag. This method allows students to work through problems together and creates a collection of questions and responses from the study session.
- **Instructor Interaction** - Students can ask questions @Mentioning the instructor and using the course #hashtag to add the conversation to a feed. This method encourages thoughtful, direct questions. Answering frequently asked questions in a Twitter feed also reduces lengthy and redundant email threads for the instructor.

U.OSU is a free web authoring platform, providing web space to anyone at Ohio State. Participants can share learning experiences in of blog posts, static web pages, discussion forums and more. U.OSU accommodates more robust content than the other platforms listed here. Potential Uses:

- **Group Blogging** - An instructor can establish a group blog, in which students are assigned to post. They can discuss a current event or musing related to the course material. The discussion continues in the comments to share additional insights and apply course concepts.
- **Portfolios** - Students can establish a U.OSU site as a portfolio for a course or assignment. They can write progress updates in the blog, share results by embedding a report in a web page, post photos of fieldwork, and more.