Introduction

During my first two years as a teaching assistant (TA) at York University I have found using a Facebook group to be an invaluable tool with regards to teaching, organization and most importantly student engagement and participation. This seemingly informal social media platform provides many benefits as a means to communicate, share and organize ideas. In this resource, I will outline my experience and some of the benefits of adding a Facebook group to tutorial.

Web 2.0 / Community

The term Web 2.0 is used to refer to "social networking platforms and media for collaborative content development" (Bloom, 113). Facebook and YouTube are the two platforms I used in my tutorials, but many of the benefits could alternatively be applied to other types of social media. Often, electronic devices like cell phones and tablets have been seen as distractions to student learning, but they can also be used for "intellectual growth and socialization through skill-building, learning, and social networking" (ibid, 114).

So far, in the two years I have used a Facebook group, I have been able to find all students in my tutorial on the platform. Some individuals use it more than others, but this demonstrates that the majority of students already use and have access to Facebook as a form of "participatory culture" (ibid, 113). It is to our benefit as teachers to use this pre-existing community for educational purposes.

"Collaborative online social learning opportunities increase peer interaction and access to each other's ideas, experiences, and knowledge; it offers more opportunities for students to find and join niche communities where they can benefit from the opportunities for distributed cognitive apprenticeship; and it goes beyond providing access to traditional course materials and educational tools to create a participatory architecture for supporting communities of learners" (Jacobsen).

Creating a Facebook group establishes a smaller and stronger community as individuals can sometimes feel lost within a larger lecture of 100 or more students. Tutorials of 20-30 students have an opportunity to question and deconstruct course content while also getting to know their fellow classmates. This is in contrast to the traditional lecture style of learning by passively listening. Incorporating participatory and active learning in tutorials is crucial for the success of students as they benefit from co-constructing knowledge together. "Social learning is based on the premise that our understanding of content is socially constructed through conversations about that content and through grounded interactions, especially with others, around problems or actions" (Brown, 2).

Establishing a safe communal space within your tutorial early is valuable in terms of building trust and a sense of belonging. Tutorial activities and discussions allow for students to voice their opinions and talk to each other about the content, which strengthens and gives context to the information being learned. Students like the Facebook page because it is a space they have
helped create. As a group, we post content related to what we talk about in tutorials and students become part of that dialogue when they contribute to it.

**Messenger / Notifications**

Traditionally, students contact their tutorial leaders through Mymail, which is the official email system used by York University. Everyone, students and staff, are given a Mymail account. Since I have started using Facebook groups, I have noticed that some individuals have instead opted to use Facebook Messenger when asking me questions regarding the course or assignments. Perhaps they are more comfortable with using Messenger, or maybe it is more convenient for them. Either way, responding to students' messages through Messenger as well as through my Mymail account, means I am opening up another window for student communication.

Another benefit of Messenger is that there are automatic notifications through the application which inform individuals when there has been a response. Students will see once the tutorial leader has responded immediately and vice versa. These notifications are also a feature of the Facebook group, so once anyone has posted, everyone will receive a notification. Unless you turn notifications off, which is another option. These types of notifications are not available through Mymail or Moodle. It is more likely that students will see notifications through Messenger because it is usually installed onto their cellphones in contrast to having to log into Mymail.
Possible Tutorial Applications

1. Share Content

Post materials like video, audio or documents to share with the tutorial group for future tutorials or to dig deeper into recent topics. This creates several benefits. The tutorial leader can be more prepared and students can respond to what has been posted and view it at their convenience later. Students can also post their own examples, which we can then discuss during tutorial time.

I like this option for students because some do not feel comfortable with talking in front of a group initially but when you allow them to first engage online it is an alternative way for them to achieve participation marks as well as slowly gain confidence with speaking in front of a group. Co-constructing knowledge together creates a "participatory medium" which supports "multiple modes of learning" (Brown, 2). Not all students learn in the same ways and so opening up to what students want to discuss will benefit them and you as the facilitator.

As the tutorial leader, it is your responsibility to be prepared with lesson plans for tutorials. Facebook allows for you to post anytime during the week or weeks in advance, having videos or articles ready to share in tutorial. Students can comment and post on these as well. Sometimes students would post videos and as a class we would watch a portion of it and then have a discussion. This was effective and regularly sparked discussions regarding course content. It is valuable for the tutorial leader to hand over some of the organizational power to the students. Regardless of what is posted, there is something worth discussing. It is more about how the class can relate it back to the course. Give the student an opportunity to explain why they posted it and why it appealed to them.

"The integration of Facebook and blogs in teaching and learning should be implemented as supplementary material or for creative use. Supplementary materials in the form of offering additional materials which may broaden or deepen students' understanding by providing students with alternative perspectives on content previously delivered or enable further exploration of topics. Adoption for creative use enables students to become more engaged in learning through constructing knowledge rather than receiving it." (Ivala, 162)

2. Analyze A Song

Post a music video for a specific theme or topic from lecture and have your students post on the Facebook group in response. Analyze and discuss what they have posted. It does not matter if it is right or wrong. Your tutorial can still learn from a critical analysis.

In tutorial, I needed to cover topics like rhythm, form, scale and texture for listening portions of the exam. For example, I would post a song which uses 5/8 time and then have students post different songs in response which use that same 5/8 time signature. We would listen as a class and then count it out loud to develop these listening skills. Many times, students would be posting their responses in class, which meant they were looking for examples while we having a discussion about the previous song.

When I played their video, I would ask them to demonstrate the counting of 5/8 so they were the classroom expert of that song. It was really exciting to be in tutorial while the
notification sounds were going off and the students' hands were raising waiting to tell me that they had just posted something to the group. They wanted to share their knowledge with the tutorial and I was able to provide them this opportunity through the live interactive flexibility of a Facebook group. Many times, we could not get to every example, it was like the snowball effect, because once someone posted something, everyone else wanted to find an example to share too. "When educators blend the best features of in-class teaching with the best features of online learning, they promote active, self-directed, and flexible learning opportunities that are supported with appropriate digital technologies" (Jacobsen).

3. Record and Post Student Presentations

Tell students you will record their presentations and then post them to the Facebook group. This gives them a sense of necessity to prepare, as being recorded is more permanent than just performing. Because it will be posted to the Facebook group, everyone can see it and respond to it. There is also an option to post live to Facebook.

The majority of students looked forward to performing and I made sure to verbally ask for their permission to record and put their performances on Facebook. If someone was uncomfortable I reassured them they did not have to be recorded or they could review the video after and I could delete it if they did not want it posted. The Facebook group is private, meaning that individuals outside of our tutorial group cannot view the videos. As the moderator, I only grant permission to students in my tutorial to join the group, it is not open to everyone.

There were students who were nervous and made mistakes, but public performance is a learning process. I tried to draw the comparison of performing at open mics in downtown Toronto. When performing in public, you usually do not have control over who records you. For musicians, it is very common to be performing and have individuals take videos and photographs of you without your permission or knowledge. Artifacts like recordings and videos are valuable in creating portfolios and promotional materials. I do not want students to fear this, instead I hope they leave the class having had a positive experience performing publicly and knowing they could do it again.

The following was taken directly from York University's "Qs & As for Employees: Obtaining Consent" page, where it addresses video recording students in the classroom.

Q: I am an instructor who videotapes classroom activities as a part of my course curriculum. Do I need to obtain consent from the students?

A: If video recording, audio recording, filming or photographing students in a specific activity is required to facilitate learning and feedback and/or evaluation of the students’ attainment of a learning objective of the course, then you do not need to get consent from the students. However, it is recommended as a best practice that notice be provided in the course syllabus that such activity will occur.

4. Post and Share Chalkboard/Whiteboard Notes

Generate notes on the chalkboard or whiteboard in tutorial. Take a picture of them at the end of class and post them to the Facebook group. Students can use this image to remind them of what happened that day in tutorial, which will be a beneficial tool when studying for exams. It
can be used like a brainstorm of more general themes and ideas or for more specific details like definitions. It is like a snapshot of what happened that week in tutorial. There are three general ways you can create class notes:

1) the TA creates the notes
2) the TA and students both create the notes
3) the students create the notes

If the TA creates the notes, they have control of the content and photograph students will later study. Consequentially, the experience of actively engaging with the material will be lost and so the student is more likely passively receiving the information. Oppositely, if students are creating the notes independently then they will be actively engaging with the content but what if they are incorrect?

This is why some combination of the TA and students creating notes together is optimal. Participatory and active learning activities are perfect ways to engage students in their own learning, usually working in pairs or smaller teams to generate information. This gives students a chance to discuss their ideas at several levels before it gets put on the chalkboard. Allowing students to work collaboratively in conversation sized groups to generate a portion of the information is more realistic then expecting them to do everything independently at home. This can also be done as a discussion without notes, but if they are coming up with good summaries of course content, then why not provide them with something to study from for later?

5. Poll Your Students

Facebook has a tool which enables you to poll the members in the group. This means TAs can ask students about what they need help with or topics they would like to cover in future tutorials. This gives an opportunity for feedback from students so you can direct your tutorials towards what students identify as important for their understanding of the course contents. This also opens a dialogue with students so they feel like their input matters and can impact future tutorials.

There is some flexibility when creating a poll on Facebook. First, you will need a polling question. Once the question has been established there are two parameters, ‘allow members to add options’ or ‘allow people to choose multiple options’. The first parameter means you can have an open ended question where students can choose the responses and then vote on the responses they themselves have generated. If this option is not selected then all responses are chosen by the TA and students will have a fixed set of responses to the question they vote on. The second parameter gives students the opportunity to choose more than one of the proposed responses, so they can have either have one vote or many. What you decide will depend on the information and feedback you would like to obtain from your students.
Copyright

With regards to copyright, in Canada, there are no public performance rights necessary to stream videos in the classroom (Ryerson). However, you must ensure that the video was posted by the legal copyright holder (ibid). Illegally posted materials are not permitted, so be sure to confirm that information before posting and sharing the video on your Facebook group (ibid). You are also permitted to send links to Youtube videos for students to view privately (ibid).

If we refer to the Canadian Copyright Act, we can see that one of the exceptions under Fair Dealing is "Research, private study, etc." (Canada, Justice Laws Website). Here it states "fair dealing for the purpose of research, private study, education, parody or satire does not infringe copyright" (ibid). Embedded videos posted on a course website are also permitted, again, as long as the material has been posted legally (Zerkee). During your tutorial, be sure to explain the importance of copyright to your class and why it is not permitted to share illegally posted materials on the Facebook page.

There is a section on "fair dealing" from the York University's website which outlines what is permitted for teaching staff to use in the classroom. When in the classroom, as Teaching Assistants our "dealing" is primarily for the purpose of education or research (York University). After showing a video, I always opened up the classroom to questions and discussion from students afterwards. Sometimes these videos were used for the audio they contain, not always for their video content. YouTube is the easiest access to this content in comparison to Apple Music or Tidal, which require sign up and paid subscriptions. YouTube is accessible to anyone without financial commitment.

The second condition is that the "dealing" must be "fair" (ibid). It is permissible to reproduce a "short excerpt" of up to 10% of the work, or no more than a chapter, article, painting or score, which can then be copied and distributed in the classroom (ibid). Although this applies to photocopied materials, it is valuable to know in case you wanted to share a visual document with your tutorial.

The following was taken directly from York University's "Copyright and You. FAQ" page, where it addresses the use of YouTube in the classroom.

Q: Can I show YouTube videos or other works made available through the Internet to students in class?

A: Yes: section 30.04 of the Copyright Act permits an instructor to reproduce, communicate and perform in public for educational or training purposes of a copyright-protected work that is made available through the Internet. However, a number of conditions must be met:

1. the instructor must provide the source, e.g. through a URL, and the name of the author, performer, record label or production company, as applicable;
2. the copyright-protected work or the Internet site where it is posted is not protected by a digital lock that either restricts access to the work or restricts copying, communicating or performing in public the work;
3. there is no clearly visible notice posted on the Internet site or on the work prohibits the act sought to be done;
4. the educational institution or person acting under its authority did not know or should not have known that the work was made available through the Internet without the consent of the copyright holder.
Works Cited

Using Web 2.0 in the Classroom:


https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1035&context=jmle


https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237047494_Social_media_for_enhancing_student_engagement_The_use_of_Facebook_and_blogs_at_a_University_of_Technology
Copyright:


https://library.ryerson.ca/copyright/faculty/copyright-faqs/physical-classroom/#youtube

http://copyright.info.yorku.ca/faq/#classuse4

http://ipo.info.yorku.ca/privacy/qs-as-for-employees-obtaining-consent-for-photographs-video-and-audio-recordings/

http://copyright.info.yorku.ca/fair-dealing-guidelines-for-york-faculty-and-staff-111312/

https://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/academic-integrity/copyright/instructors/faqs