Chapter 4

Six Points for Six Posts: Evidence for Using Facebook to Facilitate Learning in the Mass Lecture

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The author suggests using out-of-class communication opportunities activities to enhance learning in a large lecture course. Specifically, students are encouraged to use Facebook as a “persistent space” for classroom instruction, and evidence is provided to demonstrate cognitive and affective learning benefits of this activity.

BACKGROUND

Hollywood portrayals of the college classroom often invoke images of the stately professor standing behind a lectern “engaging” students in a crowded, chalky classroom theatre. In mass lectures, communication between instructor and student is largely top-down, with the instructor serving as a “sage on the stage” and delivering lectures and commentary to students in a one-directional and closed format. On the one hand, the mass lecture is a remarkably efficient way to deliver basic course materials as it allows for very large groups of introductory students in one area of study a chance to have standardized contact with expert faculty. On the other hand, many educators feel that such a format minimizes—and potentially marginalizes—student participation in their own learning and, as result, their own learning (cf. Murphy, 1998). So, what do we do with the format?

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