Center for Teaching and Learning

"Hitchhikers Guide" to Social Media

Social media can be used with great success to support learning, although one needs to be cautious about 1) privacy—especially with respect to content that may be FERPA protected, 2) online reputation (of both students and faculty) and 3) copyright and other legal liability. Below is a sampling of the many sites with notes as to potential benefits and risks. If you choose to use these tools, you will want to help your students understand the potential risks.

Facebook

Some faculty use Facebook to communicate with students since students know how to use it and are all on Facebook anyway. Others feel that students be taught to separate professional versus social interactions and prefer not to use Facebook.

Twitter

Twitter, a popular phone app, allows users to send short messages (140 characters) referred to as Tweets. You can create an account for your class (e.g. @SUFYS101SP16) or advisees and have them "follow" your tweets. Hashtags (#) allow you to aggregate tweets that relate to a specific topic. Tweets are public by default, so be careful with what you tweet!

SnapChat

This is an app for sharing photos and videos that can be annotated with text and drawings. The videos are available for a short period of time and then deleted. (Although the security of those deletions has been called into question.) The site is mostly used by people 13-23 years of age for fun/silly content, although there has been concern raised about "sexting."

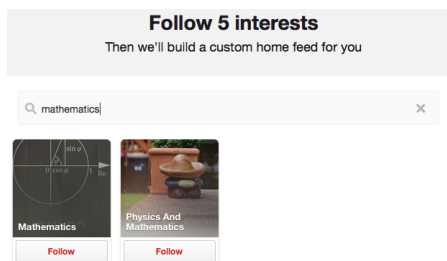### GoodReads (http://www.goodreads.com/)

This site for book lovers is like an online reading club where you can get reviews and recommendations on what to read or find out what friends are reading.

Instagram/Flickr

These are photosharing sites that might be used to support learning activities.

Pinterest

Pinterest is a sort of virtual bulletin board that can be used to share images, discussions, and media. Pinterest also creates custom feeds so that you can "follow" items of interest.

Instructors can use it to share teaching and learning resources and students can use it to collaborate.

See:
http://www.zdnet.com/article/pinterest-as-a-learning-tool-do-the-two-compute/

Learnist (http://learni.st/)
The Learnist motto is "share what you know." It's like Pinterest, but with a focus on education and knowledge sharing. Users create "boards" to present their ideas. Content is curated by internet users.

Tumblr
Like Pinterest, but uses a blogging format. (The site has had spam and security problems, as have other social media sites. Tumblr is reputed to contain a lot of adult content.)

Reddit (http://www.reddit.com/)
Reddit, founded by a pair of UVa roommates, is also a bulletin board where users can vote posts up or down.

Of interest for education is the IAMA ("I am a")/AMA ("ask me anything") forum where users can post questions of celebrities, politicians, and subject matter experts.

A popular "subreddit" is the University of Reddit (http://ureddit.com/) where users can take or offer classes on a variety of topics.

YikYak (yikyak.org)
This is an anonymous social media service that restricts posts to a 10-mile radius (although there is a new "peek" service that allows you to view posts at other institutions). You download the app to a phone. The site requires users to be 18 years of age.
Posts are voted up or down based on popularity.

Since posts are anonymous, concerns have been raised about cyberbullying and spurious/derogatory content. See this comment to the effect that anonymous content is "like bathroom stalls without the toilets," http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ryan-chapin-mach/why-your-college-campus-should-ban-yik-yak_b_5924352.html

Edmodo
Edmodo, a social media site designed for education, is a place where students and teachers can collaborate on assignments and hold discussions. While it is aimed at K-12, it may have applications in supporting college group work as well.