# **Engaging students using Twitter as a teaching tool, Dr Adam Brown**

[Start transcript]

**[Adam]**

I’m going to talk about my use of Twitter[[1]](#footnote-1). I’m from Media Studies and a lot of people who are in this room, who are not on Twitter, hate Twitter. And those people who hate Twitter, have probably never used it before, which is the paradox of social media. I’m not here to try and convince you absolutely you must be in it, but try and stay away from the idea that if you’re not in Media Studies, well, this is just a 'Media Studies thing'. Because I find that a lot; there’s a very defensive kind of reaction whenever I speak about social media.

I use a lot of different media. And I was a sessional for some years. I didn’t actually use it much before 15 to 16 months ago. I was never on Twitter, never made digitally edited video, and now I am seen, ironically, as somewhat of an expert in the area. But I hope you don’t think that. Because you *cannot* be an expert in social media—Twitter, Facebook, will die, possibly in three to four years; we don’t know what will be next. But this is what people are engaging with. And it’s not just Media Studies’ students. So there are opportunities I think. And I’ll just show you what I use it for.

So, this is just this year. You can see I’ve been pretty active. And you wouldn’t have to be this active, and some of those are re-Tweets. But 900 plus Tweets, almost got to 1000, slightly disappointed, but I didn’t. But, this is just the way I use to engage; I use the Media Studies 2.0 approach, which again sounds like something that is just about media studies. And usually I wouldn’t talk about it if it was just relevant to the discipline; I wouldn’t talk to everyone here about it. But engaging people in public realm domains is partly a risky business, but it’s immensely empowering for students. I actually get students to build the unit with me. This creates, what I call a databank of resources, links, videos, ideas, questions, answers. And you engage in conversation—Tweets and replies. Twitter did this fantastic thing earlier this year, where it separated those out. So you can see—I haven’t even logged in, this is public, conversations I have with students, re-Tweeting their ideas.

As I said, I don’t want to intimidate people, I could have focussed on my use of YouTube, and that may well have that effect. And sessionals do not get paid enough to spend as much time as I do making videos that are engaging enough to get people to sit through 10 minutes of YouTube. It’s a hard business—10 minute YouTube video is a hard sell. We know that readings are a hard sell; a 140-character Tweet is a hard sell to read on a weekly basis. It’s true; I’m not actually being too disparaging about that, I’m just stating the fact.

Twitter, I found, is an immensely useful thing. You can see what I’m doing here. I’m actually Tweeting; one of my students started a blog, and he’s continuing from the unit. All of this stuff has actually happened after the unit has finished. So again, not something you [sessional staff] get paid for, not something you necessarily want to do. But you can see the conversations, the engagement and the impact the unit has. This is all probably the last week of trimester. So, I’ve got what I call my ‘Me Lectures’ here, post the odd funny video of course. By the way, I have seen dodgy stuff happen on social media, so you need to be strategic, you need to be wise about it. But you can see here, a lot of this stuff is not by me. I had one of my students, Maryanne, there—she was more engaged, she was doing the unit better than I was. I didn’t have time to Tweet as much as she was. I just re-Tweeted what she did.

And also, linking basically very easily from a blog, to Twitter, to GooglePlus. And that might be way too much for what you want to do. But just to think, are there any social media applications I can use in my teaching?

1. Refer to Adam Brown’s teaching [Twitter account](https://twitter.com/digitalzones), which he was demonstrating live on 15 October 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)