Facebook in Class?!

By Anna Hoffmann

Twitter, MySpace, Facebook, Blogging.
All are hotbeds of online activity for college students, and a number of professors in the Communication Studies Department are determined to keep up with this trend. Dr. Kalen Churcher and Dr. Doug Tewksbury both use social media in the classroom, and this nontraditional teaching method has given them very positive results.

According to a recent Pew Research Center study, 72% of online 18-29 year olds use social networking websites. This study also revealed that young adults favor laptops over desktop computers, are becoming more wirelessly mobile, and use Twitter, Facebook, and MySpace for microblogging, in which the user posts short status updates. This overwhelming use of social media among college students, and the growth of the medium as a whole, has attracted the attention of Churcher and Tewksbury, who have been experimenting with them as learning tools.

For Churcher, who uses Facebook in some of her courses, it is a chance for students to communicate with each other and share ideas and opinions in a meeting space outside of the classroom.

“Conversation is more natural on Facebook than something like Blackboard,” Churcher said. “The class can meet in a more relaxed place outside of the traditional classroom.”

Another important aspect of using social media is that it allows students who are not as verbal in the classroom to participate in discussions.

“Anything that will get (students) to participate and invest more time into the class, I'm willing to try,” Churcher continued.

So far, she has met with good results. Student surveys at the end of her Spring Media Literacy course were largely positive. “A fun, modern twist that adds to class dynamic,” one student wrote. Another said, “Facebook is a very popular medium and is therefore highly relevant to the class. Easy to post and access links.”

Churcher also taught the same course in the summer, but this time taught it entirely through Facebook and Blackboard, a popular course management system. In that case, results were similar.

While Churcher did have an entire course online, she believes that face-to-face learning is important for the development of social skills. Thus, most of her courses are a hybrid of traditional classes and online assignments and coursework. She continues to try to incorporate social media in new and interesting ways for her students, though.

Tewksbury uses wikis for most of his courses and views them as a user-friendly and reliable tool. A wiki is a Web site that allows for the easy creation and editing of interlinked web pages via a web browser. For Tewksbury, student ownership of course material...
and direction is very important.

"[Wikis] are flexible tools for working together," he said. "They create a central point for knowledge retrieval and for building and generating knowledge."

Tewksbury has used wikis for submitting discussion questions, creating collaborative exams, and for doing group projects, among other things. He additionally builds a "sandbox" function into his wikis where students can experiment and become comfortable with the technology without any consequences.

Kristen McAuley, a senior, is enrolled in Tewksbury’s Research Methods Course, which uses a wiki.

“At first I was a little unsure of what to make of it,” McAuley said. “Now I feel like it is a great tool to be able to connect with professors and peers. It’s nice to have all of the course information, documents, and assignments in once place.”

Tewksbury has received almost universally positive feedback on using wikis, and student feedback directly influences how wikis are used in future classes.

"Wikis are an ongoing experiment," Tewksbury said. “They are a brand new technology and we are still learning how to apply it to a classroom."

As Churcher and Tewksbury implement and study the use of social media in the classroom, they face a few challenges. The most important is finding the most effective way of getting all students in a given course comfortable with and using the technology. Although the learning curve is not as steep for social media as it is for Blackboard, it is still somewhat of a challenge.

Another concern is involves safety, privacy and legality issues, but both professors try to ensure the security of the content and discussions with the settings available to them in each social medium.

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Students Get Involved with Project Censored

By Ashley Shufelt

We hear about politics and news every day, but what about all of the news that never makes it into mainstream media?

Project Censored, according to its Web site, is a national organization whose mission is to “teach students and the public about the role of a free press in a free society – and to tell the news that didn’t make the news and why.”

Dr. Brian Murphy, associate professor of Communication Studies, works closely with the group and often discusses the organization in his classes.

“It is set up by journalists to track news stories that are underreported or not reported at all in national media,” Murphy said.

The Project Censored Web site notes that the organization has been active since 1976, the year it was founded by Carl Jensen of Sonoma State University. It works to maintain democracy and keep censorship out of mass media outlets “through a partnership of faculty, students, and the community.”

Murphy said that during the Fall semester, students and faculty research underreported news stories and send about 100 of those stories to a panel of 21 judges. Murphy is one of those judges. The judges then vote on the top 25 non-reported stories.

Like other judges who are professors at different schools, Murphy gets students involved with the project in his courses. Each student researches and presents a different story to the class, Murphy said.

“The class then votes on which stories are the top ten,” said Matt Riley, a student from Murphy's Spring 2010 International Communications class. “I thought the idea was great. There were a lot of really interesting articles.”

Every summer, Project Censored publishes the top 25 stories previously chosen by the judges in its annual book, Censored. The book features the most important under- and non-reported stories of the previous year.

In the most recent book, Censored 2011, two of the stories that were chosen by Murphy's International Communications class made it into the top 25. Dr. Murphy, and the names of all the students in the class are acknowledged in the book.

Murphy plans to incorporate Project Censored into his future classes, as well. For the Spring 2011 semester, students who enroll in CMS 335: Investigating and Reporting Media will have the opportunity to participate in Project Censored and contribute to the mission of the organization.
Dr. Mark Barner, associate professor of Communication Studies and chairperson of the department, has announced two new adjunct professors and a new course for spring 2011. The redesigned TV Film and Writing (CMS 221) will be taught by Kenneth James, a new instructor for the department. The course will allow students to format and write scripts for programming such as comedy/drama, documentary/reality and promos. It will also cover how to write pre-production documents, like show treatment and show bibles. James believes it is important for students to gain “a greatly enhanced understanding of how to structure a film narrative.”

He also said the course will explore the difference between a strong and weak dialogue, how to build an emotionally believable character and how to think about the dramatic structure of a scene.

The prerequisite required for the course is Media Writing (CMS 120).

Brian Rock, NU Multi-Media Production Specialist, will teach Advanced Video Production (CMS 445).

Advanced Video Production is a project-based course and offers a film making aspect much different than Video Lab and Production (CMS 345).

The course is also more in-depth in various types of production, such as message design, script writing and video production.

There are four main projects required for the course in short video format: the stock project, the fast minute - slow minute, an animation, and a demo-reel of students’ work for the final.

Students will also learn how to make DVDs and upload videos to YouTube. Assignments will be produced for non-profit organizations and submission to various video festivals.

Rock expressed excitement for the redesigned course and said it is a “hands-on experience” that will “stretch the mind.”

He also explained that the demo-reel is important to show employers who are looking for experienced employees who are comfortable with editing software like FinalCut Pro.

The prerequisite for Advanced Video Production is Video Lab and Production I (CMS 345).

Media Law (CMS 360) will be taught by Dr. Kalen Churcher, assistant professor of Communication Studies. Churcher also teaches other communication courses including Stereotyping in the Media, Mass Media and Culture and Media Theory.

Students who successfully complete Media Law will gain a basic understanding of communications and mass media law. The course will focus on a variety of contemporary issues in a case law format.

Topics to be covered include anything from libel to obscenity to privacy. The course also focuses on communications and media through the spoken word, advertising, broadcasting, print journalism, the internet, etc.

“Until now the department did not offer a Mass Communications or Mass Media Law course,” Churcher said. “That means that unless professors talked about media-related legal issues in another class, and some did, students would leave NU without having a basic understanding of what they legally could and couldn’t do in their chosen professions.”

Media Law is not yet mandatory in order to graduate, but that could change in the next year. There are no prerequisites, but it is an upper-level course. Non-majors are also encouraged.
Various production tools and facilities are available for student use through the Communication Studies department. Most equipment is available to all students; however, class assignments take priority over personal use. Check for individual loan periods and requirements for each piece of equipment and openings for facilities.

**Digital Audio Recorders (2)  
*Tascam DR-07*

Can be used to record on-location interviews for research or production purposes. Users need to supply their own headphones.

See Dr. Tewksbury for more information.

**HD Video Camcorder Kits (5)  
*Canon Vixia HF100*

Can be used to record high definition video for editing or uploading to the web. Each kit includes camera, batteries, microphones, headphones, and tripod. Users need to supply their own SDHC Class 6 memory card. The kits are available through the Information Technology help desk, first floor St. Vincent Hall. They are typically reserved for those students currently enrolled in CMS 345/445 Video Production. The IT department also has a number of these cameras available for check out to all students.

**Digital Cameras (3)  
*Kodak Z915*

Can be used to record 10 megapixel still images for use in print and online publications and presentations. The cameras are available through the Information Technology help desk, first floor St. Vincent Hall. They are typically reserved for those students currently enrolled in CMS 340/440 Photography.

**Lighting Kits**

The CMS department has several multi-instrument light kits available for student use in both photography and videography. These kits include either two or three lights, tripods, and power cords.

See Dr. Barner for more information.
TV Studio, Dunleavy 121

A complete high definition three-camera production studio with live digital effects/switching capability. Includes various sets, green-screen, and audio recording booth. The facility is typically reserved for students currently enrolled in CMS 345/445 or by special arrangement.

See Brian Rock, Media Production Specialist in Dunleavy #130B for more information.

Computer Labs

Dunleavy 217, Mac Lab for Video/Audio Editing

Contains 6 24-inch iMac computers with audio mixers and microphones for sound recording. Software includes Final Cut Pro suite. This lab is typically reserved for students currently enrolled in CMS 345/445 Video Production or by special arrangement.

See Dr. Barner for more information.

Dunleavy 217, Mac Lab

Contains 22 20-inch iMac computers. Software includes the Adobe CS3 Suite (Photoshop & Dreamweaver), iMovie, Garageband, etc. This lab is reserved some of the time for classes but also has open lab hours when all students have access by swiping in with their ID cards.

DUN #122 Lab Hours for Fall, 2010

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<td><strong>Sunday</strong></td>
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Below: Cole Bielecki concentrates on the video camera as he and his classmates try their talents in the NU TV studio.

Below: Chris Amato learns it takes practice to find the right speed on the teleprompter.

Above: Alexandra Louisos smiles as she takes direction from the control room.

Above: Jessica Haight concentrates on getting the right shot for the student newscast.
Freshmen Communication Studies students had an opportunity to spend some time in Niagara University’s television studio as part of their freshman experience course. Brian Rock, who manages the studio, walked the freshmen through the production of two newscasts. The students handled everything from floor management, to videography, to audio and anchoring.

"This was a great opportunity for the students," said Dr. Kalen Churcher, assistant professor of Communication Studies and course instructor. "Sometimes students don’t get to really use some of this equipment until they're upperclassmen. This allows them to explore broadcasting and get some hands-on practice within a few weeks of becoming NU students.

Photos by Anna Hoffmann

Above: Chelsea Correnti and Taylor Transue wait for their cue before beginning their turns as anchors.
Left: Elizabeth Caspari and Brandon Allen serve as anchors for "News Minute Niagara" during a recent hands-on visit to the NU TV studio.
Niagara University’s freshman seminar course, known as NUS, is designed to help new students acclimate to their college environment. This year, things have been done differently, though. Wherever possible, freshmen have been split up by major and an upperclassman from that major helps the instructor.

The First Year Niagara course allows all freshmen to meet classmates and make an easier transition to college. Being in a class with other first year students also helps freshmen network and make long-term friendships as well. They are also able to discover extracurricular activities on campus and see why it is important to be involved.

Kristen McAuley, WNIA production manager and a senior Communication Studies major, is an NUS teaching assistant. McAuley enjoys creativity and is excited to be in a media department because of the classes she has been able to take, including photography, video production, media research, international communications and various writing courses.

McAuley one day hopes to be a media studies professor. She is currently in the process of applying to graduate schools.

"By teaching I would be able to show more people how the media is a part of our lives and that we need to realize this in order to make informed decisions," McAuley said. "It is important in this day and age to be media literate."

This fall, she has been assisting Dr. Kalen Churcher, assistant professor of Communication Studies, with her NUS class.

"Kristen has been an absolute asset to our class," Churcher said. "She has helped teach, answer questions, and provide guidance to the freshmen that only another student can provide."

The NUS class enables students to explore different concentrations and learn about possible internship opportunities. The variety of classes that Niagara offers students allows them to test different areas in order to discover their interests.

"NUS is a safe environment where students can ask things that they might not be comfortable asking elsewhere," McAuley said. "(The students) can also learn where important offices are and who to talk to when certain problems arise."

Joe Cuda, Dean of Student Affairs, is the co-supervisor of all First Year Niagara classes and in charge of overseeing housing, RAs, counseling, health services and CARE. He describes the 25-year-old NUS program as a course that exposes new students to many things that will help them be successful.

Although McAuley is the only student assistant for the Communication Studies NUS class, two other majors help in other classes. Jeannine Alsous, a sophomore, works with Cuda, and junior Karin Freyer assists Jacob Long.

Students with a minimum GPA of 3.0 and who are not on academic probation are eligible to become an NUS teaching assistant. With one letter of recommendation from any faculty member, and attendance at a two-hour training program, NUS student assistants earn $100 for their work.
The school year is usually a very hectic time for students between classes, sports, and maybe even work. This could help explain why many students are turning toward summer internships instead of trying to fit them into the fall or spring semesters.

“Students don’t have to deal with other courses in the summer, so scheduling internship hours is often easier then than during a semester” said Communications Studies Associate Professor Dr. Mark Barner. “Also, many students are home for the summer so they may have more access to transportation.

“They may also have more contacts in media organizations near their home,” he continued.

Senior Sarah Kim did her internship this past summer in Denver, Colo., working for FOX and CW.

“I worked for the Everyday Show on CW and I worked for the morning news and night news shows for both CW and FOX,” Kim said. She participated in everyday duties, including writing stories, helping with guests, going to live shots featuring reporters, photography, and set up.

Kim said she chose the summer to complete her internship so that she could focus more on “school things” during the school year. She also liked that her internship was in her hometown.

“...I still had my summer vacation while interning,” she said.

Although Kim found an internship close to home, others were experiencing completely new worlds. Known as the city that never sleeps, New York City offers so many multimedia opportunities from ABC and MTV studios, to journalism, art, photography, and film.

Rianne Farrugia, also a senior Communication Studies major, found herself taking full advantage of all NYC has to offer by interning at WCBS-TV. Two other CMS majors, Anna Hoffmann and Lauren Merrick, also interned at the same station.

A summer internship worked best for Farrugia, as well.

“Being a student athlete, it was the best time for me to participate in a program as intensive as the NYC internship.” Farrugia said.

Her internship duties included blogging, coming up with story ideas, and watching B-roll.

Students don’t have to travel far from campus for their summer internships, though. There are many opportunities right here in the Buffalo/ Niagara region.

Senior Nicholas Sabato found an internship with the Programming and Production department at WKBW-TV in Buffalo.

“Over my time there I observed how commercials and various spots are edited,” Sabato said. “Also, I went on several live shoots with John Summers for AM Buffalo.

“I chose to do (the internship) over the summer because I needed to take an extra course to graduate in May, and this was easier than adding it on top of my course load during the fall or spring semesters.”

Even though summer internships are convenient, sometimes students find that they would have learned more or experienced more during the school year.
“I interned in the sports department at WIVB-TV in Buffalo the previous summer, and I know that I would have been more active had I done it during the school year,” Sabato explained. “They were actually quite up front in saying that, too.”

For more information on summer internships, check out the new resource page for internship information on the Communication Studies Department home page under Internships & Co-ops.

Behind the Scenes at the Little League World Series

By Emily Kaufman

Internships are sometimes viewed by some with apprehension.
Interns often work long hours without pay and are immediately thrown into the action. Employers may rely heavily on interns and place a lot of responsibility on them.

But although they are demanding, internships provide a beneficial experience, especially when a student is passionate about the field they are exploring.

Current NU sophomore and Communication Studies major, Shawn Lynch, worked closely this summer with Little League International, an organization he has known and admired all of his life. The company is a non-profit organization that promotes little league baseball and softball and is responsible for producing the Little League World Series.

Lynch participated in an intensive two-week long internship at the Little League World Series in Williamsport, Pa. He shadowed the head of Public Relations and the Director of the Communications Department for six to eight hours a day.

Acting as an assistant to these individuals, Lynch’s main duty was to coordinate shoots with players that aired between programs on ESPN.

“I found the players that were to be filmed and brought them to the location of the shoot,” Lynch said.
Not only did Lynch become familiar with conduct for interacting with players and co-workers, he also gained experience in production. He watched as 40 minutes of material was shot for a 2 minute spot.

“I thought it was amazing how much was shot for how little was used,” he said.
Much to Lynch’s pleasure, his internship allowed him to meet several well-known baseball players including Nomar Garciaparra, Bobby Valentine, and Dave Winfield. His duties included coordinating conference calls with pro players who were interested in — and wanted to talk to — the little league players.
He also met ESPN sportscaster, Brent Musburger, and play-by-play announcer, Gary Thorne.
For Lynch, these encounters were not only for pleasure. He hopes one day to be the head producer for ESPN. His experience at the Little League World Series helped him become familiar with ESPN and its production and allowed him to make valuable connections with current staff at the network.

Although Lynch has respected and admired ESPN for years, his internship showed him the intensity involved in broadcasting and production.

“I realized how much work was put in and how much goes on behind the scenes at the Little League World Series that no one would ever think about,” he said.

Internship

Brian Rock, NU’s Multimedia Production Specialist is looking for a Spring 2011 intern
If you’re interested, please see one of the Communication Studies professors

A Note to Students
Registration begins for seniors on Nov. 8
CMS professors have posted advising sign-up sheets on their office doors.
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Simone Hughes not only loves teaching advertising and public relations, she lives it.

Aside from the classes that Hughes has been teaching as an Adjunct Professor at Niagara University for the past 6 years, she also has a day job in Canada. Hughes is the Chief Marketing Officer and National Director of Business Development for Canada’s largest business law firm, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP. For four years, she managed a staff of more than 30 people across the country, integrating the marketing, public relations and business development functions of the company.

Hughes received her BA in Communication Studies, as well as her MBA from Concordia University in Montreal. She has also taken courses at Harvard University.

Hughes has a reputable background in the marketing industry. Her vast, previous experience includes leading the marketing and public relations functions for Towers Watson, as well as leading the client relationship management functions for Canadian Tire Bank. This responsibility also involved market research for the companies.

“Advertising is only one possible option amongst many to achieve client objectives,” Hughes said of her experiences. “The advertiser of today needs to be understanding of her client’s business and be committed to help him achieve his goals through being relevant, memorable and achieving client objectives. By doing that, you will also be successful.”

Dr. Mark Barner, associate professor and chair of Niagara University’s Communication Studies Department, praised Hughes’ expertise.

“Simone has many years experience working for some of the top marketing and public relations agencies in Canada,” Barner said. “She is able to bring that experience into the classroom and offer students a real-world view of how these industries operate. She brings knowledge and experiences that you just can’t get from a book.

“Another great benefit of having Simone teach here at NU is that because she is from outside the US culture, she is able to take an objective view of how the US media works. She is able to point out things that we tend to take for granted.”

Students benefit from Hughes’ no-nonsense approach to teaching, which mirrors how things work in the real business world.

“Ms. Hughes has extraordinary experience in advertising and PR,” said Dr. Brian Murphy, associate professor of Communication Studies. “I can say with confidence that she is one of the best in the business. We are lucky to have her. She has always brought rigor, intensity and thoroughness to the classroom.”

Hughes enjoys teaching at NU because of the culture and values of the university. She also believes that with small class size, she is more able to deliver her own experience into the minds of her students. She can also stress what she believes to be the most important aspects of public relations and advertising.

“It’s all about the client needs and that you need to balance with profitability and objectives,” she said. “It’s about using communication techniques to solve the client’s problem for the long run.”

"She brings knowledge and experiences that you just can't get from a book."

- Dr. Mark Barner, Communication Studies Chair