



Using Twitter to Reinforce Teaching Concepts

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As of November 2016, 86% of people age 18-29 (Millennials) used social media. According to Pew Research, 24% of all adults with an online presence use Twitter while 36% of Millennials use this form of social media. Twitter use is higher among those with college degrees versus those with a high school education or less (29% vs. 20%). Additionally, it is used almost equally among men (24%) and women (25%). And, 42% of Twitter users indicate that they are daily visitors, with 23% saying they visit more than once a day. Slightly more Americans use Pinterest than use Twitter, but are less likely than Twitter users to check their accounts every day (Greenwood, Perrin, and Duggan, 2016).

When teaching large classes with a diverse student population, it is important to use as many tools as possible to engage students. With a class population of between 200-250 every semester, finding ways to get students to engage is often challenging. In addition, this class is required for all students in the College of Human Sciences as well as by those in a variety of other majors. Keeping this varied and dissimilar group of students focused on information and preparing such a diverse group for exams is challenging experience.

With the aim of stimulating interest in studying course material and for exams, the instructor decided to employ social media to connect with students beyond the traditional classroom setting. Even though every lecture was recorded, the students found reviewing the recorded lectures time consuming and tedious. The instructor believed that something beyond a traditional review sheet would be helpful for exam preparation.

Students were surveyed in class as to what their social media preferences were to select which platform to incorporate into the class. Students listed 4 types of social media that they predominately used on a daily basis: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter. As a result of student preferences, privacy considerations and its appeal to both male and female students, Twitter was chosen as the social media platform to use to communicate information about exams.

In a traditional classroom, students are often provided review sheets before exams. These review sheets are generally list of key terms from class lectures and usually provide a list of textbook chapters related to and containing course material. With the use of Twitter, the instructor can more easily prepare students for applied concepts and questions. Instead of a general list of terms, questions are asked of the students. How would a theory be applied? What types of examples would you (the student) be able to present related to class topics?

A hashtag using the course number and department acronym was created. Information, in question form, was tweeted related to general class concepts such as the fundamental beliefs and theories related sustainability and social class. This way the student would have to know the basic general concept and be able to either give an example(s) or recognized the application of the concept in a question or be able to take the concept and be able to apply it in an essay format while being able to discuss application. These tweets were sent out at random times from 5 days before the exam up until an hour before the actual exam.

This is a preliminary look and comparison of using tweets and #hashtags as an exam review for students as opposed to a traditional printed (or posted) review sheet. Simple t-tests were used to compare exam grades from classes that were provided with traditional reviews sheets that students asked questions about in class and the same class, in a different semester, using tweets to provide review information. The class using traditional review sheets had an n=191 and the class using Twitter had an n=251. When evaluating a comparison of results from these classes, grades for the first two exams were chosen. That is, Exam I where students were provided a traditional review sheet was compared to performance to Exam I for the class where Twitter was used to prompt students to study key ideas and the same for Exam II. When comparing test scores for these two sections there was a statistically significant difference between the two scores for Exam I and Exam II. P value for Exam I comparison was $p=0.0001$ at a 95% confidence level. P value for Exam II comparison was $p=0.0079$ at 95% confidence level.

A statistical difference was seen between classes where a traditional review sheet was posted on Canvas versus the instructor tweets conceptual questions and hints where the students must search and synthesize probable answers. The students came from diverse backgrounds, majors and a wide spectrum of GPAs was present. This technique will continue to be used to help students review for exams. Also, students recommended other social media platforms that they would like to see used. Further consideration will be given to their recommendations.

References

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