

# Theory through Application: A Study in the Use of Social Media for Teaching

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*Despite the growing integration of social media in their personal and professional lives, many faculty remain uncertain about its application to the classroom. One barrier for the adoption of social media as a learning tool is continued uncertainty about effective practices and successful use cases. Anchored in a specific course implementation and informed by reflections of faculty, teaching assistants, student feedback, and relevant literature, this article offers recommendations for implementing social media as a learning tool. We highlight key principles of social media as guideposts for practitioners to determine if and how to incorporate social media in their classroom.*

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Spurred by rapid development and significant social, cultural, and economic changes, recent years have seen a growing interest in the application of technology to address challenges in teaching and learning. Many of these tools such as Learning Management Systems and Student Response Systems (clickers) have been widely adopted and integrated into the activities of instructors. More recently, the emergence of Social Network Sites (SNS) (boyd & Ellison, 2007) and other forms of social media have been seen as potentially beneficial tools for instructional purposes (c.f. Brady, Holcomb & Smith, 2010; Joosten, 2012; Veletsianos, Kimmons, & French, 2013; Webb, 2009). Commercial social network sites include such well established platforms as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Google+, and numerous niche sites like Pinterest, YouTube, Wordpress, and Tumblr, most of which are widely used by both students and those who teach them. Research suggests that 74% of American adults use social networking sites (Pew Research Center, 2014) and over 85% of undergraduate students use these sites (Smith, Rainie, & Zickuhr, 2011). Among faculty, recent data indicates that most are still more likely to adopt social media in both their personal lives and their non-teaching professional work than they are for teaching and learning activities (Seaman & Tinti-Kane, 2013). However slow, the adoption of social media for teaching purposes continues to rise each year. The somewhat sluggish integration of social media into teaching may be associated with any number of common concerns about these technologies including privacy, intersections of personal and professional identities, assessment, integration with other campus

tools, and variability of institutional support (Tinti-Kane, 2013). Further, as Veletsianos, Kimmons, & French (2013) note, there remains a relative dearth of empirical data about instructor experiences using social media in their teaching.

On many campuses, the Learning Management System (LMS) is the most prominent educational technology used for teaching and learning activities. The LMS typically provides an array of instructional tools for delivering course content, conducting assessments, facilitating student interaction, and managing grades. In her report on faculty use of these systems, Morgan (2003) notes that instructors typically utilize content distribution and administrative features of the LMS rather than the interactive and learning tools. Others (c.f. Brady, Holcomb & Smith, 2010; Mott, 2010; Veletsianos & Navarrete, 2012; Veletsianos, Kimmons & French, 2013) have characterized the LMS as an administratively centered tool that often fails to effectively develop the types of engagement that supports student learning. In contrast, SNS are seen as more user-centered in their design and therefore may be better able to foster engagement, community, and interactivity among students. In addition to design affordances, the use of SNS also recognizes the increasingly social and networked world in which learning occurs (Ito, 2008). Social media as sites of learning not only provide students with an opportunity to further develop content knowledge, but also for gaining valuable digital media literacy skills. A number of scholars (c.f. Gammon & White, 2011; Jenkins, 2006; Mioduser, Nachmias & Forkosh-Baruch, 2008; Rheingold, 2011) point to the need for increasing emphasis on

digital media literacies and the focused attention that educators should give to cultivating these skills among their students. As Siemens (2004) argues about today's environment, "we need to act by drawing information outside of our primary knowledge. The ability to synthesize and recognize connections and patterns is a valuable skill" (p. 2). Social media tools can present learners with an opportunity both to interact with content knowledge and to build valuable competencies needed to engage in contemporary life.

This article approaches social media use in the classroom as an emergent activity. Our perspective is informed by the integration of social media in an undergraduate Introduction to Cultural Anthropology course at a large state research university. The development and introduction of social media in this course was first initiated in 2010 as part of a new pedagogical strategy for teaching social theory to undergraduate students. Would using social media create an external learning environment in which students would better understand theory through application and discussion? A similar approach to the integration of social media in the course was also used in 2013 and fall 2014. This multi-year deployment has provided both historical observations and reflection as well as points for comparison and contrast in the use of social media across these courses.

The article is informed by three key sources of data: 1) informal observations and reflections of the course instructor (Carole McGranahan), 2) interviews with three of the course teaching assistants, and 3) a survey of students in the fall 2014 theory course (see Appendix 1). Anchored by the course implementations and situated in the experience of faculty, teaching assistants, student feedback, and relevant literature, we emphasize a pedagogically driven approach to the adoption of social media in the classroom. By highlighting key principles and practices of social media as guideposts, we hope to help other practitioners to determine if and how they may want to incorporate social media in their courses. Finally, grounded in the applied use of the theory blog assignment, we offer recommendations for effectively implementing social media in the classroom.

## Theory Blog Assignment – Observations and Reflections<sup>1</sup>

How do we teach social theory to beginning undergraduates so that they will learn and retain the material? This theory blog assignment began with a specific pedagogical problem: teaching the foundations

of anthropological theory to undergraduates in a large introductory lecture course. The faculty expectation was that this course provided students the foundations for upper-division undergraduate classes in the major, such that a professor could presume that juniors and seniors taking advanced classes were familiar with basic theoretical concepts. Over time, however, faculty realized this was not the case. When asked in an upper-division course, for example, to provide a symbolic or poststructuralist analysis of a specific cultural practice, students often could not do it. Knowledge that professors wanted students to use and apply at the upper-division level was not being learned in introductory courses in ways students retained. After several years of being frustrated at having to re-teach, rather than reinforce, introductory social theory to junior and senior majors, Professor Carole McGranahan decided to rethink how she taught social theory in the introductory course. Could social media be of pedagogical use here? The answer was yes.

Professor McGranahan had already experimented with social media—Facebook and Twitter—in other courses but without real success. This time, she wanted to find a way for the use of social media to be substantive in terms of students engaging each other as well as providing an additional way for them to deeply engage with course material. Neither Facebook nor Twitter would allow for what she had in mind, but a course blog seemed as if it might. With the help of Mark Gammon and head Teaching Assistant Marnie Thomson, Professor McGranahan came up with a plan for a blog that would include instructor-chosen student essays on broad topics—love, music, money, family, food—and which would require all course students to comment on the essays.

Assignment goals were the following:

1. Increase student engagement with social theory in anthropology;
2. Create an additional intellectual space for students to interact with each other about course content, a community of practice different from the lecture hall or their TA-led discussion classes;
3. Enable students to learn by applying theory to topics which were meaningful to them;
4. Give undergraduate students the rare opportunity to read each other's academic writing rather than only writing for their professors or TAs;
5. Help students acquire digital literacy skills including writing for broader consumption, reading online, and providing meaningful feedback on each other's work.

1. A related blog post is available at: <http://savageminds.org/2012/03/05/using-social-media-to-teach-theory-to-undergraduate-students/>

The assignment was structured to meet these goals. All students in the 2010 course wrote two 500-word essays applying two different anthropological theories to a topic of their choice under the rubrics of food and love. Essay due dates were staggered over the semester, with some groups of students writing first about food, then love, or vice versa, and applying the theories they were learning at that particular moment in the course. Teaching assistants (TAs) graded the essays, and selected those to put up on a blog we created on Wordpress. Selected student authors gave permission for their essays to be published on the blog. Instructors posted each essay under gender-neutral pseudonyms, and students were required to submit six “substantive comments” on the blog (three on food essays, three on love essays). Their assignment sheet explained:

What do we mean by substantive blog comments? We are looking to create a truly dialogic space for exchange about anthropology. We ask you to engage with the posted essays—for example, offer your thoughts on the author’s argument, raise questions, make connections to other course topics or cultural phenomenon, in general, participate in such a way that conversation is started, continued, or otherwise enabled.

All comments were moderated and not made public until a TA or the professor had read them. Students who did not want to comment under their real name did so using a pseudonym, which they privately shared with their TA to ensure they received credit for their comments. The essays and blog comments were worth 50% of their recitation grade, which made up 40% of their course grade. After TAs posted the essays to the blog site, the professor also announced this in lecture, sharing the topics of each essay, and thus putting the students’ intellectual contributions into direct dialogue with course lectures.

In the assessment of Professor McGranahan, this pedagogical social media experiment worked beautifully. All of the assignment goals were met. On the public class blog, students had respectful, intellectual conversations not usually possible in a large lecture class. They read, responded to, and benefitted from each other’s writings, rather than just writing for the instructor. Collectively, the students turned the blank blog into a space of intellectual exchange and growth. The TAs and professor decided not to participate in the blog so that it could truly be a student space for discussion.

Six “food” essays and ten “love” essays were posted on the blog. In one essay, a student analyzed the US locavore movement using structural-functionalism and cultural ecology. Another wrote about “bromance” from functionalist and Boasian perspectives. A third

student critiqued Facebook profiles using symbolic and feminist anthropology. Following each essay were student comments, which were extensive, thoughtful, and productive. The format was a great success in terms of getting students to think *with* rather than *about* theory. Again and again, in their blog comments on the different essays, the students asked each other “what would a \_\_\_\_\_ anthropologist think about this?” and together to think through the different theoretical approaches to any given topic.

While the course was in session, students gave positive feedback on the blog, and in Professor McGranahan’s estimation, their deeper understanding of theory was evident in their final exam essays as compared to prior semesters when she had taught this same course. Students from this first 2010 class implementation of the assignment who have since taken more advanced courses with Professor McGranahan were more comfortable with theory than had been students in prior years, clearly retaining knowledge from the earlier class, and thus further marking the pedagogical impact of the blog.

In 2013 and 2014, Professor McGranahan again taught this class and used the theory blog assignment. Each time it worked well. The only changes made were to the essay topics, rotating through them each year for variety:

- 2010: food, love
- 2013: body, family, money
- 2014: food, love, music

Beginning in 2013, students wrote three essays rather than two. The other change made was in 2014, when the TAs and professor decided to would allow the blog comments to be posted without requiring instructor approval, which was key in reducing some of the instructor labor that goes into this assignment. There had been no issues with inflammatory comments in the prior two courses, and there were no subsequent problems when comments were posted without moderation.

This assignment required significant coordination by the professor and teaching assistants. Over the three iterations of this assignment, the enrollment size of the course varied. There were 200 students and four graduate student teaching assistants in 2010; 125 students and three teaching assistants in 2013; and, eighty students and two teaching assistants in 2014. Teaching assistants read and graded all student essays, chose essays for the blog, coordinated with student authors for permission and any needed revisions, posted essays to the blog, and read and evaluated student comments on each essay.

In individual interviews with Mark Gammon, TAs reflected on assignment outcomes (see Appendix 1). Challenges for TAs included extra work in tracking the

comments on essays, especially if students commented at the last minute. Benefits from the assignment were numerous. Each TA believed the assignment helped students to learn course material. They noted that the format of the essays allowed students to apply theory to their own experiences, in a way that made theory not appear “scary.” TAs indicated that writing on a topic of their choosing was for many students a fun and engaging way to think about anthropology, even if they had to specifically use two theories in a 500 word essay. In discussion classes, students talked about their essays and discussed the ones that had been posted, thereby engaging in a new form of collaborative learning both in and out of the classroom. Reading other students’ work was new for almost all students, and TAs agreed that student writing improved as a result of reviewing other students’ writings and thus having new models for their own writing.

It was clear to the TAs that the social media aspect of the assignment also mattered. One point of feedback TAs received from students was that having the blog online made the students think of the assignment as “more alive.” This third space outside of lecture and discussion classes allowed students to engage their peers without necessarily knowing the correct answer per se, but instead enabling them to explore anthropological theory and ask questions together. While most students wrote the obligatory minimum of comments, there were also significant numbers each semester who wrote beyond what was required, and continued to follow the conversation as others made comments. TAs received very little negative feedback on the assignment. Some students struggled with the 500 word limit, some were not excited about commenting and tended to do their comments at the last minute; however, most students did not fit this pattern. Given that this course is for anthropology majors, the majority of students in the class have a personal as well as academic interest in the topic which we believe contributed to the genuine success of this assignment, rather than students’ rote or obligatory participation in it.

Over the three years, fifty students have had their essays posted on the course blog. Only once did a student decline to have their essay posted. In the TAs’ experiences, students whose essays were chosen tended to be especially engaged with the discussion, while other students were disappointed their essay was not selected. Reading other’s essays helped students see how to improve their writing, sharpen their analyses, and deepen their thinking. Mostly, however, it made theory something these introductory-level students actively applied in their own writing and thought, rather than about which they just passively read.

## Should I, could I, would I, use social media?

As faculty continue to increase their own use of social media, both personally and professionally, the potential for incorporating these tools into their instructional activities is also growing. Partly a function of becoming more familiar with the technologies themselves, this increasing interest also reflects a desire by some to make their teaching more contemporary along with an expanding recognition of social media affordances for teaching and learning (c.f. Joosten, 2012). For example some have noted that the use of social media can help to facilitate participation from those students who might otherwise remain silent (Rankin, n.d.). For others, social media are attractive due to their contrast with more centralized and administrative teaching technologies such as a campus LMS. When compared to social media, many LMS fall short in their ability to support interactions between individuals that lead to the exchange of ideas and the building of deeper insights that come from engaging with others in learning. The use of social media as sites for educational activities is also important as it provides an opportunity for instructors to engage with students about the learning context itself. In his work on Connectivism, Siemens (2004) suggests that this approach to learning “acknowledges the tectonic shifts in society where learning is no longer an internal, individualistic activity. How people work and function is altered when new tools are utilized” (p. 5). We recognize that education as more than just an exercise in the acquisition of knowledge, it is also about helping students to cultivate skills for thinking critically and for effectively engaging with the world around them. In this regard, educators continue to play a central role in preparing students to be successful in a highly collaborative and networked culture. And while students can often seem to display a near omniscience about these media, most need assistance from educators to develop critical media literacy skills (Gammon & White, 2011).

These contextual aspects of social media use in the theory blog assignment were highlighted by the instructor who underscored the goal of having students develop literacy skills including writing for broader audiences, online engagement, and providing feedback to peers on their work. Teaching assistants emphasized the importance of getting students to write differently, with a wider audience in mind, rather than just writing for the class instructor. TAs also affirmed the value of students learning how to respectfully engage online with peers about ideas and how this took the learning “beyond the classroom.” Both the instructor and TAs noted that there

was little to no issue with online misbehavior associated with the assignment.

When evaluating whether you may want to incorporate social media into your teaching, an important consideration is what students think about the use of social media in the classroom. As with most pedagogical practices, the answer to that question is varied and highly dependent upon how effectively the technology is integrated into the course. Based on broad US data about the topic, many students have mixed feelings about the use of social media as a learning tool. Recent data on students and technology suggests that only one in three indicated that they would like their instructors to use social media more (Dahlstrom & Bichsel, 2014). The researchers also note the 73% of students who indicated that they prefer to keep their academic and social lives separate as a key factor in the use of social media in the classroom. Recent institutional data from the university where the Introduction to Cultural Anthropology course is offered seems to mirror this national trend with only 17% of students agreeing with the statement that they would like social media to be used more in their classes, and 64% disagreeing. Interestingly, when asked if it is important for instructors to use new, cutting-edge technology, 66% of students agreed and only 7% disagreed. Further, 82% of students agreed that instructors should be skilled at using technology. At first glance it is easy to conclude from these data trends that many students don't want their instructors to use social media as a learning tool and that this may be due, in part, to the idea that they don't like mixing their personal/social and academic lives. However, students do express a strong desire that faculty use innovative technology and that they be well skilled in that use. Thus it may be that students' perceptions about social media use in their classes are more about the effectiveness of its implementation than the specific media itself. Further, concerns about maintaining separation between social and academic lives does not account for the myriad of pedagogical uses of social media that does not require such intermingling. And, perhaps more importantly, the perception and management of separate spheres of identity in social media is a fundamental challenge confronting its users. Rather than a reason not to use social media in the classroom, this concern might instead be seen as a significant opportunity for engaging with students about their strategies for being digital citizens.

In contrast to the broader data, student perceptions about the theory blog assignment were very positive overall. When rating the assignment for helping them learn the course material, 100% of students responded positively with most, 84%, describing it as either helpful or very helpful and 12% rating it as "instrumental."

When asked to describe their overall experience with the theory blog assignment, 80% responded with very positive or positive and the remaining 20% were neutral. When asked if they like using social media for educational purposes in a class, responses were mostly positive with 64% saying yes and another 24% undecided. Asked if they would recommend that more instructors use social media in their teaching, 60% responded yes with 28% undecided. Not unsurprisingly, open-ended responses in questions about social media use for education highlighted the importance of context, effective application, and a desire that more use might improve the "overall use of social media in education." This positive feedback about the theory blog assignment and broader perceptions about social media use lend credence to the idea that successful implementation is less about the technology itself than how effectively it is incorporated in the course.

What does this research and feedback mean for educators who are interested in using social media in their teaching? Who should use social media and how might they effectively implement these tools into their teaching?

## Effective Practices and Recommendations

As we've discussed and has been supported by student feedback, successful adoption of social media in the classroom is never a certainty. While it may be appealing to think that social media will be readily accepted by students who are already heavy users of these media, the reality is often quite different. In fact, because students are already widely using social media and find themselves culturally associated with these tools (c.f. Barnes & Lescault, 2013; "Millennials: Technology = Social Connection," 2014), getting them to think critically about their educational use can be particularly challenging. Concerns about keeping social and academic lives separate can also be a barrier to the use of these tools for learning. Additionally, students' seeming knowledge and comfort with social media can make it more than a little intimidating for instructors who may not feel the same sense of ease with these technologies.

Based on our experiences with social media, we suggest the following recommendations to help increase your likelihood of success with these tools in your teaching. Integrating technology into teaching should always be about more than just adding tools, but rather is a deliberate outcome of an intentional pedagogical practice, which benefits from the application of technology. This is not to say that the technology is arbitrary or unimportant; in fact, a focus on the technology is key to

making effective choices that will directly influence the success of the implementation.

Start with clarifying your pedagogical goals and what you are trying to accomplish in your teaching and students' learning. How might the use of social media help you and your students to achieve this goal (by the way, you may determine that social media is not the right tool)? Having clear objectives is particularly important in the use of social media because most social media have not been designed as explicitly educational tools. As such, the use of these media for learning requires an intentional approach that is grounded in learning goals and which provides clear direction to students in order to avoid frustration.

As you further develop your pedagogical goals and their relationship to social media, it is crucial to recognize the context of these media in both broad and specific instances. In general, social media are more open than closed with regard to their relationship with information. This attribute is a key contrast to educational tools such as an LMS which has design affordances related to its use for classroom management, including the administration of student information and privacy. This open-closed dichotomy is one of the defining principles of social media and the use of these tools for education should be cognizant of the associated benefits, constraints, and any potential policy issues (c.f. Drake, 2014). Many institutions have adopted social media guidelines, which can provide further direction about their use for instructors. In addition to the broader context of social media, it is also important to understand and evaluate specific variations among these tools and their impact on your intended use. For example, Twitter, a well-known micro-blogging tool, has seen increasing adoption by educators (see Rankin, n.d.) in their teaching. Among Twitter's primary characteristics are its openness, interactivity, real-time flow of information, brevity (140 character limit), and the use of hashtags for contextual cues. Depending on the purpose and intended goals of its use, these characteristics may be seen as both affordances and constraints. If you're looking for a tool to encourage students to publicly engage and share information on a timely topic such as the Scottish independence referendum of 2014, Twitter is likely a good fit. If, however, you want students to cultivate their long-form writing skills through peer feedback, Twitter's character limits and publicness are not well suited to this effort. Clarifying your pedagogical purpose in conjunction with an evaluation of the affordances and constraints of social media, and its various formations, is fundamental to its successful use in the classroom.

A vital component of both evaluating and effectively implementing a technology like social media in

your teaching is to actually use the tool yourself. There really is no substitute for hands-on experience as a way to learn about the substantive features and application of a social media platform in your classroom. This is particularly important if you have little or no background with a tool and how it fits into the ever-changing social media landscape (Solis & JESS3, 2013). Give yourself some lead time before deciding to adopt a social media tool, sign up for an account, get comfortable and start exploring how the tool works, and specifically how it might fit with your intended pedagogical purpose. If you feel confused and uncertain about the technology and its application to your pedagogical practice, your students are likely to feel the same way. Although you don't have to become an expert in Google+, Twitter, or whatever tool you choose, you should be actively using the technology so that you can make informed choices about social media and its contribution to your classroom. This discovery effort will also inform you about the potential need for support. Will you need to engage with your campus IT services or academic technologists as part of your implementation? Do you have teaching assistants that will be expected to help with the implementation? What is their knowledge about social media and what training might they need in order to support students?

In addition to building in time for your own training with the social media tool, we recommend that you consider doing the same for your students. While it's easy to assume that students are already using social media and that they just "get it," this is often a fallacy (Gammon & White, 2011). Further, even if students may have substantial experience using social media in their personal lives, it is critical to talk with them about its intended use in the class, which may be quite different than their everyday practices. Explicitly engaging with your students about both the pedagogical and technical aspects of social media in your class will help establish its purpose and give them a grounding in its use as a learning tool.

Finally, we strongly recommend talking through your ideas with others. Incorporating a new tool into your teaching is a great opportunity to reach out to other teachers, graduate students, and staff to talk about your ideas for innovative pedagogical practices. Colleagues can be a great resource for testing ideas about social media and how to be effective in your use of these tools. In addition, you may discover colleagues who are also thinking about using social media in their own classes and who are eager to talk about their ideas and learn along with you. A campus teaching and learning center and/or academic technologists at your institution can provide useful information not only about social media

and pedagogy, but also about the integration of these media tools with other campus technologies.

## Conclusion

Social media use in the classroom continues to evolve as these tools become more deeply integrated into our personal and professional lives. Further, the dynamic nature of these media means that their use for all types of activity, personal, professional, and academic is constantly fluctuating. We see social media as a landscape full of both significant opportunities and considerable challenges. Despite the challenges and seeming resistance from some students to having social media used in their classes, the benefits of a meaningful application of these tools to learning can be profound. From increased interaction with peers, the development of a student-centered intellectual space, application of course content to their own lives, and the development of digital literacy skills, integrating social media into the classroom can be a powerful pedagogical strategy. However, as we have indicated in our discussion, instructional innovation with technology is about more than just adding tools, but rather is the outcome of considered pedagogical practice matched with a meaningful integration of technology.

In this article we have tried to combat the relative lack of applied case studies about the use of social media as a learning tool by highlighting a successful use of blogging for teaching social theory in an undergraduate course. Informed by this example and other experiences in the educational uses of social media, we identify key principles of social media including openness, connectiveness, personalization, and interactivity as important considerations for determining if and how social media may be pedagogically beneficial. Finally, we have offered a number of recommendations designed to help practitioners be intentional about their approach to using social media in the classroom.

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**Mark Gammon**, Ph.D., is a sociologist, researcher, and educator who is interested in the intersection of people

# Appendix 1

Three teaching assistants participated in one-on-one interviews with one of the researchers (Mark Gammon). The TAs who participated in interviews represented each of the three years the assignment was used. All TAs were asked the same set of seven open-ended questions about their perspectives on the theory blog assignment. Teaching assistant interviews were analyzed by the researchers for common themes.

Student data was collected during fall 2014. All students in the course were invited to participate in a survey about their experience with the theory blog assignment. From a total of 80 students in the course, we received 28 survey responses of which 25 were valid. Students were informed of the survey during class and a follow up email with the survey link was sent along with one reminder email.

## Teaching assistant interview questions

How would you describe your role with the theory blog assignment?

What was the biggest challenge with this assignment for the course?

What was the biggest benefit with this assignment for the course?

What kind of feedback did you hear from students about the assignment?

Do you think that the theory blog assignment helped students learn theory?

What would you change about the assignment in the future?

What else would you like to share about your experience with the theory blog assignment?

## Student survey questions

### *Demographic*

What is your current major?

Anthropology

Undecided

Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

What year are you at the university?

First-year

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Auditor

Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

What is your gender?

Female

Male

Transgender

Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

### *Social Media Use*

How would you describe your use of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Blogs, and Twitter?

Don't use at all

Light User

Moderate User

Active User

Very Active User

Which social media do you use? (Mark all that apply)

Blogging

Facebook

Google+

Instagram

LinkedIn

Pinterest

Snapchat

Twitter

Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Do you actively seek out anthropology-related news and information using social media?

Not at all

Rarely

Occasionally

Often

All the time

Have you used social media for academic purposes in any previous courses?

Yes

No

Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

### *Course and Assignment*

Did you have an essay selected to be posted on the course theory blog?

Yes

No

Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

In your experience, which of the following best describes the role of the theory blog in this course?

- Just another assignment
- A place for students to interact
- A place to read other students' work
- A place to comment on other students' work
- Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

How often did you return to read other blog comments after posting your own comment?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Some
- Often
- All the time

Did reading the comments make you think differently about the course materials?

- Yes
- No
- Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Overall, how much did you engage with your peers through blog comments?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Some
- Often
- All the time

What did you find most valuable about the Theory Blog Assignment? (Mark all that apply)

- Helped me apply and learn theory
- Interacting with my peers about the course materials
- Reading other students' essays
- Supplementing the lecture and recitation with a "student-only" space
- Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Overall, how would you rate the Theory Blog Assignment for helping you learn the course material?

- Not helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Helpful
- Very helpful
- It was instrumental

What did you like most about the Theory Blog Assignment?

What did you like least about the Theory Blog Assignment?

Overall, how would you describe your experience of the Theory Blog Assignment?

- Very Positive
- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative
- Very Negative

Do you like using social media for educational purposes in a course?

- Yes
- No
- Undecided
- Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Would you recommend that more instructors/faculty use social media in their teaching?

- Yes
- No
- Undecided
- Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_