



Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

ScienceDirect

Computers and Composition xxx (2017) xxx–xxx

Computers
and
Composition

www.elsevier.com/locate/compcom

Effective Social Media Use in Online Writing Classes through Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Principles

Stephanie Vie

University of Central Florida

Abstract

This article explores how universal design for learning (UDL) principles can be used to effectively scaffold social media in online writing courses. It offers proposed best practices for user-centered design in online environments when using social media. These include offering alternative assignments, using accessible social media technologies, and encouraging students to critique social media's affordances and constraints. Thus, readers may take away from this article some practical suggested approaches that can help support technologically enhanced classroom environments involving social media.

© 2018 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Universal design for learning; Social media; Social networking; Online writing courses; Online pedagogy; Usability; Accessibility

Social media technologies and tools continue to grow in popularity, both within the academic sphere (e.g., publications and conferences exploring social media use; pedagogical applications of social media) and in everyday life on a local (i.e., United States) and global scale. Social media can be included in various ways in a wide range of classroom modalities, and this article argues that social media integration into the online writing classroom may be of particular interest for those interested in usability and user-centered design. This interest is because incorporating social media into classrooms, and especially into online classrooms, presents accessibility and usability challenges. However, with careful planning, social media can be used within a user-centered, accessible curriculum that challenges, engages, and meets the needs of diverse learners.

User-centered design is closely linked with usability and accessibility (which will be explored later in this article), and within the sphere of user-centered design research, many scholars have considered the framework of Universal Design for Learning, or UDL, and how it may support more usable learning environments for broader participant populations. This article thus explores how UDL can be used to effectively scaffold social media in online writing courses. It offers proposed best practices for user-centered design in online environments when using social media. These include offering alternative assignments, using accessible social media technologies, and encouraging students to critique social media's affordances and constraints. Thus, readers may take away from this article some practical suggested approaches that can help support technologically enhanced classroom environments involving social media.

E-mail address: Stephanie.Vie@ucf.edu

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2018.05.005>

8755-4615/© 2018 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Please cite this article in press as: Vie, Stephanie. Effective Social Media Use in Online Writing Classes through Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Principles. *Computers and Composition* (2017), <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2018.05.005>

Supporting such accessible environments is critical. United States federal law requires that higher education institutions ensure students with disabilities have equal access to participate in educational activities.¹ Increasing numbers of fully online courses are offered nationwide and increasing numbers of students with disabilities are enrolling in them (Walters, 2010). Digital multimodal technologies such as social media have the potential to offer greater inclusion to people with disabilities; at the same time, though, technologies required for students' use in online education must be accessible to all, including students with disabilities. Lawsuits against schools for accessibility infractions have brought this issue to the forefront, including lawsuits about Kindle e-book readers (Beja, 2009), clickers (Parry, 2012), and learning management systems (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016). Many institutions that previously did not address online accessibility issues are now working quickly to develop related policies and procedures because of the increased use of online learning spaces as well as classroom technologies.

With the deliberate application of UDL principles during the instructional design process, instructors can proactively develop courses that address the needs of diverse learners (Dell, Dell, & Blackwell, 2015; Elias, 2010). In other words, the application of UDL principles and strategies to fully online courses as they are created help make these classroom experiences more inclusive before students ever enter the classroom. This allows for online course creators to design writing classes that use social media in ways that are accessible and usable for all students enrolled, not just some. Or, as Jason Palmeri (2006) has argued, we “must move from seeing disability accessibility as a concern particular to a subset of users and begin to reimagine it as a source of transformative insight into design practice for all” (p. 57). Similarly, Melanie Yergeau et al. (2013) queried, “Disabled individuals are among our colleagues and our students. Why is it that we so rarely design with them (us) in mind?” (n.p.). As research has shown that social media are becoming more prevalent in the classroom, including in online writing classrooms, it is imperative that faculty designing courses that incorporate social media scaffold them with an eye toward accessibility and greater usability for all participating students.

1. Why use social media in the writing classroom

Over the past decade, social media in higher education teaching has increased, with faculty members incorporating these tools into a variety of courses through different assignments, activities, and assessments (Moran, Seaman, & Tinti-Kane, 2011, 2012; Seaman & Tinti-Kane, 2013). In particular, faculty who teach in distance, e-learning, or blended learning environments are more likely to incorporate social media into their teaching (Manca & Ranieri, 2016), and those who frequently use social media personally or professionally are more likely to see social media's benefits for building community, increasing positive student-faculty interactions, allowing students opportunities to provide feedback, and delivering institutional information to students (Rios-Aguilar, González Canché, Deil-Amen, & Davis, 2012). These examples illustrate the growing interest nationwide in social media for personal, professional, and pedagogical reasons.

The writing classroom is no different. Many faculty members now bring social media into their writing classrooms to help students learn greater rhetorical awareness, including understanding how to compose effectively using social media. Some of the more frequently used social media in the classroom include Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, all digital multimodal technologies that can allow for rich expressions of multimodal literacies given the interplay of text, audio, video, and imagery (Buck, 2012, 2015; Maranto & Barton, 2010; Monty, 2015; Shepherd, 2015, 2016; Vie, 2008, 2015, 2017). Furthermore, scholars such as Alice Daer and Liza Potts (2014) have put forward potential approaches that can “help users of social media maximize their critical use of these spaces . . . [and teach] students about decorum, privacy protection, anticipating audience responses, and curating their online identities” (p. 27).

However, the literature has only touched upon accessibility and social media briefly. Though social media are popular, there are limited studies of its usability (Hamzah & Wahid, 2015), pointing to a rich area for future research and one in

¹ For the purposes of this article, I focus on social media use within the United States context. Social media is a global phenomenon, and usability is also a global concern (see, for example, the May 2017 special issue of *Technical Communication* (Sun & Getto, 2017), which addresses usability issues in global contexts). However, because of differing cultural practices and perspectives, laws related to accessibility, and uses of particular social media technologies, it is beyond the scope of this article to address social media, usability and UDL, and online learning in a global context. This would be a ripe area for future research. See, for example, Annalien van Rooyen (2015) for a discussion of social media integration in a South African distance education context and how physical access to smart phones and the Internet impact such use. Also see Katie Ellis and Mike Kent's (2017) edited collection *Disability and Social Media: Global Perspectives*.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10225630>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10225630>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)