

Twitter Assignment

ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

Twitter Participation (60 points) - Each student will be asked to create a Twitter account just for this course; students may choose varying levels of anonymity for that account, so long as the instructor is aware of the student's Twitter username. Over the course of the semester, students will be asked to engage with Twitter for homework, in-class activities, and as part of the research process for the Unit 1 artifact. All tweets over the course of the semester must include the course hashtag **#I102kids**

Social media is a vastly important medium for connecting with a broad audience - this assignment is designed to give students a grasp of how to create, build, and sustain a social media account dedicated to a scholarly/professional persona. Students will learn to express ideas concisely, to engage with online discussions respectfully, and to make the best use of Twitter's affordances as a tool to further their own research.

INSTRUCTIONS

At the start of the semester, each student will be asked to create a new Twitter account. This account is not required to reflect your real identity (i.e. it DOES NOT need to reference your real name, your status as a Georgia Tech student, or any other identifiable information if you prefer not to make that information public). However, your account should include an image, an biographical statement that notes you are the history and rhetoric of science writing for children. Having an image/bio will facilitate interaction with Twitter users beyond this course; however, it is not necessary for you to disclose identifying information to create an effective Twitter profile.

Throughout the semester, as a class, we will discuss how to follow accounts that might be useful to your projects, how to participate in ongoing conversations about the course topic, how to engage with other Twitter users, and how to use some of the features of Twitter to help express your ideas, share your research, and build a network.

Starting in Week 2 of the course, each student should plan to tweet about course material on a regular basis; this will include activities in class that use Twitter, as well as homework assignments that ask you to tweet reactions to readings, discussion questions, events in literary and popular culture, and your own research. You should expect to send between 5-10 tweets a week from Week 3- Week 15, or approximately 75-100 tweets over the course of the semester.

By the end of the semester, your Twitter feed will be a set of detailed notes on the readings we have completed in class, the course discussions we have completed together, and the research you have conducted in teams and on your own. You will be able to use your Twitter account to follow relevant discussions in real time, to locate reliable and useful sources, and to brainstorm, both individually and collaboratively, on your projects.

In order to be counted towards your participation grade, each tweet must include the course hashtag **#I102kids**.

Your Twitter participation grade will be a holistic assessment of

- ☐ the number of tweets sent on a weekly basis
- ☐ the quality of those tweets in terms of content and engagement with the material
- ☐ the relevancy of your tweets and your online conversations to the course
- ☐ the role you play in an active online scholarly community

The syllabus policy on appropriate discussion etiquette applies throughout the digital classroom space (though some irreverence and informality is encouraged by virtue of the platform's constraints).

AUDIENCE

The primary audience for your Twitter account will be your I102 instructor and your peers. However, due to the very nature of social media, it is likely your tweets will be encountered by other individuals who may be unfamiliar to you. It is important to keep in mind that your tweets are taking place in a public “space” and therefore could attract the attention of individuals outside of Georgia Tech. While in some instances, this attention might be a good thing (such as interacting with experts, scholars, authors, or other students working on similar projects), it also brings the possibility of negative online interactions. To that end, be sure to consider the following:

1. How much personal information do you want to make public? If the answer is none, create a Twitter handle that is not associated with your real name or other publicly identifiable information - you need only tell the instructor your Twitter handle if you wish to remain unidentified online.
2. How would any single tweet read out of context? Even if you create a tweet thread or a series of tweets, if someone took just one and put it into another forum, could it potentially give someone the wrong impression of you, your research, or this course.
3. How might my readers interpret this tweet? As we consistently discuss in class, keep a reader-centered approach to your tweets and be aware that 280 characters can sometimes create confusion or misunderstandings. Be prepared to respond carefully and respectfully if misunderstandings do occur.
4. How might you use the multimodal functions of Twitter to express your ideas and communicate with an audience? Twitter allows you to embed images, gifs, links, hashtags and other specialized lingo (which we will discuss in class); think carefully about how to use those tools to make your thoughts clear, concise, easy to understand, and useful to your audience and to you.

TWITTER ETIQUETTE TIPS

Avoid “Trolling”: On Twitter, “trolling” is when someone jumps into a conversation with the express purpose of starting an argument, derailing an existing conversation, or upsetting people. **DO NOT DO THIS.** If you are approached by a troll during the course of our class activities, many social media experts advise avoiding “feeding” the troll by engaging. However, some trolls may escalate to spamming or other inappropriate behavior if ignored; if this happens, report the user via Twitter’s reporting method and notify your instructor for further assistance.

Use appropriate media for the platform: Shorten your URL links using a shortening service. Embed images or photos rather than linking to bulky attachments. Embrace multimodal forms of communication with the understanding this is an educational setting.

Tag content creators: If you are tweeting about an article, blog post, book, film, or other source, it is often seen to tag the author/creator as a form of attribution. Use the @ sign and handle of the creator if they are on Twitter in your first tweet about the topic but avoid cluttering that creator’s feed with 30 tweets in a row if you are continuing to comment on the same piece. If the creator is not on Twitter, be sure to cite them by name in the first tweet on their work, and make it clear when you are referring to that creator’s ideas in future tweets.

Follow accounts in line with your interests - If you are particularly interested in chemistry, follow authors who write/talk about chemistry texts. If you are interested in researching more about early astrophysics books for kids, follow authors who have published on those topics. The more diverse the list of people you follow, the more diverse information will come across your timeline and will provide you with potential avenues of research down the line.

Don’t be afraid to dive in - If you see individuals having a conversation that you find interesting, jump in and contribute, even if they are strangers. This is the equivalent to jumping into a conversation at a party; provided you are on-topic and respectful of the group, you will likely be welcomed with open (digital) arms and you might gain valuable insight for your own research (or may be able to contribute valuable insight based on your research!) As a general rule, you get what you give!

TYPES OF TWEETS

In-class Activities - The instructor may regularly provide the class with a prompt, question, or brainstorming activity in class that asks you to respond via Twitter.

Homework Activities - The instructor may also regularly ask you to use Twitter as you complete assigned readings, activities, teamwork, or your own research.

Live Tweeting - Some students find it useful to live tweet as they read or as they attend class. This often resembles a stream of consciousness set of notes, questions, ideas, or links. If you find this practice useful, it can count towards your participation grade, but if you find it distracting or otherwise uninteresting, you do not need to engage in this practice.

Engagement with Peers - As your peers contribute their thoughts, questions, and ideas to the course hashtag, you will want to engage with and respond to them so as to improve your own understanding and contribute to the online community of literary culture scholars. As you continue to curate your Twitter timeline, you may also find it useful to direct queries or thoughts towards authors, other scholars, or classmates by including their @username in your tweets. Consider retweeting material you find relevant to the course topic so you can share with the class.

Research Journal - For your Unit 1 assignment, you will be asked to keep an account of your research activities. Your participation in this project stage, as well as engagement with other students' research, is a part of the Unit 1 assignment but can help to build and foster your Twitter ethos.

ASSESSMENT

A level participation includes regular, enthusiastic participation in the course's digital space via high quality, varied, original content spread evenly over the semester. The student's contributions both to specific classroom/homework prompts and self-directed participation are valuable, relevant, and beneficial to the online community both within the course and beyond. (7-10 tweets a week).

B level participation includes regular participation with mostly high quality, varied content throughout the semester. The student's contributions are mostly valuable and relevant though a few may be off topic or in need of refinement to be useful to the online scholarly community. Occasional missing links, missing hashtags or other technical errors. (5-8 tweets a week).

C level participation includes regular average participation or highly irregular participation (0 tweets for 3 weeks, then 15 tweets in one week) but are largely retweets, required responses or engagement with other students instead of original engagement with the material. The student's contributions are sometimes on point and add valuable perspective, but more often adds little or confuses the issue. (3-6 tweets a week).

D level participation includes below average participation. Content is largely retweets or replies to other students, without engagement with the classroom/homework prompts or original engagement with the course material. Student contributes very little to the online community. (1-3 tweets a week).

Not part of assessment of Tweets: spelling, grammar, punctuation, complete sentences, clear argumentation, logical progression of thoughts. It is assumed that many of your tweets will be off the cuff and informal; therefore, the genre conventions of Twitter, as well as Twitter etiquette and appropriate conversational ethics are key. Consider Twitter a sandbox or informal space in which to brainstorm, experiment with ideas, ask questions, or take notes.

Resources



Twitter Terminology: If you are new to Twitter, see the official Twitter Glossary at <https://support.twitter.com/articles/166337>.

The New User FAQ is also a useful place to get started if you have never interacted with the platform before: <https://support.twitter.com/articles/13920#>



Georgia Tech's Communication Center is located in Clough Commons, Suite 447. It is an excellent resource for all students (undergraduate or graduate) who want help with a communication-related project, from their multimodal assignments for English 1101 and English 1102 to graduate school applications, from engineering and science reports to oral presentations, from storyboards for videos to poster designs, from grant proposals to job cover letters and resumes. The trained professional and peer tutors in the Communication Center help all students with their written, oral, visual, electronic, and nonverbal communication in every discipline. The staff includes professional tutors specially trained to assist non-native speakers. All services are free and confidential.

Website for Appointments: communicationcenter.gatech.edu/content/make-appointment

Phone: 404-385-3612

Visit: Clough Commons Suite 447

Expected Student Outcomes

The Twitter Participation assignment has a number of goals for the students. Among them, students will especially focus on:



Clear, concise electronic communication using a social media platform (Twitter) and the affordances it provides



Engagement in an online scholarly community both in terms of locating sources and contributing thoughts, insights, and even original research to the ongoing conversation



Careful development of an online persona, with close attention to audience-centered writing and multimodal communication



Engaged attention to course material, readings, activities, and research beyond the walls of the classroom