

# Social Media and My Classroom

## What is social media?

Social media encompasses a variety of web-based applications whose common purpose is to facilitate interaction and communication among groups of individuals or the online community as a whole. Tools may fall into a variety of forms: social bookmarking (StumbleUpon; Digg), social networking (Facebook; LinkedIn), blogging/micro-blogging (WordPress; Blogger; Twitter) and many other uses.

## What are the risks associated with using social media in the classroom?

Using social media in the classroom poses a unique risk when it comes to the federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA governs student educational records, which are broadly defined by the University of Puget Sound as “any record maintained by the university which is directly related to a student.” According to the Office of Academic Advising’s tutorial on FERPA, “Almost any student-related piece of paper is part of the student’s educational record. Information displayed on a computer screen is also considered part of the student’s educational record.” Examples include but are not limited to:

Any form of communication that includes personal information about a student

- Transcripts or any communication that includes grades (midterm or final)
- Class Lists
- Degree Progress Reports
- Academic Sanction Records
- Advising Information



## Important things to consider if you wish to use social media in the classroom:

- Use social media for course-related content only if it furthers your pedagogical goals
- All social media-related assignments or engagement should be optional for students
- Students should be given the opportunity or encouraged to create an alias for class work
- Inform students in your syllabus and at the start of the course that the class will have a social media component
- Educate yourself about tools’ terms of service as well as online privacy, security, technical support and availability of data.
- Consult with Educational Technology if you have any questions

## What else can I use to make sure I’m compliant with FERPA in my classroom, but still use social media to assist with the learning process?

Technology Services provides various online tools that are FERPA compliant. Use Moodle for online content submission and delivery as well as the gradebook and other interactive tools. Use Mahara for ePortfolio content or blogs. Also, try saving documents to your network share or using web-based academic software from vDesk.

Contact the Service Desk or your Educational Technologist for more information.