# CAIS Poster: Social Media Integration for Teaching and Learning

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**Abstract**

The poster focuses on an ongoing, 5-year SSHRC-funded research initiative to understand the affordances and potential roles of social media in teaching and learning. It highlights some preliminary results of the 1st year of this initiative, focusing on a survey to investigate different approaches to social media integration for teaching across Canadian universities.

**Résumé**

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The use of social media has been growing in university classrooms, with some surveys reporting adoption rates as high as 80% among university classrooms in the United States (Moran et al., 2010). Such use capitalizes on the wider social networks reachable via social media while simultaneously meeting the student population where it lives: i.e., online, in social networking sites and in the microforms of communication adopted in Twitter and texting. There are many potential benefits to using social media in association with education and classroom settings. For example, by having access to social media, students can continue discussions started in one class and carry them over to another. Students also have a chance to view and build on conversations with others outside the classroom, such as practitioners and experts in the field or students who took the same class in a previous semester. Furthermore, social media can be used to create a community of learners which persists beyond the current class, sustaining students as life-long learners. Recent research in this area suggests that whether one is submitting questions via Twitter, blogging about current events related to general themes of the class, or using Facebook to carry out class discussions, students' class participation, engagement, and sometimes even performance, are likely to increase once social media are introduced into the mix (Ebner et al., 2010; Junco et al., 2012; Schroeder et al., 2010). However, how do educators and learners know that their particular use of social media is beneficial to their teaching or learning? This is a problem for many educators and researchers looking for validation that social media are truly aiding teaching and learning processes.

The main objectives of our research are to determine and evaluate measures that help educators manage their use of social media for teaching and learning through the use of automated analysis of social media texts and networks. In a face-to-face class, it is relatively easy to see who is participating or not. It is also relatively easy in online classes to track progress and student participation with the help of reporting functionalities offered by modern Classroom Management Systems like Blackboard. However, when learners and educators are engaging with each other and with communities outside the classroom via social media, educators and researchers who are studying learning processes quickly find themselves inundated with data sets that dwarf more conventional survey- or interview-based data sets. Yet, data volume alone does not fully speak to the enormity of the task associated with analyzing online data. To exploit an online data set fully, researchers often need to examine the same set of data in multiple passes, each time looking for different aspects of interaction and learning. Some of the many facets they

can look at include common patterns of exchange, development of shared language and understanding, and the emergence of roles and positions that may be unique to online interactions. Multiple analyses such as these take a substantial amount of time to accomplish when managed by hand. Unfortunately, at this time there are no effective solutions that can help educators and researchers to deal with such large data sets in the context of studying learning processes that are occurring in social media.

This poster will highlight some preliminary results of the first year of our 5-year SSHRC-funded research initiative. Specifically, the poster will discuss the development and roll out of a comprehensive survey to investigate different approaches to social media integration for teaching and learning across Canadian universities. The aim of this survey is to understand how instructors align social media with the learning objectives of their classes and what kind of formal assessment criteria for the use of social media instructors use. The goal of this survey is to collect as many case studies as possible. The primary research questions to be addressed in this phase are as follows:

> Question 1: What specific social media are being used for teaching, and for what intended learning outcomes?

> Question 2: What are the common assessment strategies of social media use for teaching and learning used by instructors?

Our research contributes to the emerging field of learning analytics (Siemens, 2010; Haythornthwaite et al., 2013). The overarching goal is to add understanding, methods, and tools for learning analytics by developing and testing automated measures to study learning processes occurring in social media.

## References

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