

## Appendix A. Class on Twitter Instructions

In preparation for Class on Twitter (COT), students must establish a Twitter account or use their existing one to follow stakeholder accounts that have the potential to be sources of information around issues of contemporary government and politics. They are given guidance in class that these stakeholders would include elected officials, bureaucratic entities, media outlets, non-profits, etc. They share their Twitter handles with the class via a wiki established on the course intranet page and are expected to follow one another and myself as the course instructor.

The students were then expected to use Twitter to learn about the issue from different sources (e.g. stakeholders) and, using the course-specific hashtag, retweet information other students could learn from and dialogue with other students about. The discussion continued for 75 minutes, with only a few prompts from me after the initial Tweet to guide the discussion<sup>1</sup>. Students would retweet particularly helpful information and other students would respond to it. Once students had a good idea of the details of the issue, the chat turned to student reactions. Many students went to politicians or sources they trusted, but also posted Tweets that opposed their own views. All of the Tweets included the class hashtag. In sum, the required components for participation in the COT exercise were:

- Create a new (or use existing) Twitter account and record their handle to class wiki
- Identify and follow 50 stakeholders (political institutions, interest groups, policy entrepreneurs, media, candidates, etc.); submit list prior to exercise.
- Follow Twitter feeds of peers (from class wiki).
- Actively discuss in Class on Twitter.
- Monitor, read, retweet, reply, etc. Tweets on policy debate, making sure to include class hashtag.

Students were then required to monitor the topic over the next week then write about their COT experience using the online blogging application Storify<sup>2</sup>. The 1000-word blogpost

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<sup>1</sup> Student questions about process were handled via direct message on the platform.

<sup>2</sup> Storify is no longer available, so students in the 2018 implementation of this exercise used Wakelet to create their blogs.

required the students to reflect on the process of learning about an issue using Twitter and to synthesize what they now understood about the issue discussed. The guidelines for the blogpost required students do the following in a cohesive personal essay:

- Summarize the issue and how it developed while they were monitoring it on Twitter
- Incorporate illustrative Tweets from stakeholders and describe their approach for discovering the appropriate Twitter accounts.
- Incorporate one of their own Tweets, illustratively.
- Describe how Twitter helped them learn about the issue.