

# **Student Agency in Fostering Social Media Relationships**

**How Students Choose to Promote  
Their Creative Writing Online**

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# Presentation Focus

**Student Choices and Implementation** of social media usage.

**Observed Correlations** between writing, habits of interpersonal relationships, and social media.

**Lessons and Questions** regarding the incorporation of technology as a pedagogical tool for enhancing community engagement.

# Teaching Internship

## IRB Research – ENG 247.02

Examining how student cultivation of online writing identity affects writing choices.

- Classroom / Individual Meetings
  - Assignments / Online Interactions
- } **The Data**

## Millennials / “Digital Natives”

- Grew up with technology
  - “Excel at Facebook, fail at e-mail.”
- } **The Cultural Assumptions**

# Limitations of Study

## **Not a Quantitative Study**

## **Limited Number of Study Participants**

(12 out of class of 18 students)

## **Examples Restricted to Protect Identities**

A small, intimate class – students could recognize each other by the examples...

# Coursework

**Coursework** centered of preparing and sharing creative writing inside and outside the course.

**Readings:** Mix of literary, “pop” readings, and descriptions of social media usage.

**Final Project Groups:** Students chose their focus based on writing and media habits.

# Types of Community

	<b>In-Course</b>	<b>Beyond Course</b>
<b>Required</b>	Workshops (GD) Group Quizzes (GD) Facebook	Scribophile
<b>Optional</b>	Pre-Quiz Comm	<b>Social Media for Final Projects</b>

**The Big Question**

# Four Groups (Self-Selected)

**NaNoWriMo** – National Novel Writing

**Human Interest** – Mix  
and Collaborative

**Outside Reading** –  
choice.

**Social Media** – Focus on promoting the public

**Students Ask:  
What Counts for  
Social Media  
Credit?**

# Social Media Platforms

## **Digital (semi-private)**

Google Docs, ReggieNet, E-mail

## **Online (semi-public)**

Facebook, Twitter, Scribophile, Tumblr

## **Non-Digital**

Books, The Telephone, Letters Home

# Media Habits vs. Writing Goals

## Media Habits

Many students skipped the distraction of technology.

### **Intense Writing**

- **15,000+ words**
- **sci fi / fantasy**
- **overcoming self-critique**

## Writing Goals

**Outside Reading** – No public sharing, but highly effective sharing of very personal stories using Google Docs.

**NaNoWriMo** – No public sharing, but initiated a Facebook “support group” in order to encourage word counts.

# Media Habits vs. Writing Goals (cont.)

## Media Habits

Using technology to seek out feedback and

### **Tumblr**

- **Students Teaching Each Other New Technology**
- **Mono-Directional Connection**

## Writing Goals

**Human Interest** – Mix of fiction and personal memoir, variety of digital social media approaches.

**Social Media** – Specifically to use social media...so the technology was not secondary to the writing goal.

# Media Habits vs. Writing Goals (cont.)

## Media Habits

(example of two students)

## Writing Goals

**Personal Student Views on  
Revision and Dissemination**

participant  
...ing as a  
found  
... a revolutionary  
gain feedback for revision.

**Specific Uses of  
Technology**

# Internal Community

## A Presumed Model for Outreach to Outside Community

### Google Docs Preparation Helps In-Class Discussions

Pre-class Google Docs preparation helps in-class discussion and online communication.

**External Communities Don't Always Respond...**

the in-class classmate

### Digital Commenting Reflected Group Dynamics

Participation in the group.

**Disengaged Community**

the Docs commenting group (community of Google Docs)

**Disengaged Students**

group.

# Optional Outside Community

For community engagement,  
**Student Goals**  
are more important than  
**Instructor Priorities.**

# How Am I Doing on Time??

**Sometimes I present fast, sometimes I present slow...**

**In case you've forgotten:**

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**Next, we'll talk technology...or I'll take questions!**

# Tale of Two Technologies...

## Google Docs Worked

Integral to In-Class Interactions

Platform Encourages Flexibility

Grading Tied to Successful Use

## Scribophile Didn't

“Independent” Learning Expected

Platform Purposefully Limits User *Activity* to Encourage *Interactivity*. (And to encourage monthly subscription fees...)

Grading Tied to *Attempted* Use

# Google Docs – Internal Community

## Frequent Use Cases

- Tie
- E
- S

**Variables of  
Unknown Effect:  
Student Age and Maturity  
Classroom Synergy  
Grading Policies**

## Other Use Cases

- Syllabus
- Group Assignments

Google Docs

# Scribophile – External Community

Platform  
int

ent

**Working Theory:  
Student interest is directly  
tied to personal and tangible  
social reciprocity.**

# Tumblr: From Left Field

**Two Variables for Success**  
Social Media Platform  
Individual Engagement with Audience

rior Tumblr  
use it in  
icipants with  
ence chose  
successful

Limited in  
experien

**Limited Social Reciprocity**  
Tumblr has likes...but few user comments.

# Quick Takeaways

**Can't Legislate "Community Engagement"**  
**Technology Success Depends on Purpose**  
**"Purpose" must match *Student* Goals**

# The Technology Lessons

## The Lessons

**Student influence is crucial.**

Students adopt technology in conjunction with their peers.

**Rewards should be tied to success rather than the attempt.**

**Each Technology Is Independently Learned.**

## The Questions

**What if my students hate technology?**

**Can I fail a student for being hated by imaginary online people?**

**So if I view technology as a form of literacy...does each platform constitute a separate language?**

# Questions?

## **Might I Also Suggest:**

Aspects of technological pedagogy we can control...  
...and those aspects we *can't* control.

## **Please Feel Free to E-mail:**

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# Lessons We Control...

## Observations

Students can't be expected to learn technologies in a vacuum of tacit expectation.

Grading needs to be adapted to the individual experiences and progress of each student.

## Questions

But can't you just Google up some YouTube how-to's? I mean, what's so hard about that?

Well, duh. Don't we already do that for grading writing? (I mean, for the kids who already know their grammar...)

# ...and Those We Don't

## Observations

There's no uniform instruction of social outreach technologies.

Most students do not see social media as a means of non-social productive outreach. (Dude...you know this isn't, like, real writing, right?)

## Questions

Wait...are you implying that schools should be *teaching* children to use Facebook?

But if I tell them the internet can help them, like, reach out to audiences, they'll believe me, right? I mean, right??

# Media Habits vs. Writing Goals (cont.)

## Media Habits

Independent of student  
“buy-in”

Independent of Teaching

## Writing Goals

**18 Students,**  
**12 Participants** — Some of the most successful social-media users chose not to participate in the study.

**Tumblr** was not taught or introduced in the coursework — students introduced it for their work, and many used it very

# Internal Community

## ***A Presumed Model for Outreach to Outside Community***

### **Google Docs Preparation Helps In-Class Discussions**

Pre-class Google Docs comments on student work enlivened the in-class discussions. Students directly referenced both instructor and classmate online comments during in-class discussions.

### **Digital Commenting Reflected Group Dynamics**

Motivation and participation in pre-class Google Docs commenting varied by workshop group. The more successful and “energetic” the group (based on in-class observations), the greater the number and quality of Google Docs comments

# Community Engagement

Successful community engagement depends upon