

**“Here I am Posting Daily and Enjoying It!”:  
Twitter days of the week challenge in a graduate level online course**

Ömer Arslan  
Florida State University, USA  
[oa18h@fsu.edu](mailto:oa18h@fsu.edu)

Vanessa Dennen  
Florida State University, USA  
[vdennen@fsu.edu](mailto:vdennen@fsu.edu)

Ji Yae Bong  
Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec  
[jiyae.bong@concordia.ca](mailto:jiyae.bong@concordia.ca)

**Abstract:** This paper reports the design, development, and implementation of a microchallenge in a graduate level online course. The purpose of the microchallenge was to provide students with a structured, but fun activity that would familiarize them with Twitter, one of the optional tools being used in the class. The design process involved conceptualizing the week-long challenge with daily tasks aligned with course objectives. Technological tasks involved coordinating classroom based online communication tools to facilitate the challenge. The results demonstrate that students generally enjoyed the challenge which fostered active and meaningful knowledge sharing, networking, community development, and learning practices. Implications for social media-based course activity design were discussed.

## **Introduction**

Learning can be supported through interactions on social media. One of the popular social media tools that afford such interactions is Twitter. Research on integrating social media into formal learning contexts is prevalent with mixed results (Dennen et al., 2020; Manca, 2020; Martin et al., 2020; Tang & Hew, 2017). For example, Hawkins (2015) designed and implemented Twitter based course activities and found that students engaged in meaningful collaboration and community development practices. Erhel et al. (2022) found that following a pedagogical Twitter increased student motivation and interest in the course. Studies also address tensions (Dennen & Burner, 2017; West, 2017) which include student privacy concerns (Hawkins, 2015), student-instructor resistance (Manca & Ranieri, 2016; West, 2017), and the context collapse that occurs when we mix social and academic worlds (Lackovic et al., 2017).

These tensions are magnified when students experience mandatory social media use in their courses, with no ability to opt out. Alternately, instructors can make use optional, but this approach can lead to low levels of use or non-use. Motivating students to complete optional activities is challenging, and even more so in an interdependent context like social media use.

However, much like microlearning (i.e., small, independent learning experiences) can be used to facilitate learning, microchallenges in the form of brief activities can be used to provide extrinsic motivation to complete tasks associated with learning but not with a grade. In this study, we examine how graduate students enrolled in an online course responded to a microchallenge called the “Twitter days-of-the-week challenge.” The research questions guiding this study are:

1. How did students engage in the microchallenge?
2. How did students perceive the microchallenge?

### **Methods**

This study focuses on a graduate level online course consisting of an instructor, teaching assistant, and 24 students. This course had previously implemented a digital badge system in which students were awarded badges for completing microchallenges (Arslan et al., 2022). All the microchallenges in this system were optional and designed to support learning.

The researchers’ Institutional Review Board approved this study, with data collection consisting of design notes and documents, course artifacts, tweet and badge counts, and student blog posts. Data analysis focused on challenge participation and tweet levels (Research Question 1) and exploring student perceptions (Research Question 2).

### *Challenge Design Process*

The core design team for this challenge consisted of a lead course instructor, a designer, and a teaching assistant. The design process involved conceptualizing the microchallenge and implementing it using classroom-based communication tools. Twitter was introduced in Week 1 of the course. Students were not required to use Twitter, those who were interested in doing so were asked to share Twitter usernames and use a shared course hashtag.

The lead instructor designed the microchallenge to be loosely aligned with course objectives, engaging students in relevant activities and acts of sharing. For instance, students explore factors for creating and sustaining online communities. With #ShoutoutSaturday challenge (see Table 1), students were encouraged to acknowledge their peers’ contributions (e.g., interesting blog posts) as an effort to develop sustainability of this online community. The microchallenge followed the Twitter convention of having activities named by days, and each day students were provided with directions (see Twitter Days of the Week Challenge Directions below). These directions guided students to post a tweet on a specific topic (see Table 1). They were expected to include the class hashtag and the day's hashtag (e.g., #ShoutoutSaturday) to facilitate aggregation.

### *Twitter Days of the Week Challenge Directions* *[The Ultimate Challenge / Challenge #1]*

What to tweet? Always a dilemma, right? But people have been coming up with topics or trends for each day of the week since the beginning of Twitter. Here's a Twitter challenge that will keep you posting throughout the week.

## TCC 2023 Conference Papers

Participate as much or as little as you like. There's a badge in it (along with one of your weekly blog posts and learning a new tech skill) for folks who do it all.

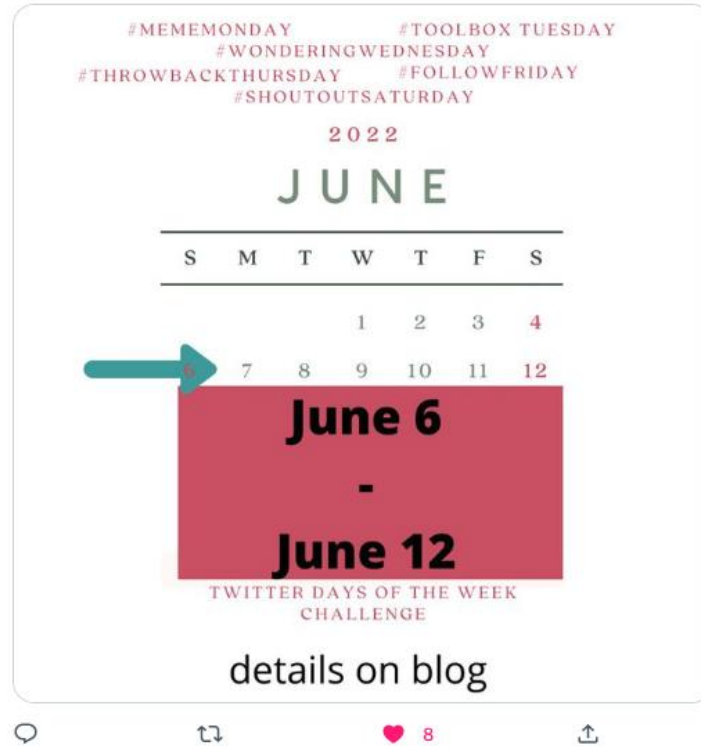
*Here's what to do:*

Each day has a theme/topic described below. Post to Twitter using the class hashtag and the day's hashtag.

**Table 1.** Twitter days of the week challenge: Dates, hashtags, and daily challenges

Challenge dates	Challenge hashtags	Challenges
June 6, 2022	#MemeMonday	Share a meme related to online life, make us laugh
June 7, 2022	#ToolboxTuesday	Share one of your favorite online tools
June 8, 2022	#WonderingWednesday	Ask a question about online tools, online life, online topics, and hopefully get answers
June 9, 2022	#TBT or #ThrowbackThursday	Post a technology memory or throwback, preferably with a visual (e.g., #TBT to my computer in elementary school)
June 10, 2022	#FollowFriday	Recommend an account for us to follow
June 11, 2022	#ShoutoutSaturday	Give a shoutout to a classmate who's done good, written a cool blog post, etc.
June 12, 2022	#SumItUpSunday (for those earning the badge)	Gather your six posts and embed them in a blog post where you write about the challenge

The microchallenges were issued in Week 5 (of a 12-week online course). As indicated in Table 1, Twitter days of the week challenge started on Monday, June 6, 2022 and ended on Sunday, June 12, 2022. This challenge was issued in multiple ways: via Canvas, the course blog, and Twitter (see Figure 1 for an example). Specific details (see Twitter Days of the Week Challenge Directions above) were posted to the course blog, which served as a central information hub for the class.



**Figure 1.** The challenge tweet posted by the lead instructor

In this study, we utilized various methods to track tweets that included the class hashtag. While we were aware of various automated tools that collect tweets, such as TAGS Twitter Archiver Google Sheet, IFTTT, and third-party services, we encountered inconsistencies with these services. Therefore, we decided to manually count and document class tweets. Twitter search results was used as the primary source to count tweets and document weekly tweets, and we relied on these automated services to cross-check the data. Additionally, we downloaded tweets containing the class hashtag using the tweet downloader tool provided by Twitter to compare the accuracy of the tweets with our tweet documenting system. The next section provides more information about weekly tweets in the class and student engagement with the microchallenge.

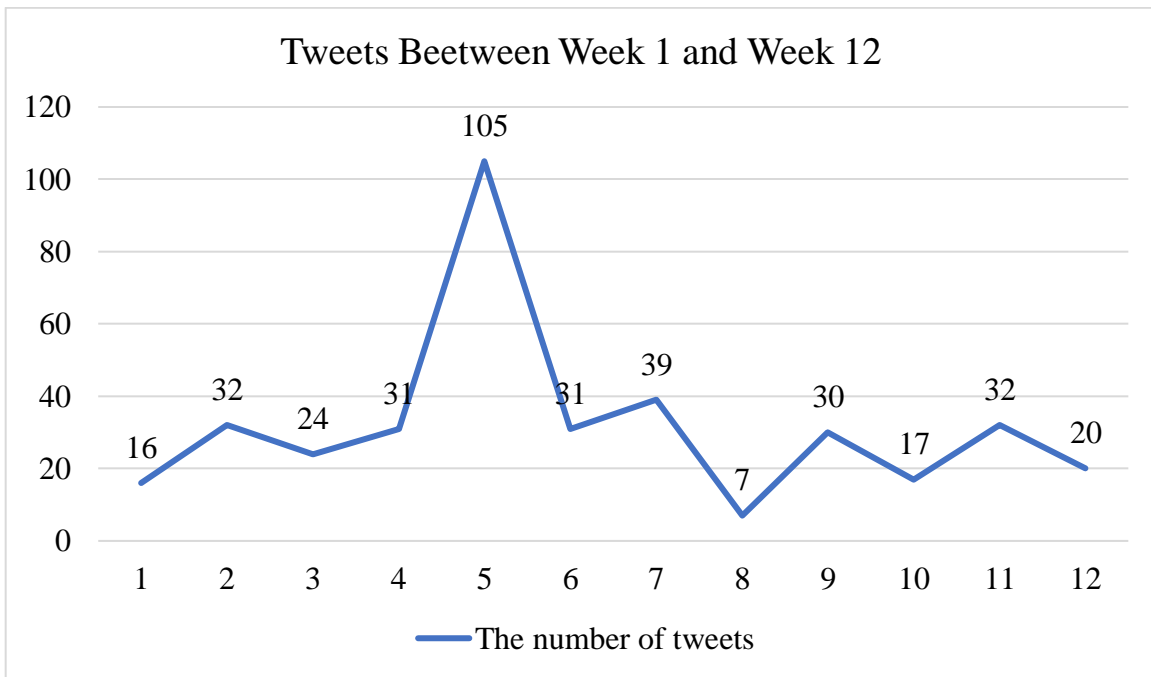
## Results

### *Student Engagement in Twitter Days of the Week Challenge (RQ1)*

Overall, 17 students (of 24) shared their usernames and indicated a desire to tweet during the class in general. Fifteen students (62.5%) engaged in at least one day of the challenge, and 10 (42%) students earned the corresponding badge by completing the whole microchallenge. Additionally, one student did not tweet but made a blog post about each challenge in her blog journal, showing the greater reach of the overall microchallenge.

Figure 2 demonstrates tweets that involved the course hashtag between Weeks 1-12 of the course. Week 1 was the lowest, with 14 tweets. The low number was expected as students were

adjusting to the class and course activities. In Week 5, there were 105 tweets, tripling the counts of prior weeks. The majority of these tweets ( $N = 92$ , 88%) were related to the microchallenge.



**Figure 2.** The number of weekly tweets in the course

### *Student Perceptions of Twitter Days of the Week Challenge*

Twelve students blogged about their microchallenge experiences, stating that the activity was fun and educational in general. The students reported that the challenge helped them master new tools and practices, get to know their classmates better, and engage more actively on Twitter. Below are three illustrative statements from student blog journals:

*The challenges have been a great kick in the butt to get me to use more web 2.0 tools. After resisting Twitter for years, here I am posting daily and enjoying it! I really enjoyed building community with my other class members and upgrading my lurker status to a full-fledged contributor. Here's to more challenges and more tweeting!*

*This was fun! I loved seeing everyone discuss the tools they use and #WonderingWednesday was probably my favorite. We all have different backgrounds and experiences, yet use many of the same big tools. (Many MySpace users in the class). Aside from the major ones, I learned about some tools I'd never heard about because of #ToolboxTuesday!*

*I can't wait to do more challenges like this one. 😊*

*As an avid tweeter, I truly enjoyed using my skills with learning. Tweeting every day is easy, but bringing instructional design into it was an encouraging experience.*

## Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the instructional team had an opportunity to design, develop, and implement a microchallenge for a graduate-level online course. Through the microchallenge, students engaged with content and skills that were germane to course concepts. The challenge gave students structure for practicing Twitter use, reducing the tensions around what to tweet, a concern raised in an earlier study (Lackovic et al., 2017). The microchallenge was optional but produced a higher number of tweets than other weeks in the course. Moreover, students expressed positive attitudes toward the microchallenge. Previous research has shown that if these activities are voluntary, participation rates may be low, which can undermine the potential benefits (Hawkins, 2015; Pollard, 2014; Tang & Hew, 2017), and a limitation of this study is that it does not examine the non-participants' perspective. The findings suggest that microchallenges may be a useful way to motivate some students to practice with course knowledge and skills, but further investigation and empirical evidence are needed.

## References

- Arslan, Ö., Dennen, V. P., & Bong, J. Y. (2022). "Can I still earn a badge by the way?": Challenges and badges in an online course. *Proceedings of the 2022 Teaching, Colleges & Community Conference*, 2022(1), 1-7.
- Dennen, V. P., & Burner, K. J. (2017). Identity, context collapse, and Facebook use in higher education: Putting presence and privacy at odds. *Distance Education*, 38(2), 173-192. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2017.1322453>
- Dennen, V. P., Rutledge, S. A., & Bagdy, L. M. (2020). (Dis)connected: The role of social networking sites in the high school setting. *American Journal of Education*, 127(1), 107-136. <https://doi.org/10.1086/711016>
- Erhel, S., Michinov, N., Noël, A., & Gonthier, C. (2022). Tweet to teach: Using a twitter-based instructional method to improve student motivation and academic outcomes in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 55, 100876. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2022.100876>
- Hawkins, T. L. (2015). "Can you tweet that?": Twitter in the classroom. *Feminist Teacher*, 25(2-3), 153-168. <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/619252>
- Lackovic, N., Kerry, R., Lowe, R., & Lowe, T. (2017). Being knowledge, power and profession subordinates: Students' perceptions of Twitter for learning. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 33, 41-48. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2016.12.002>
- Manca, S. (2020). Snapping, pinning, liking or texting: Investigating social media in higher education beyond Facebook. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 44, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2019.100707>
- Manca, S., & Ranieri, M. (2016). "Yes for sharing, no for teaching!": Social media in academic practices. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 29, 63-74. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2015.12.004>

## TCC 2023 Conference Papers

- Martin, F., Dennen, V. P., & Bonk, C. J. (2020). A synthesis of systematic review research on emerging learning environments and technologies. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 68(4), 1613-1633. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-020-09812-2>
- Pollard, E. A. (2014). Tweeting on the backchannel of the jumbo-sized lecture hall: Maximizing collective learning in a world history survey. *The History Teacher*, 47(3), 329-354.
- Tang, Y., & Hew, K. F. (2017). Using Twitter for education: Beneficial or simply a waste of time? *Computers & Education*, 106, 97-118.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2016.12.004>
- West, S. (2017). Confronting negative narratives: The challenges of teaching professional social media use. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, 80(4), 409-425.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2329490617723118>