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Ditch Your LMS Discussion Board and Make the Move To Facebook Groups

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Ditch Your LMS Discussion Board and Make the Move To Facebook Groups

Eric LePage

COMM 298-X01 SYS:

How Facebook,
Twitter, and
other Social Media
Transform Communication

Second Year Seminar for Sophomores

The class was a hybrid online course I taught in the Spring semester. Students would perform presentations in class, create a final video presentation, engage in web-conferencing meetings, and we would conduct weekly discussions in our Moodle course site discussion board.

Weekly Discussion

Each week I would assign a discussion question which focused on that particular week's readings/videos. Students would have to provide a thoughtful response to my discussion question, as well as provide thoughtful responses to at least two of their classmates' postings.

As I mentioned, all discussions were to take place in our Moodle discussion board, with one exception. One week early on in the semester, we were to use a Facebook Group site to hold a discussion/debate about the use of social media for course work and course discussions.



I created a Facebook Group site called COMM 298-X01 and gave all of my students the link to the group so that they could join. Once they accessed the site, they would request to become a member, and I would grant them access to the group page.

To me, the most appealing aspect was that I didn't have to be Facebook Friends with my students. Since my Facebook Profile was secured and made private, they couldn't see my personal stuff other than my profile picture, and I didn't have to see theirs.

I told students up front that if they wanted to create a secondary profile just for this class, they certainly could. More on that later ...



Eric LePage



News: Video Killed the Faculty Star - Inside Higher Ed
www.insidehighered.com

Students and outside groups use clips from classroom to attack professors on politics, tempers and work ethic. What does this brave new world mean for academe?

March 21 at 11:51am · Like · Comment · Unsubscribe



Eric LePage



More Professors Could Share Lectures Online. But Should They? - Technology - The Chronicle of Higher Education
chronicle.com

Siva Vaidhyanathan, an associate professor of media studies at the U. of Virginia, says that making what happens in the classroom public could undermine academic freedom.

March 21 at 11:51am · Like · Comment · Unsubscribe



Eric LePage

Following are some screen shots from the group. For student confidentiality reasons, I've blurred out any student names and pictures, and won't be taking you directly into the site.

So for that week, I posted links to articles that they needed to read in order to have some background for the weekly discussion.



Eric LePage

Discussion Topic for Week 10 (post responses as a separate message):

Facebook has become a large target for privacy advocates. Should you be concerned about what Facebook can do with your personal data?

How private are your own Facebook settings? Are you concerned about what Bridgewater State administrators, instructors, and fellow students can see on your profile? What about employers?

March 28 at 5:49pm · Like · Comment · Unsubscribe

I then posted a message in the Facebook group site with the details for the discussion.



Karl Paulines

In the video Free technology for teachers, the speaker talks about how he uses Facebook fan pages to remind students of homework assignments and other important things through Facebook. I think this is a wonderful idea, because I know I don't go and check Moodle or Blackboard everyday yet I am on Facebook almost every time I turn on my computer.

The article How social networking helps teaching, discusses that students already know how to use Facebook, and may not know how to use some of the other platforms professors use for there class. The article suggests that professors should have 2 Facebooks one for personal use and one for professional or teaching use. I think this is not necessary because people should portray themselves professionally on Facebook anyways. Any one could get hold of their information, and therefore they should portray themselves in a professional manner or how they want to be seen by other people. They could get in trouble with their employer for something they put on their personal Facebook if someone were to get a hold of it.

March 19 at 9:58pm · Like · Comment · Unsubscribe



Douglas Barlow I do believe that people should always portray themselves as professionals on facebook but I do believe that if professors want to use facebook they should have separate accounts. I know from my facebook that I keep it professional I hardly...

[See More](#)

March 19 at 11:25pm · Like

I told students that in their response to my question, they were to create a brand new post in our Facebook Group site. They could use the Comment tool in Facebook to comment on each others' postings.

The Response from Students

There were no technical hiccups in the discussion that first week. The students seemed to enjoy it, I enjoyed it, and I figured that was the end of it. However, several students contacted me directly and said they wished that we could continue to use our Group site for our weekly discussions, so I put the question out to the rest of the class. If everyone else was comfortable using our Facebook Group site, we'd go with that for the rest of the semester rather than Moodle. The response?

Students: Ditch Moodle

This was their overwhelming response. So why did they prefer Facebook Groups to the Moodle Discussion tool?

Always on Facebook

Students are seemingly on Facebook 24/7. We see them using it all the time in the labs, on their smartphones, and on their laptops.

Notifications

And since they're always connected, they receive notifications right away that someone has posted a message in our Facebook Group site, right alongside all their other notifications from Facebook Friends.

Intuitive Discussions

They're used to using Facebook for discussions, so there was no learning curve. The most recent posts appeared at the top of the page, and they were easily able to navigate through all of that week's postings and keep the discussion going.

One Less Login

Although we continued to use Moodle for the Gradebook features, students said they appreciated having one less login for accessing the weekly readings and taking part in the discussions.

Making the Leap

So with all this good feedback, and no student being against the idea of using Facebook the rest of the semester for our discussions, I retooled the weekly discussion format so that each discussion took place in Facebook.

I definitely noticed an uptick in participation from then on. Students were more apt to remember to keep involved in the discussions.

 March 21 at 11:50am · Like · Comment · Unsubscribe



Eric LePage

Week 9 Overview - Learning On-Demand: YouTube. Great job on this past week's discussions. I really enjoyed your insights on student-teacher relations in social media. For the week ahead, we'll be looking at the ways in which educators and students use on-demand video content.

I saw that more folks signed up for the Final Presentation topics in Moodle. Get on there ASAP if you haven't already! I'll give folks to the end of this week, and then if anyone is not signed up, I'll assign topics to the rest.

Also, you'll need to select a topic for your Final Video project as well. The forum for signing up is in the the Week 8 section of Moodle. Just a reminder that the date for having your first draft of your Final Video project ready is April 20th - only a month away. Details about the project are in the Moodle sign-up forum and the syllabus.

Post any questions about the Final Presentation and Final Video project as a comment to this posting or in the Peer Forum in Moodle. Look forward to the weekly discussion ahead.

March 21 at 11:50am · Like · Comment · Unsubscribe

In addition to the discussions and links to the assigned readings/videos, I also posted weekly overviews in Facebook each Monday. In these overviews, I would talk about the previous week's discussion, and the work ahead of us.



Gregory Barlow

Its really short. I have a lot of parts that i have to fix. I hope you can get an understanding of what my video is trying to convey.



Cell Phone distractions

www.youtube.com

Its extremely short I have to many pieces that I still have to fix. I hope you can get what my video is aiming for.



April 20 at 5:44pm · Like · Comment · Subscribe



Patrick Heider

This is very short for a first draft. I cannot hear a word you are saying and my volume is on FULL BLAST, on the first interview of a person, you "fade out" to fast and it cuts off what she says.

Maybe consider posting the question that you asked the people you interviewed in a text box in a title screen before you show the clips of them talking. This is very confusing.

April 20 at 7:59pm · Like



Alexandra Wilson

Gregory, I really like the set up of your video. I think the way you are using interview questions in your presentation. The

Also, as I mentioned earlier, students had to create a final video documentary project. I had them post first drafts of their video projects on YouTube, and post a link to the YouTube videos in our Facebook Group site. Students could watch the videos directly from Facebook and provide feedback to one another that way.

Assessment and Grading

I mentioned that we continued to use Moodle's Gradebook tool for the rest of the semester. So the question is, how did I assess and grade students on their discussions?

Each week I would print out a copy of the course roster. I would then proceed through each posting in our Facebook Group site, along with any attached comments, and using my grading rubric, I would assign scores next to the students' names on the printed course roster. Once that was done, I would insert a final grade into the Moodle Gradebook.

Not very clean, but it did the trick, and wasn't overly cumbersome.

Concerns

So in using a free third party web-based service like Facebook, what concerns did I have?

Profile Pics



Although I didn't have to see students' personal postings, pictures, and videos, I could still see their profile pictures.

As you'll see here, this is a personal profile picture that I currently have up. I used a more professional picture as my profile picture during the semester, though. I can't say the same for students, however. None of their profile pictures were offensive by any means, but they had pretty personal pictures, such as pictures with significant others, silly poses, pictures at parties with cups that could have had beer in them, etc. I didn't have to deal with an uncomfortable situation, but if someone had an inappropriate photo, I would have politely asked them to change it for class purposes or create a new secondary account just for class.

Profile Names

I told students that if they didn't have Facebook accounts, they could create a Facebook account with a fake name - just let me know the details. I could see this being problematic for someone who, say, is hiding from an abusive spouse, and not wanting to be found online. Facebook's policy is that you must create a truthful profile, or your profile may be removed from the system, but there's no way for them to know that unless someone reports them, so I tell students to create a fake profile if they need to.

Distractions

Students commented that sometimes while responding to other students' comments, they found themselves distracted by new status updates, and forgetting to come back to the discussion. So Facebook is not only a distraction to regular course work, jobs, and life, but also to Facebook itself.

No Gradebook

Facebook obviously has no Gradebook tool, so I still needed to use Moodle for secure gradebook tracking and reporting.

Friend Requests

Students can sometimes be very sociable, innocent, friendly creatures, and occasionally would send me Facebook Friend requests, which I would have to politely decline. I told them that my personal policy was to not friend students, and they were fine with this.

Poof - It's Gone

As with any free third party web-based service, if Facebook decides to change how its system works, change its privacy policies, or if it just goes away, there's no responsibility to you and your students. You're out of luck. You're at Facebook's whim.

Privacy

Facebook is free to sign up for, but that's where free ends. Facebook is compiling data on its users in order create marketing profiles which it uses to sell advertising space on its web site to corporations. Make no mistake about it - even your conversations in your Group Site are being tracked by Facebook to help with creating marketing profiles and deliver appropriate advertising to its users.

Social Media Policies

Check with your institution and department to see if there are any official or unofficial policies in place regarding the use of social media for teaching and learning. I know of none at BSU, but there are obviously many impediments in place at the k12 level for various reasons.

Questions?