

# Leveraging Social Media for Student Engagement in the Virtual Classroom: A Case Study



## In the beginning...

### The Problem

- Engaging students fully through collaborative peer processes in a graduate-level course using an asynchronous virtual classroom.

### The Opportunity

- To engage students in learner-centered activities by creatively leveraging social media technologies.

### The Pedagogical Assumptions

- Learner, rather than teacher-centered activities lead to more positive outcomes.
- Students must be actively engaged in constructing their own learning.
- Learning is largely a social process wherein students learn by engaging in dialogue and discussion.
- The role of the instructor is that of educational catalyst.

## Lessons learned...

- The professor must consider him or herself to be a collaborator in this project.
- The course objectives need to be clear and relevant, ensuring that a wiki can actually achieve the desired outcomes.
- The professor should remain open to suggestions from students as they proceed.
- The wiki needs careful monitoring.
- There is a need to provide detailed, individual, private feedback to students regardless of whether you participate in editing the wiki (which you might have to do) or not.
- The wiki is but one of the modalities that can be leveraged: try blogging for peer review

## A theoretical basis...

### Constructivism

- Based on the concept that meaning is constructed by the individual learner rather than provided by a teacher (Parker & Chao, 2007).
- Enhances problem-solving capabilities by focusing on the learning environment (Vygotsky, 1986).

### Social Constructivism

- Learning is enhanced by activities that permit construction of new knowledge in an environment that enhances social interaction: students learn from the experiences of others.

### Peer Review

- As a teaching tool, peer review has been found to positively affect students' awareness of what & how they are learning, their attitudes toward their learning and their performance (Richer, 1992; Xiao & Lucking, 2008).

## Why a wiki...

- "..a web page that nobody would own and that anyone could edit.." (Evans, 2006).
- Wikis can be used for knowledge construction, development of critical thinking, and contextual application.
- Wikis invite (demand) peer review.
- A wiki creates a community of practice.

## The project...

- Focused on knowledge construction that allows students to learn through active collaboration.
- Students negotiated for topics and were required to create pages on the wiki.
- Students were invited to edit pages created by their peers.
- The students would leave a legacy for future students and practitioners on a public wiki.

