

2010

Law school classes with Twitter (!)

Stephen Ellmann

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/fac_other_pubs



Part of the [Legal Education Commons](#), and the [Legal Profession Commons](#)

SATURDAY, MAY 8, 2010

Law school classes with Twitter (!)

A scientist friend, Jonathan Art, tells me that when he lectures in class, there's a simultaneous Twitter feed on which students can discuss what he's saying. A teaching assistant also adds commentary, e.g., "The three main points the professor is making are" Would this work with a class built around the professor's questions to the students, as law school classes normally are (under the title of the "Socratic method")?

First we'd need teaching assistants (TA's). We don't have graduate students in the same way as arts & sciences departments do, but we certainly have upper-level students who have already taken the courses we are giving. Would these upper-level students make mistakes? Well, probably, but the chances are they'd usually get things about right, and that their doing so would be helpful to the students currently taking the course, who might be reluctant to ask about the kinds of fundamental points the TA's would reiterate.

Would the Twitter feed interfere with the students' focus on the dialogue with the professor? Possibly the effect would be the reverse – to increase students' otherwise flagging attention. (What's on those laptops now?) The use of the laptop and Twitter for an online discussion paralleling the in-class dialogue might reach them partly because they like these media. The chance to speak via Twitter to their peers (and semi-peers, the TA's) might also operate to draw them in more immediately than the large-class Socratic discussion, in which only a small number of people can participate in any given period. Maybe the students would as a result follow and understand the dialogue led by the professor better, and be more engaged in it as well. Or maybe they'd be more involved in the Twitter discussion than in the professor's dialogue, but still with the net result that they are more engaged in the overall learning process (Twitter included) than they otherwise would have been.

At the least, it seems worth a try.

POSTED BY STEPHEN ELLMANN AT 2:47 PM



LABELS: LAW SCHOOL TEACHING; SOCRATIC METHOD; TWITTER
