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Report on the Association for Education of Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) Annual Conference
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By Dani Madrid-Morales, Department of Media and Communication[1]

This report describes and discusses some of the teaching experiences and innovations that were presented during the four-day annual conference of the Association for Education of Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC). The focus on this report will be on how technology can be used to enhance students' learning process and how it can also be used to improve the way certain subjects and topics are currently being taught. Most of the innovations and teaching experiences presented here might only be suitable to educators in the fields of journalism, media studies and mass communication, but others can be applicable to other disciplines in the social sciences.

I will structure this report around three parts. First, I will report on technological innovations in the classroom, particularly the incorporation of mobile devices. Second, I will present some examples of pedagogical changes taking place, such as the increasing gamification of classrooms and the sophistication of peer reviewing processes. Finally, I will present some examples of assignments that I found innovative and easily replicable at City University of Hong Kong.

Innovative uses of technology

There were plenty of interesting examples of how new technologies could be used to enhance the learning experience. These innovations go from the way courses are managed to how assignments are designed, delivered and graded. An overarching trend is the incorporation of mobile devices (phones and tablets) in the classroom, not only in order to engage students, most of which are heavy users of mobile phones, but also to improve their digital literacy skills, which sometimes are assumed to be higher than they are in reality.

#New communication technologies for course organization and classroom interactions
While Canvas is a powerful platform to organize course content, some educators are exploring other platforms, particularly social media, that can help increase students' following of course instructions. These educators respond to a general trend towards incorporating social media in classrooms.

▪ **Using Facebook as a course management tool**
Given the prevalent use of Facebook by students, outside and inside the classroom, some instructors have begun using closed Facebook groups to manage entire courses. Facebook allows for easy sharing of multimedia files; it allows private and group conversations, and also makes provision of feedback (both textual, sound and visual) relatively easy. Some of the problems of using Facebook as a course management tool include the possibility of some students

not having a Facebook account or students whose access to the platform might be restricted by their parents.

- **Using #slack as a course management tool**
  #slack is widely used communication platform and messaging system in the publishing, IT and media industries. #slack provides a very intuitive and easy to use interface that not only allows teachers to provide information about the course to students, but it also facilitates file exchanges and communication between students and groups. It appears to be particularly useful for capstone projects and classes that involve a lot of student group activities. One of the advantage of using #slack is that students get acquainted with a tool that is increasingly being used in the workplace. At the same time, it allows an easy integration with other social media platforms as well as file sharing services.

  For a more detailed explanation on the use of #slack in the classroom, readers can refer to Zach Whalen's (University of Mary Washington) detailed report here or this teaching note prepared by Catherine M. Staub at Drake University.

#Digital video editing with Videolicious
It is increasingly common for educators to include some form of video assignment in social sciences classes. Because mobile video technologies have become so prevalent, it is fairly easy for students to use their devices to record good quality footage. A problem that often arises, however, is how to edit footage. Videolicious is a very easy to use mobile and desktop app that makes the process extremely simple. The advantage of using Videolicious is that students can focus on the content of their productions without having to have a very profound knowledge of editing software. Videolicious comes with a free version and a professional version. The professional version is available for free to educators.

Here is a link to a very detailed presentation by Lee Hood from Loyola University on how to use Videolicious—and by extension any other form of mobile video—in any social sciences class.

Screen capture of video produced with Videolicious (click to reproduce)

#Mobile apps for teaching, advising and research
There are thousands of apps that can be helpful to educators. Some of the innovative apps that I personally found interesting are listed and briefly described below:

- **Medium**: one of the most popular news apps in the tech and design sectors these days. Medium allows individuals to report their own stories in an easy and engaging way. It makes online storytelling very simple and engaging.
- **Instagram Stories**: although Instagram is a very popular app, particularly among millennials, not so many are familiar with the "Stories" functionality, which allows users to compile up to ten images or videos to tell/report a story in a fun an engaging way. Again, a very simple way of engaging in digital/mobile storytelling.
- **Zoom**: it is an app that brings together functionalities from many different videoconferencing apps, such as Skype, FaceTime and Adobe. Not only is Zoom free, but it is so simple to use that is being currently being used by some educators to record classes for students to view them at home. Also, some are using Zoom to have videochats with students instead of physical meetings, making it easier to advise students.
- **Cogi**: is a recording tool that allows capturing, reviewing and sharing of voice memos, interviews, lectures and meetings. It has transcription enable services and some other functionalities that can also be used in ethnography-based courses and other forms of fieldwork.

Pedagogical innovations

In many of the sessions that I attended at this year's AEJMC Conference, two teaching trends appeared to be increasingly popular among educators: gamification and peer reviewing. While these two have been used in classrooms all around the world for decades, the advent of new technologies, particularly digital technologies, have changed the way they are incorporated in courses. Also, as more research goes into the rationale behind these teaching practices, more recommendations on best practices can be made. In here I briefly discuss these two trends and report on some of these best practices.

Case Study #1: Gamification
The use of games as a teaching and learning device might not be innovative on its own, but if we consider how technology can aide this process, then more innovative ways of designing games can be incorporated. One such example is the "Social Scavenger Hunt," designed by two professors at City University of New York's Graduate School of Journalism. It is an experimental learning exercise to teach students how to use different types of social media platforms in an enjoyable way. A very detailed guide on how to design a Scavenger Hunt in the classroom can be found in this guide.

Poster presentation of the Social Scavenger Hunt (credit, Jeremy Caplan @jeremycaplan)

Case Study #2: Experiences with peer reviewing

Probably many educators at the university level have attempted to incorporate peer reviewing and peer editing in their classes. Reactions of students to peer reviewing tend not to be overly enthusiastic. Jessica Holt at the University of Georgia presented some empirically based research on how to improve the effectiveness of peer reviewing exercises. Some of her recommendations include:

- Using grade incentives to increase students' self-assigned value to peer reviewing.
- Openly address grade anxiety that some students report when having to assess the work of their peers.
- Substitute the concept of "peer-reviewing" for "coaching," so that students perceive this as a co-learning experience rather than a grading exercise.
- Incorporate collaborative tools such as Google Documents in all peer reviewing and peer editing, in order to track changes in students' works.

Finally, I would like to report on some sample assignments that, in a way or another, seemed innovative and engaging. Whenever possible, I include links to online resources provided by the educators who presented them.

Example #1: Storytelling techniques – a holistic assignment
This exercise involves designing a video/multimedia piece that explains the history of a historical building in a city or town. To do so, students are required to access archival material (usually photographs), interview people who are somehow related to the building and shoot contemporary footage about the building. This exercise has students engage with archival research, it involves them with the community and it teaches them some interesting storytelling techniques. Joe Gosen, from Western Washington University has put together a guide on how to go about an exercise like this.

Example #2: Multimedia reporting
Anthony Adornato at Ithaca College has students work on mobile reporting (newsgathering, distribution and audience engagement) with platforms that are not very commonly used in journalism courses, such as Snapchat. Students partner with news organizations which are not very proficient in these new forms of reporting and work together with students in covering large events such as elections or political campaigns.

Example #3: Facebook Live
One problem many journalism students face when they land their first job is their minimal experience with live crosses. To solve this problem, Facebook Live, YouTube Live and, more recently Snapchat and Instagram, provide great opportunities for students to learn how to report in real time. Facebook Live reporting assignments typically involve groups of 3 to 5 students who attend an event and take turns in front and behind the camera. For more ideas and resources about how to incorporate video in the classroom, particularly live video exercises (probably more useful to students of journalism and media studies), Deb Wenger has put together a list of great resources here.

Example #4: Incorporating twitter in the classroom
While the number of instructors that use Twitter in the classroom has been increasing in recent years, some of the existing practices fail to engage students. Some assignments that have proved to work with media and journalism students include:
- Tweet the book: have students tweet the name of books of movies related to class, and ask questions to the authors/creators.
- Connect with authors and guess speakers: have students live report a conference by a guest speaker on twitter, and use twitter to collect questions from students.
- Twitter list of credible sources: learn how to build a list of credible sources and engage with the individuals through social media.
- Twitter question of the week: have students pose questions related to the content of the course every week and select the best question for extra credit.

Using Twitter and other social media in class were reported to increase students' interest in lectures, reduce the time they spend using their phones for non-educational purposes, and create a sense of online community among peers.