

Bonni: [00:00:00] You would be surprised how much can be done through less than 140 characters in today's episode Jesse Stommel shares about how he engages his teaching with Twitter.

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Bonni: [00:00:20] Welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. This is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to increase our personal productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

Bonni: [00:00:48] I'm excited today to be welcoming to the show Jesse Stommel and Jesse is here in a different capacity for the first time ever we're doing video over Skype so we can actually see each other as we record although you can't see him as you listen. It does added added dimension which was pretty nice. Thanks for coming on Teaching in Higher Ed.

Jesse: [00:01:08] Yeah thank you so much for having me. It's great to be here.

Bonni: [00:01:10] I feel like before I start to talk a little bit about your biography we should really come down on are you a person who pronounces it pedagogy or pedagogy.

Jesse: [00:01:20] Oh what a perfect question to get us started in debate. We can maybe get into a little fight here with this. I pronounce it pedagogy.

Bonni: [00:01:28] Okay.

Jesse: [00:01:28] And why do I pronounce it pedagogy? I think actually both pronunciations are accepted pronunciation of the word. For me it just rolls off my tongue. It's an interesting word to me it's a word that is it's almost a little tost

it's a little it's a little bit of a hard word but I like that about it some people find the word alienating. I find that when you've got a word like that that's maybe difficult to pronounce difficult to understand first grasp. It actually forces you to dig a little deeper you want to feel what the words sounds like coming out of your mouth.

Bonni: [00:01:55] It is the only word I can think of that I pronounce both ways. It just depends on as you said both ways are correct. The reason I asked that first is for those of you listening that haven't heard of Jesse before. He's the founder director and designer of an incredible I would call it an online journal although that's I feel like that's a limiting term in this case but of a site called Hybrid Pedagogy or pedagogy depending and maybe you can do a better job of describing what it is for people who haven't accessed the site before.

Jesse: [00:02:25] Glad that you call it an online journal but also are pushing on exactly what that would mean for it to be an online journal because really when we launched the Journal for me what it was was. When I grew up I always wanted to have my own school. Essentially when this idea started to germinate For me it came out of many many years of thinking what would this school that I would build look like.

Jesse: [00:02:49] The journal is not really as much a sort of repository for articles and information but it's a space for community and a space for learning and an engaged space for figuring out our teaching together. And to me that fits much more with the idea of what I think about us what a school would be rather than what I think about it what a conventional journal would be.

Bonni: [00:03:10] I think part of the challenge is if you had just gone out there and done that solely you might have not had the kind of success you had because embedded in that is the respect that comes from the peer review process.

Bonni: [00:03:22] And I think that's what people would be nervous about if someone just started something. Yeah but where's that research orientation going to be and you have managed to do both in a both a real credible online journal but at the same time it feeds people like me who find journals traditional journals to be so limiting.

Jesse: [00:03:37] For me the title hybrid it meant both hybrid as in the classroom and online it meant hybrid as sort of disrupting the distinction between teachers

and students. But it also meant hybrid in the sense that it's kind of a blog kind of a journal kind of a community kind of a school kind of peer reviewed.

Jesse: [00:03:54] Some things aren't peer reviewed some things that we publish like announcements are peer reviewed. Essentially it's trying to be a little bit of all of the best thing of all these different worlds.

Bonni: [00:04:04] In addition to managing that site. You also are an assistant professor in the Department of Liberal Studies and the arts at the University of Wisconsin Madison which is where you are now as I get to see you and others get to listen to you. And you had a I don't know do you want to talk about your injury is that something.

Jesse: [00:04:21] Oh sure.

Bonni: [00:04:22] I got to see and.

Jesse: [00:04:23] I'm actually sitting on my porch right now and I am I have basically been on bed rest for four and a half weeks because I was in Canada for the digital humanities Summer Institute second day in Canada. Just walking down a hill rolled my ankle didn't even hit the ground heard a crack and turns out that I had a broken ankle and they said that they the doctor said the good news is it's a clean break.

Jesse: [00:04:48] The bad news is it broke clean through. So basically my I've been in bed for the last 40 weeks I just got cleared to move a bit about the world a week ago so I'm try to reactivate. You know what it's like to not be sitting in a bed all day.

Bonni: [00:05:03] It's just dawning on me. You've said Canada before we press the record button. But I'm so dying to ask you about going to access health care in Canada my cause my mom actually I was born in Alaska. My dad had been drafted during the Vietnam and his heroic war career was to go to Alaska to be a bookkeeper.

Bonni: [00:05:23] So they drove up there with my brother and the time and then I was born and they had to access health care I guess on their way back down on their drive down to the states and she talks about that it was the weirdest thing I don't know if it's still like that today. But just to walk in and where's all the forms I have to fill out.

Bonni: [00:05:37] So they all know take care of. You're with the army it's ok. Yeah I was kind of a nutty thing. I probably just told that story completely wrong. Sorry Mom if I got a lot of those facts wrong.

Jesse: [00:05:47] I think we're going to have me on again for another show we can have the topic be Canadian U.S. health care system. Excellent excellent idea.

Bonni: [00:05:55] In the meantime I'll continue on your bio. A Ph.D. in English from the University of Colorado Boulder and your key emphases are digital pedagogy open education and new media. You're an advocate for lifelong learning and the public digital humanities and I'm actually going to save some of the courses that you teach for a little bit later in our conversation because I imagine you teach with Twitter on some of them so I'm going to hold off on that.

Bonni: [00:06:21] But I would love for me to share just a bit about your favorite book it's fun Moby Dick. Favorite film Night of the Living Dead. You have a clever dog Mary, two rascally cats Loki. Is that correct.

Jesse: [00:06:34] Actually the cats are Loki and Odin And actually my dog is now Emily. I don't want to have a sad moment on your show but Mary lived a long life 13 years and now she has gone to a place where she's napping. Emily little 9 month old bogland terrier running around making my life chaotic.

Bonni: [00:06:57] Oh they nine months old. They'll do that. They'll do that in your bio. You say that your likes among your likes are that one of them is to be kind. Would you talk a little bit about how that wound up on something being highlighted on your bio.

Jesse: [00:07:11] I'm always trying to find things for my bios that gives sort of a sense of what actually drives me as a person. We have always put all these things that we do and in that particular bio is just a list of you know one thing after another that I do things I like and things I do and so it was a sense like how do I capture what it is that drives me.

Jesse: [00:07:29] And I think that that idea of kindness is really important to me and to me I would distinguish between niceness and kindness. Here I am in the Midwest and I grew up being taught how to be nice. And to me it's so much more difficult to be kind.

Jesse: [00:07:43] So it's not about being polite to me. Kindness is about actually really kind of paying attention to people paying attention to the world around you paying attention to the situations that you're in.

Jesse: [00:07:53] And really I would say that kindness is what drives my pedagogy that it's about seeing people for who they really are and engaging with their full selves and I think part of it is also bringing your full self to the relationship that you have with your co-workers with your students with your you know the writers that I am an editor for on the journal that you really sort of use that as the guiding ethic.

Bonni: [00:08:17] It caught my eye because we we now have selected a preschool for my son. But more than a year ago we started that search and that was one of the questions I asked you know how do you teach children to be kind and I'm sad to say that all but one or two of them were thrown by that question and then didn't have an even a decent answer to address it with and I thought I don't need him to learn Mandarin.

Bonni: [00:08:38] I don't need him to learn French. I want him to learn to be a kind. In that case going to be 4 year old boy in that so I didn't. I'm glad there's people focusing on being kind.

Jesse: [00:08:47] It was interesting that when I at one point I said something on Twitter about it that essentially we needed more kindness in education. And someone wrote back and essentially argued that what I had said was an aphorism. My response was to say that if only kindness were an aphorism I mean if only kindness were that widespread and that sort of universally embraced that it could be common aphorism that's fine.

Jesse: [00:09:15] But the truth is that I think we actually do need to remind each other and remind ourselves to be kind all the time and that there's nothing aphoristic about that.

Bonni: [00:09:23] Well we're going to dive in now to talking about Twitter and for people who are listening. This isn't an episode where we're going to be talking about the basics of Twitter and if you're interested in finding out more about the basics cause you haven't joined yet or dipped your toe into that social media outlet.

Bonni: [00:09:38] I will be posting a link to Jesse's introduction to Twitter which is a great resource you can use to get familiar. We're going to ask a couple of

questions related to some big picture but then really start talking specifically about teaching with Twitter. It's when they give you an idea of what to expect in our conversation to come. Starting out though with I think a basic question but perhaps not. How do you describe Twitter to a colleague who hasn't used it before.

Jesse: [00:10:02] I think that one of the things that I often get when I'm asked about Twitter is I get this sort of assumption that Twitter is a superficial medium that there's something about the 140 character limit that is that that sort of puts constraints on the dialogue and puts constraints on what happens there such that what you end up getting is what someone have for breakfast what they're doing at that exact moment I'm sitting on my porch it is a great day.

Jesse: [00:10:30] And so I think the first thing that I want to talk to people about is actually what that 140 character limit does and for me I see that the constraints of Twitter are also it's a Florence that essentially being asked to take an idea and put it in this constrained linguistic space of 140 characters forces us to think about and question and push on our thinking in ways that we wouldn't otherwise do.

Jesse: [00:10:55] And for me I think about someone like Emily Dickinson or Gertrude Stein I'm certain that Gertrude Stein would have loved Twitter. But it's this idea that if you think about how much can happen in an Emily Dickinson poem or how much can happen in a Gertrude Stein poem.

Jesse: [00:11:09] And it's this idea that that essentially some of our best epiphanies happen when we have those kind of constraints put on us when we're forced to improvise within such a sort of constrained space.

Jesse: [00:11:20] And so basically what I would say is that it's a space for that kind of improvisation. So it's an example of what I do in my pedagogy which as I describe it as improvisation within a framework this is something that I've talked about with Sean Michael Morris who is my co director of Hybrid Pedagogy.

Jesse: [00:11:38] And we've written a little bit about this idea of improvisation within a framework. This idea that improvisation doesn't happen unless there's some sort of frame or there's something like a essentially a playground a playground has boundaries it has limits and those boundaries and limits are exactly what allow you to have the playfulness and the improvisation within that space.

Jesse: [00:11:57] And I think the same thing is true about Twitter that it becomes this really improvisational this really emergent space where discussions happen very organically and and those are some of the things I like about it.

Bonni: [00:12:08] Is there anything then when you are describing it to a group of students a class that you'll be teaching something that you need to call out that you don't emphasize to your colleagues about it as far as it entering into your classroom experience.

Jesse: [00:12:22] I think that I mean one thing I would definitely try and impress upon my students and also in a way have them remind me of is the ways in which it becomes a space for us to try out ideas that it's not a space I meet some of the places where we write I teach writing so I'm often thinking about you know that is the difference between product and process and what is. Is there ever a final product of a piece of writing.

Jesse: [00:12:47] Twitter for me is really a space for trying new ideas it's not a space as much for our final thinking on a subject and instead what it really encourages is us to iterate us to have an idea express it see how people respond to it.

Jesse: [00:13:02] And then have another idea whether that's right in that on that same day or a few hours later or whether it's three months later and then the other thing that I would say that I would point out to students is that it's really a space where where dialogue is this sort of highest ethic.

Jesse: [00:13:18] It's a space where essentially what happens when you have 140 character tweets is that you tweet something and someone responds you tweet again and becomes this kind of banter it's not what I'm doing right now where I'm speaking to you and saying a lot more than 140 characters and not giving you any room to respond. Twitter is almost like it's constantly all of these pauses is an endless series of pauses that create this space for dialogue and conversation.

Bonni: [00:13:43] What would you say is the right purpose for which to use Twitter.

Jesse: [00:13:48] I think that that's a little hard to answer with a with a platform like Twitter because it's a different kind of tool than some of the tools that we use. It's like a tool in the way that a pencil is a tool or the way that a chalkboard

is a tool it's a tool that lots of people can use for lots of different reasons with lots of different effects.

Jesse: [00:14:06] And that's true about a lot of tools but I would say that one of the things I like about Twitter is it becomes this platform that you can use for different reasons in different environments I might use it one way and one class but I might use it very differently in another class and any any student who came up to me and said how should I be using Twitter.

Jesse: [00:14:25] My answer would be to ask them Well how do you want to use Twitter. What do you want to get out of Twitter. Why are you use in this space. What you know and it also has to do with our personalities. You know some of us are very outgoing extroverted personalities and that person might use Twitter in a slightly different way than someone who's really using Twitter to help launch their music career.

Bonni: [00:14:47] When I spoke with Steve Wheeler back on episode 38 he challenged me because I used the phrase talking about digital natives and digital immigrants and one of the things he emphasized was trying to do away with those those names. And that it was all about context is what he described as the context with which you use the tool.

Bonni: [00:15:06] So I'm going to go back at it again because I can't resist because it might teach 90 all the way from undergraduate up to doctoral levels. Yes the doctoral level students tend to be older and that generation there tends to be a lot more concerns about privacy.

Bonni: [00:15:21] And I do say you can sign up for Twitter and you can have an anonymous account just let me know what it is so I can engage with you. But there still is just a real strong concern about that is there a way that you attempt to address that as you're teaching sometimes older students or maybe you find that in younger students as well.

Jesse: [00:15:40] Well one of the things I often use I use the word literacies literacies plural essentially to point out that it's a complex space you might know how to do one thing in the space but you might not know how to do another one kind of interaction within a space like Twitter might feel familiar whereas another kind of interaction might feel unfamiliar.

Jesse: [00:15:59] When I think about that issue of privacy I think that each person has to find a different relationship to these tools and sort of build their own sort of

self inside of the network and make critical decisions about how they're going to put themselves in the network are they going to have a picture of themselves or are they going to use pictures of their kids are they going to talk about their wedding on Twitter or are they going to have pictures of their spouse on Twitter.

Jesse: [00:16:26] So there's really this idea that privacy is an on or off switch. I think that that I mean essentially one of the things is having a kind of sense of privacy literacy having a sense of public ness as a literacy that we all need to engage with and make decisions about. I think anyone who imagines that they can just become private.

Jesse: [00:16:46] And flick a switch is not really understanding how these networks work. You are on Twitter whether you want to be on Twitter or not. You are indexed by Google whether you want to be indexed by Google or not. And sometimes the person who flicks the switch and said I'm just not going to be in this space doesn't realize the extent to which they already are in the space.

Jesse: [00:17:07] And so there's a way in which engaging in these networks becomes a way for you to take ownership of the space so that you can be present in the space the way that you want to be present in the space rather than the way that other people are making you present in the space. If that makes sense.

Bonni: [00:17:22] Yeah reminds me of. There was the school in the Northeast I can't remember what it was but they were having some racial tensions that were being expressed through and I'm forgetting the name of the service. You might remember it. This is twice now in this episode. What the heck is it called.

Bonni: [00:17:39] Anyway I mentioned I want to stay away from that site. It's a location based social network. And I'll put it in the show notes at teachinginhighered.com/57 for anyone who's interested in knowing about the story and about that service.

Bonni: [00:17:53] But I loved these professors at this Northeastern University who said we're not going to stay away from that network. We're going to go in there and start honoring our students and acknowledging the wonderful things that they're doing and letting those people know who are expressing those racial the racial hatred we're here. We hear this and this is not acceptable and that's not the kind of culture we have here.

Jesse: [00:18:17] I'm guessing I think the name of the tool is Yik Yak.

Bonni: [00:18:20] That's it. Yep.

Jesse: [00:18:20] Yeah. And the interesting thing is I mean absolutely at the second that something makes you uncomfortable. I mean and this maybe comes from my being you know I'm a cultural studies I'm a humanities professor. That's been my training and background at the second. That's something makes you feel uncomfortable. I think that what we need to do is look at that thing.

Jesse: [00:18:41] So if your impulse is to turn away that that's exactly the thing that you need to look at and that you need to consider. And so if someone thinks I never want to be on Twitter as a platform my recommendation to them as a sort of as a human would be to say well maybe go on Twitter and see what it is about that platform that scares you so much.

Jesse: [00:19:00] Create an anonymous account and sort of route around. I mean what I list for me is it's like dumping out the Lego is on the table and sifting through them. Sure you can decide that you don't want to build anything. You can decide that you want to put them back into a pail and sell them at a garage sale but it's that sifting through the Lego's that helps us understand what they are and why we're afraid of them.

Jesse: [00:19:21] And I think that that's really a critical thing. I mean and that and that's how we develop the literacies that will help us figure out what to do with the tool that comes out 10 years from now 10 years from now it will be a different tool.

Jesse: [00:19:31] And if we're not doing the critical work of engaging right now then we won't have to use that tool that comes out 10 years or how to reject that tool that comes out ten years from now because so often we are part of things we are part of the digital you know we're being tracked without us knowing that it's happening.

Jesse: [00:19:50] And so I think that engaging in these spaces becomes a way of taking you know essentially taking having agency in the space or as much agency as it's possible to have.

Bonni: [00:19:59] I enjoyed so much reading the colorful listing of classes that you teach and I'm just gonna list off a few of them zombies horror film Haptic interfaces and I'm sure I'm just mentioning a small portion of them would you share a way used Twitter specifically in some of these more colorful classes.

Jesse: [00:20:19] Well one of the things that I really like is I like thinking about Twitter as a as an improv space so base both a space for trying on ideas as I talked about earlier but also as a space for trying on different kinds of identities. So I along with colleague Pete Rohabaugh we invented a game called Twitter versus zombies and we've tied the game has run in about six or seven different iterations.

Jesse: [00:20:42] But for me that game was that it was a way to have students learning critical literacies for within networks and in a way Twitter was a red herring because it wasn't that I wanted people to be experts in Twitter. I wanted them to be experts and gay in engaging in communities online.

Jesse: [00:21:00] And essentially the improvisation of the game to play the sort of playing on the rolls taking on the roles of zombies or survivors in a zombie apocalypse became a fun way to kind of model some of the different. Literacies that we need to engage in spaces like Twitter essentially the idea is they were tweeting to save their life.

Jesse: [00:21:22] So in order to protect themselves from a zombie bite they had to really quick take a picture of an item in their environment that they were going to you know keep the zombies at bay with them. So really quickly to save their life from the zombie they had to figure out Well how do I take a picture and upload it to Twitter and then share it. I've got to use a hash tag and they've got to do it within ten minutes. Wow.

Bonni: [00:21:43] Oh that's fun. That's great. I'm the tuck that awya for some of the students I teach who really have an aversion to it to try to maybe have some fun and then and maybe lower some of those concerns.

Bonni: [00:21:53] Speaking of concerns there are people who who purposely will try to have a huge separation between the personal and the professional and then some who seem to have less concern. Is there any.

Bonni: [00:22:06] And of course is a very personal thing and this is this is just you but anything that you consider whether you post about it on Twitter or not.

Jesse: [00:22:14] You know and also the interesting thing is that you feel like you have to have a different self on Twitter on Facebook and certainly on Yik Yak like and then in the real world quote unquote real world. And then also like how

are we going to act when we're in the classroom how are we going to act when we're at the grocery store.

Jesse: [00:22:31] So there's a way in which we're negotiating these identities we're negotiating our various selves not just online but in the you know in the physical world as well. And even just as I say that the physical world will why isn't the digital world also physical you know we talk about on ground versus online learning when I'm learning online. My feet are still on the ground or my arm or my leg is.

Jesse: [00:22:54] And so there's a way in which our physicality becomes something that we think about. It also becomes something I think that can be potentially dangerous and that works like this because we still our physical selves when we go and put our personal lives out in these spaces you know sometimes people people can take advantage of it in various different ways.

Jesse: [00:23:14] And I don't think that's unique to Twitter as far as me how I make those decisions. I think it changes almost a year to year. I used to be a person who never put much of my personal life on Twitter.

Jesse: [00:23:27] I would put personal things on Facebook but Twitter was really a professional it was really a pedagogical was a way to interact with my students. It was not a place where I shared a lot of personal information about myself. I was very warm on Twitter I was very friendly I was very personable.

Jesse: [00:23:42] But I didn't reveal things about myself that actually changed really dramatically about a year ago gay marriage was legalized in the state of Wisconsin for a single week and I got married during that week to my husband. And as we were get it we were going out to get married and no one was going to be at our wedding because it was literal we decided to get married and then got married the next day because it was this one week window in the state of Wisconsin where it was legalized.

Jesse: [00:24:07] And I looked to my husband that morning like literally an hour before we were going to go to the courthouse and I said Can I live tweet this. And he's actually very private and very introverted and he without even a pause he said yes. And the idea was that some things need to be public. That's one of the things I tweeted I tweeted the words some things need to be public.

Jesse: [00:24:27] And so there's a way in which it became this moment where I said you know I actually there's a reason why I need to put a really personal

thing out inside of this very public space. It's a moment where that felt really important for me to do that.

Jesse: [00:24:42] And interestingly since I did that like once you get married on Twitter once you live tweet your own wedding. All of a sudden it's like it changed the way that I engaged with the network. And I couldn't go back I couldn't go back to the space before where I didn't share that kind of thing. It's like I had opened Pandora's box or a can of worms or whatever it was.

Bonni: [00:25:04] That's a powerful illustration. Thank you for being vulnerable enough to share it with us. I thought I had the answer. I don't know if you listen and I'll put a link in the show notes. I don't know if you listen to the episode of This American Life where they spoke about changing minds about the issue of gay marriage there and that research has since been completely identified as being all the data falsified. Are you familiar with this.

Jesse: [00:25:30] Only so vaguely but I think that we could probably still talk about it.

Bonni: [00:25:34] I'm sure. Well I thought because because so much of it and I do identify so much with what you're saying where there's a different persona for me on the face on Facebook versus Twitter etc. But I think about wanting to be able to change minds and how just posting a link to something even if the link is full of very factual data that what research has shown us is that that we tend to get more rooted into our beliefs that that's false even when presented with data contrary to our existing beliefs.

Bonni: [00:26:06] At any rate the podcast had shared about that actually people were changing their minds about the issue of gay marriage when the person would go out and really listen to them and hear their stories of people that they love in their life and they could find those common grounds.

Bonni: [00:26:19] And that was so sad find that the data had been falsified and hope that people do continue and I guess. So it's for me it's kind of wanting to figure out where is it worth being vulnerable enough because it something so personal I mean this is your husband that is incredibly personal to you.

Jesse: [00:26:36] And I mean I took it pretty far. I mean we because we actually had our first public kiss and our first public kiss was on Twitter. I tweeted Our first public kiss. You know and I'm used to these tweets he's like peer reviewing the tweet before I send it out. I'm like you sir you're comfortable with this.

Jesse: [00:26:54] So like our part we have been that we've been together eight years before we got married and then our first public this was on was shared in real time on Twitter. And to me I actually really do believe like just my anecdotal experience is that when there are actual human beings sharing things with me.

Jesse: [00:27:15] I am much more likely to trust the thing that's being shared when it's a human being that I feel like I know them it's seen some even small way. It's it's sort of that idea of making connections with people and that it's actually the connection that helps me pay a different kind of attention to what it is that they're sharing.

Jesse: [00:27:33] I've never read I don't read the newspaper anymore in any kind of conventional way. Twitter is actually my newspaper now and it feels and I get so much more out of it than I used to get out of flipping through a newspaper. What I'm now flipping through is people that I know are at least that I know in some small way sharing things with me. And I feel like I'm more likely to read things when they share.

Jesse: [00:27:56] I'm more likely to actually pay attention to them and I don't know I mean I don't know the extent to which this is true for everybody. But it feels like I know a lot of people who have a similar experience who feel like essentially drawn in more engaged more connected to the world even though we talk about these these social media or our cell phones disconnecting us from the people that are around us.

Jesse: [00:28:18] I actually feel more connected. I have some dear friends on Twitter that I've never met in person and are who are halfway around the world for me. And like that is so valuable and I guess one of the reasons why I teach Twitter to my students and I teach various different ways of approaching social media are networked communities is because I want my students to have that experience too.

Jesse: [00:28:40] I want them to know someone in a place that's so different from the place that they're in. So like I have a very close friend in Egypt Maha Bolly who I just adore and I've never met her in person and yet I feel really close to her and connected.

Jesse: [00:28:55] And I get a view of the world that's so different than the view that I get in a in a town like Madison Wisconsin which in a lot of ways it's an American town. It's a quote on quote American town.

Bonni: [00:29:08] Are there any technology tools that you use to help you in your teaching. Because I think about the I mean I use Twitter in some aspects of my class. But what holds me back from using it more is I can track this like I can't make it measurable or is there some trick out there or do I have to let that go.

Jesse: [00:29:27] So my answer to that is that there's two there's two different kinds of things that I think that I hear you're referring to one is the sense of how do we parse all this information that's coming at us. So we have I you know I follow 3500 people on Twitter. There's no way that I can actually engage substantively with all 35 500 of those people.

Jesse: [00:29:46] So I have to use various tools that help me see different pieces of that group at any individual time. So I use it I use the tool TweetDeck in order to kind of put essentially put subsets of. The stuff I'm following into columns and then I can kind of parse the information that way.

Jesse: [00:30:06] But I also find that that's a little bit overwhelming to students. And so I think starting with just the Twitter app itself and thinking about how can we change the way we think about what we're seeing on the screen so that we don't get overwhelmed by it.

Jesse: [00:30:20] And Howard Rheingold has a great book called Net Smart where he talks about filter failure. And he says that it's not that there's too much information coming at us it's in fact that our filters are failing that we're not able to. Make sense of all of this information. For me one of the reasons why we have difficulty is because we expect ourselves to hear it all to understand it all to make sense of it all.

Jesse: [00:30:47] And I think instead of Twitter it's like dipping my feet into a stream you're not collecting water into a cup of into a cup you're not collecting water into a cup you're instead dipping your toe into a stream and you're only going to get one little tiny bit of the stream at any one time.

Jesse: [00:31:03] And so to try and expect yourself to read every single tweet that passes through on your feed I think is not really understanding how this kind of rolling stream works that would be like expecting yourself to hear every word that said in a common space. Every word that set in the city park here at the City Park.

Jesse: [00:31:22] Would you ever expect yourself to hear every word. No instead what you do is you overhear stuff and you talk to one person for a minute and then you move from one person to another or like a cocktail party would you ever expect yourself to be a part of every conversation that's happening at the cocktail party.

Jesse: [00:31:39] Would you say if you weren't a part of every conversation the cocktail party that you weren't there at the cocktail party no you'd say I was at the cocktail party. I didn't hear every conversation because how would you hear every conversation did I. I talked about this person with this that I talk about that person about with that.

Jesse: [00:31:54] But I think we have a kind of unreal realistic expectation of yourself. If we expect ourselves to see every feed to see every tweet that comes through to see every Facebook post that comes through.

Bonni: [00:32:06] Tell me about your assignment of the Twitter essay.

Jesse: [00:32:11] The Twitter essay The Twitter essay is actually what got me started using Twitter in the classroom in 2007 is when I first logged on to Twitter and I think I started teaching the Twitter essay in 2008 and I at that point I really hardly used Twitter at all except for teaching.

Jesse: [00:32:28] So I didn't even use it as a professional network I didn't use it personally I really only use it as a teaching tool. I was teaching writing and I wanted to use it as a tool to get my students thinking about the the way that tiny tiny choices that we make can have a really big rhetorical effect.

Jesse: [00:32:43] So essentially one character one word can change the meaning of a sentence can change the meaning of a tweet. And one thing that's interesting is that even one punctuation mark can radically change the meaning of a tweet. So the activity was essentially to have them write an essay and they can only use 140 characters to write the essay.

Jesse: [00:33:06] And I actually started by drawing it on a graph paper where they would where they would basically draw a square around 140 boxes on the graph paper and then they could use each square on the graph paper to put a single character.

Jesse: [00:33:20] And what's interesting is they find our wow punctuation marks are really powerful it only counts as a single character and yet it has so much impact so much power.

Jesse: [00:33:29] And then it also became an exercise in figuring out how they could read mix how they could playfully think about what could happen in 140 character space and then the really fun part was that I then would have the students peer review each other's tweets.

Jesse: [00:33:44] So we would actually spend a whole day sometimes multiple days writing a single 140 character tweet so they'd compose the tweet. They would peer review the tweet they would put the tweet out in the world they would then publicly respond to each other's tweets. And sometimes I would even quote unquote grade the tweet by writing a tweet in response to their tweet. So in a sense that you know I could only take 140 characters to respond to the work of the of the student.

Bonni: [00:34:14] And speaking of logistically grading things how many students do you have in your average class. What does this tend to look like when you're grading Twitter is it more like a participation kind of grade.

Jesse: [00:34:25] I've taught the Twitter essay in classes of 20 and I've taught it in classes of 20000 and so for me it has to be a little bit different depending on the group. Personally I am not someone who does objective grading. It's it's to me grading is fundamentally subjective. It's a conversation that I have with my students that they play an active role.

Jesse: [00:34:44] And so I do a lot of peer evaluation and a lot of self-assessment and then I intermingle that with my own feedback to the students. The Twitter essay for example becomes a really good space for something like peer or self-assessment talking about. What did I learn by doing this activity.

Jesse: [00:35:00] The Twitter essay blogging about the tweets that they wrote peer reviewing each other's tweets talking about how they were or were not effective talking about their own interpretation of each other's tweets. All of those became assessment mechanisms in a sense very different from need putting a grade on a tweet.

Jesse: [00:35:19] I actually recently saw a rubric for tweets and it was a huge rubric like six columns by six columns at all to assess one or a handful of tweets. And I just thought there are way more than 140 characters in that rubric.

Jesse: [00:35:34] So I mean the challenge is if we're going to have our students tweeting can we think of us ways of assessing their work that don't take more than 140 characters or can we develop a rubric that is less than 140 characters.

Jesse: [00:35:48] Because at the point that you're handing a student a 6 by six column rubric to compose a tweet at that point I mean to me that sucks all the love that sucks all the sort of magic out of what a tweet actually is and what it can do in the world. What can you tell us about the Twitter fishbowl the fishbowl exercise is something that people may be familiar with where you treat create two circles.

Jesse: [00:36:08] You have an inner circle that is having a conversation and then you have an outer circle that's observing and then people can tap into the inner circle. And so essentially you have this really dynamic flowing discussion where only six people are talking at any given time but different people are tapping from the outside circle into the inside circle.

Jesse: [00:36:26] And when I do this activity I always just play along with the students rather than rather than being a judge or an MC of it. And so what I when I added Twitter to this activity I had students in the outer circle tweeting and students in the inner circle talking. So in a sense it became this kind of Twitter Greek chorus.

Jesse: [00:36:44] And so it allowed them to be more active on the outside circle observing this conversation on the inside is kind of like a back channel but it's the people on the inside circle were facing each other what was happening in the Twitter feed wasn't visible to them.

Jesse: [00:36:57] But then once they moved to the outer circle they could kind of catch up and see how people in a sense it became an assessment mechanism a peer driven assessment mechanism for what was happening in the conversation and then at the end of that 70 I would always ask the students I would say.

Jesse: [00:37:12] So now let's talk about let's move to a meta level and let's talk about how these discussions happened. How was the Twitter discussion different from what was happening in the face to face inner circle. What were the what were the sort of rhetorics of these different spaces. How did the conversation function differently.

Bonni: [00:37:31] This is the part of the show where we do recommendations and I already thought of what my recommendation is going to be and that is for anyone who's listening that wants to learn more about teaching with Twitter.

Bonni: [00:37:41] You have a class that you are delivering through digital pedagogy which people can take to learn more about it and I'm going to have a link to that in the show notes. But is there anything else you want to share about the class that people should know who are listening.

Jesse: [00:37:54] Yes. So Hybrid Pedagogy just launch what we're calling digital pedagogy lab courses. We're doing an on ground Institute this summer and then we've started a series of online professional development courses and a launch as early as January where we have a class called the flipped classroom in January.

Jesse: [00:38:10] And then the second class that we're offering is me teaching a class called teaching with Twitter. And it's going to be a two week intensive online professional development course where we're going to it's going to be very kind of peer driven. I'm going to be with you and we're going to be essentially experimenting both inside of Twitter and also inside of the canvas learning management system. And yeah it should be a good time.

Bonni: [00:38:35] What would you like to recommend today to those listeners.

Jesse: [00:38:38] I really want to recommend a book that I mentioned earlier which was on Net Smart by Howard Rheingold and what I would say about this book is that it is anyone who is nervous about technology. Anyone who is worried about technology. Anyone who's excited about technology and wants to figure out better how to navigate technological spaces or digital spaces like Twitter. This is the book that I recommend. It basically is like a guide to living in the digital world.

Bonni: [00:39:03] Well I just want to thank you so much for accepting my invitation to be on the show. I have admired your work for some time. It was hard to narrow down what I wanted to talk to you about so I hope that you'll consider coming back and being on the show in the future.

Jesse: [00:39:16] Yeah I would love to be back any time.

Bonni: [00:39:19] Once again I am blown away with so much information. Thanks once again to Jesse for being on the show. As always if you have suggestions of

guests or topics that you would like to hear from on the show you can do that at teachinginhighered.com/feedback.

Bonni: [00:39:33] And I really recommend if you haven't subscribe to the weekly update yet. That's a great way to automatically get in your inbox. All of the links that we talked about on the show and I accompany that e-mail with an article about teaching or productivity. Each and every week. Thanks so much for listening and I look forward to the next time on Teaching in Higher Ed.

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