#SocialMediaEd: Perspectives on Teaching about and with Social Media in Higher Education

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Abstract

Within the field of education and informational technology, technologies like social media — near ubiquitous in the lives of today's high school and college students — raise interesting questions about learning, teaching, literacy, design and democracy for researchers and educators. In this panel we considered multiple perspectives on teaching with and about social media from researchers at five different institutions. Three panelists: Greenhow, Gleason and Krutka all teach variations of a Social Media in Education course within graduate programs at their respective universities and each presented an overview of their course goals and curriculum. Description of these courses was enriched by commentary from the panel chair and moderator, also social media in education researchers. The session was organized for maximum audience participation to advance conversations about an essential social media in higher education curriculum across institutions and how to implement and evaluate it.

Disciplines

Communication Technology and New Media | Educational Methods | Educational Psychology | Educational Technology | Higher Education | Social Influence and Political Communication | Social Media

Comments

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Abstract: Within the field of education and informational technology, technologies like social media — near ubiquitous in the lives of today's high school and college students — raise interesting questions about learning, teaching, literacy, design and democracy for researchers and educators. In this panel we considered multiple perspectives on teaching with and about social media from researchers at five different institutions. Three panelists: Greenhow, Gleason and Krutka all teach variations of a Social Media in Education course within graduate programs at their respective universities and each presented an overview of their course goals and curriculum. Description of these courses was enriched by commentary from the panel chair and moderator, also social media in education researchers. The session was organized for maximum audience participation to advance conversations about an essential social media in higher education curriculum across institutions and how to implement and evaluate it.

Introduction

Within the field of education and informational technology, technologies like social media — near ubiquitous in the lives of today's high school and college students — raise interesting questions about learning, teaching, identity, literacy, citizenship, design and democracy for researchers and educators alike. Such questions include: 1) how to educate students to critically evaluate learning about and with social media? 2) how to prepare teachers who can maximize the educational potential and mitigate the pitfalls of these technologies? and 3) how to resolve the tensions between the unstructured learning that is typical of social media environments and the structured and expert-focused

character of many classrooms and education systems (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012). Although the 'wisdom of crowds' seems valued on social media, it can threaten long-held notions of authority, credibility, expertise, and reputation which undergird institutions of higher education. Norms of authorship, ownership, and academic integrity may not align with common social media practices such as "mashups" that combine material from various sources and the sharing of content without traditional forms of attribution. These are just some of the issues that are laid bare when we consider teaching *about* and *with* social media in higher education. In this panel we considered perspectives on this topic from social media in education researchers at five different institutions. In addition, three panelists: Greenhow, Gleason and Krutka all teach variations of a Social Media in Education course within graduate programs at their respective institutions and each presented a brief overview of their course goals and curriculum. As explained in the Panel Organization section below, the session was organized for maximum audience participation so that collectively we could come to some agreement about an essential social media in higher education curriculum across our institutions and how we might implement and evaluate it. Next, we present a brief abstract from each of our three instructor's perspectives, before turning to an outline of our panelist presentation order and panel organization.

Mind, Social Media and Learning in Educational Psychology and Educational Technology

Drawing on an interdisciplinary, emerging base of research and students' own experiences with social media, the first panelist presented key topics and goals in teaching "Mind, Social Media and Learning." A main goal of this course is that students will learn to take a critical and informed approach to evaluating learning and teaching in and out of classrooms with social media. Part of an Educational Psychology and Educational Technology doctoral program comprised of on-campus and hybrid students, this course explores the *psychology* of new media; media effects and learning with media; and issues of identity, literacy, pedagogy, and policy through readings, discussion, and immersive, reflective social media use. The course synthesizes research on learning (formal- and informal-) and teaching within social media-enabled environments in K-12 and higher education. Students consider the social and technical affordances and challenges of particular spaces, especially social network sites and microblogs. Recent theory and research on scholars' contemporary work practices with social media are also considered in the course.

Social Media and Education: Teacher Education and Human-computer Interaction Perspectives

Another approach to teaching "Social Media and Education" as presented by our second panelist, is to increase students' understanding of how social media is changing traditional concepts of identity, literacy, citizenship, and more. This second course is organized around trends in educational practice and research that have emerged through the use of social media, including networked learning, politics, social scholarship, literacy, learning and development, free speech, privacy, surveillance, and data. Each unit focuses on balancing the affordances and constraints that may arise through social media use so that students develop multiple perspectives on the complexity involved as social media are integrated into educational contexts. Learning goals are that: 1) students will develop a rich theoretical understanding of social media, 2) apply their knowledge of social media to develop and evaluate their own social presence in an online professional learning network (e.g., Twitter), and 3) conduct a research project on a topic that critically examines social media and education.

The Social Media Curriculum

A third approach to teaching the "social media curriculum" is to identify, map out, and explore what educators should know to teach *with* and *about* social media. Social media has allowed for new ways to connect and organize, but also posed novel threats to elections, privacy, and attention. If educators are to offer emancipatory experiences for students to address the challenges of our world, we must dedicate space and time for their investigation on critical topics like identities, literacies, development, speech, democracy, privacy, design, education, research, and theories. In addition to offering brief introductions to these lines of inquiry, our class explores how learners of all ages grow as digital citizens. In this course, doctoral students not only gain a handle on the social media landscape, but write lessons and conduct research on the topics that most resonate with them. The aim is that educators, no matter their field, can help us confront the challenges and take up the affordances of social media for a more just world.

Panelist Presenters

Chair: Tonia Dousay, University of Idaho, USA

Perspective 1:
Mind, Social Media and Learning in Educational Psychology and Educational Technology
Christine Greenhow, Michigan State University, USA

Perspective 2:
Social Media and Education: Teacher Education and Human-computer Interaction Perspectives
Benjamin Gleason, Iowa State University, USA

Perspective 3:
The Social Media Curriculum
Dan Krutka, University of North Texas, USA

Moderator: Jeff Carpenter, Elon University

Panel Organization

This panel was organized for maximum audience participation. We designated the hashtag #SocialMediaEd to engage a wide, virtual audience on Twitter before, during, and after the session. Specifically, we encouraged faculty, graduate students, and others to tweet their questions or ideas. These tweets were monitored and incorporated into the audience interaction portion of the panel session. Dr. Dousay opened the event with introductory remarks and introduced the panelists (3 minutes). Each panelist introduced his or her social media in education course, emphasizing its organizing structure, key topics and goals for teaching and learning about and with social media. Where social media is integrated into the course, the panelist explained the rationale for how and why social media was used in teaching the course and the benefits and/or challenges experienced by students and instructor (7 minutes each). Finally, the moderator synthesized themes across the courses and important points of departure toward generating an outline of what a social media in education course should contain in higher education (5 minutes). Carpenter noted similarities and differences across the three course syllabi in terms of topics and readings, and offered Sobel's (1995) notion of *ecophobia* as a metaphor for considering issues related to finding a balance between noting the problems associated with social media and helping young people and educators to feel agency in the face of such problems. In the remaining 30 minutes, audience members, both physically present and virtual via Twitter, offered their thoughts, experiences, and critique as we seek to collectively envision and outline an ideal social media in education course.

References

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Sobel, D. (1995). Beyond ecophobia: Reclaiming the heart in nature education. *Clearing*, *91*, 16-20.