Chapter 1
The Digital Communication Journal: Building an Online COMMunity for Student Dialogue

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The digital communication journal assignment challenges students to write and respond to online posts that examine the connections between course concepts and their own academic, personal, and professional experiences.

RATIONALE

Many communication instructors are interested in making written assignments more relevant to their students’ lives. Rather than tweaking the prompts, however, instructors should tweak the format. The emergence of digital tools has given birth to a generation of students that interact with one another and with the world in very different ways. Instructors can no longer rely on traditional approaches to connect with the “digital generation.” Instead, instructors have the opportunity (and responsibility) to align assignments with their students’ digital communication behaviors.

Although course syllabi often include traditional writing assignments (e.g., the group project reflection paper), students often complain that these assignments are “abstract” or “uninteresting.” Unlike typical written assignments, the digital communication journal assignment offers students a structured opportunity to connect what they are learning in the course with their out-of-class experiences.
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