

**本科毕业论文（设计）**

**英 文 翻 译**

**社交软件在教学当中的作用**

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**Teaching Social Software with Social Software**

This article explores how the current wave of information and communication technologies (ICTs) known as social software can enable new forms of study and research, preparing students to participate in networks where knowledge is collectively constructed and shared. This approach to learning, which I call distributed research, might be attractive to educators because it exhibits three comparable advantages to those associated with problem-based learning (cf. Watson [2002](http://technologysource.org/article/using_technology_to_promote_success_in_pbl_courses/); De Vry and Watson [2003](http://technologysource.org/article/university_of_delawares_facultyit_partnership/)). First, it engages students in learning to learn by having them assume some of the responsibility for integrating and maintaining the social software systems that allow learning to happen. Second, it promotes the benefits of working cooperatively with tools that facilitate the aggregation and organization of knowledge while at the same time demonstrating that the diversity of individual research interests enhances learning for all. And last, it helps students develop practical research skills that they need in a world where knowledge construction and dissemination make increasing use of online information networks. In short, social software allows students to participate in distributed research communities that extend spatially beyond their classroom and school, temporally beyond a particular class session or term, and technologically beyond the tools and resources that the school makes available to the students.

In what follows, I first provide a more detailed definition of social software and explain the importance of studying it in an educational context; I then illustrate and discuss my particular experience in teaching a course on social software with social software in a manner consistent with what I have just described.

**1.The Concept of Social Software**

Vicki Suter, Bryan Alexander, and Pascal Kaplan ([2005](http://www.educause.edu/er/erm05/erm0513.asp?bhcp=1)) conducted a review of various definitions of social software, identifying at least three possible perspectives for defining it: "social software as a tool (for augmenting human social and collaborative abilities), as a medium (for facilitating social connection and information interchange), and as an ecology (for enabling a 'system of people, practices, values, and technologies in a particular local environment')" (48). With these perspectives in mind, any definition of social software therefore needs to be broad enough to encompass technologies as varied as the following:

* blogs: personal Web publishing systems;
* wikis: collaborative content management systems that allow any user to create or edit pages instantaneously;
* distributed classification systems: software that allows individual users to classify items by associating them with any number of keywords known as tags, which are then aggregated by the software for the benefit of the whole community; and
* rich site summary (RSS) feeds: a subscription system that alerts the user when new content is available, for example, in a blog, a wiki page, or a particular tag in a distributed classification system.

While the polysemic nature of the term social software is indicative of its newness, the history of how computers have been applied to replicate or enhance social dynamics is as long as the history of computers itself (c.f. Allen [2004](http://www.lifewithalacrity.com/2004/10/tracing_the_evo.html)). Perhaps what makes social software unique then is not only the new generation of tools that can be grouped under the label but also the fact that these technologies have reached a widespread use in a very short time. According to a report by the Pew Internet Project ([2006](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/148/report_display.asp)), it took the Web less than four years to gain an audience of 50 million while it took radio almost 40 years to gain that same number of users.

This rapid dissemination, however, can sometimes mean that there is not enough time to think carefully about the applications and affordances of the technologies. In the course I taught, it was my intention not only to give students hands-on experience conducting distributed research using some of these new technologies but also to encourage the class to address more fundamental questions regarding them: What is social about social software? How is the notion of community being redefined by social software? How is social agency shared between humans and code in social software? What are the social repercussions of unequal access to social software? Can social software be an effective tool for individual and social change?

**2.The Social Software Affordances Course at Teachers College**

During Fall 2005, I taught a course titled Social Software Affordances at Teachers College, Columbia University. This graduate seminar had a total enrollment of 13 graduate students from the Communication, Computing, and Technology in Education ([CCTE](http://www.tc.columbia.edu/admissions/programs/details.htm?page=Program+Description&amp;id=104)) program. The course aimed for students to acquire proficiency in the use of social software for conducting distributed research while engaging in a critical analysis of the affordances of social software, or the types of actions the technology makes possible or prevents. Because a central theme was the exploration of social software to effect social change, the course also asked students to apply their newly acquired skills and knowledge to promote a social cause or project of their choosing. In order to accomplish these objectives, I organized students into a distributed research community: a work group that used social software to explore a topic collectively by sharing and organizing resources, analyzing data, reporting on individual research projects, and contributing to group projects.

The syllabus ([Exhibit 1](http://www.innovateonline.info/extra.php?id=848)) identifies the following three learning objectives for the course:

1. The class will develop competency in the use of blogs, wikis, distributed classification system, and RSS subscription feeds.
2. The class will perform a state-of-the-art review of social software tools, applications, and theory, focusing on a critical assessment of the affordances of social software.
3. Class members will conduct an individual exercise on the potential of social software to effect change at a personal and social level.

Although the students met for a few classroom sessions (one introductory session, one mid-point session, and one final session plus some informal meetings), most of the classwork unfolded online. A central [Course](http://ssa05.blogspot.com/) [Blog](http://ssa05.blogspot.com/) disseminated information about the course itself, its assignments, its suggested readings, and other material pertinent to course activities. Using a free distributed classification system called [del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us/), the class contributed to a repository of research pertinent to our studies. Students also set up personal blogs where they could post individual reactions to the research and the class readings or update the rest of the class about their individual projects. Using a RSS aggregator, a program that allows users to subscribe to and read RSS feeds, students were able to track new additions to the research repository instead of having to check each resource individually and repeatedly to see if any updates had been made. The class as a whole also edited a final [wiki project](http://ssa05.annenberg.edu/pmwiki/socialsoftware/index.php?n=Main.DesignPatternsOfSocialComputing), which we collectively defined in the earlier part of the semester. Although all of the class activities and tools functioned in conjunction with one another, each activity warrants further detail.

**3.Distributed Research: The Power of Many**

The distributed classification system referred to above consisted of using del.icio.us to bookmark items related to social software by assigning to them the tag "ccte" (for Communication, Computing, and Technology in Education, the name of the program at Teachers College). The resulting (and ongoing) collection of links can be viewed [here](http://del.icio.us/tag/ccte/). All students were expected to contribute items throughout the semester. Students were also expected to subscribe to the RSS feed generated by del.icio.us as a way to keep track of all contributions. Class members then explored items of personal interest and discussed them in their individual blogs, often in the context of the books assigned as course readings on the syllabus.

But beyond the benefits of better information management, this exercise turned students into contributors, not mere recipients, of knowledge about social software. Students became researchers who could add something to our study of the topic while at the same time building their own collection of resources tagged according to their own classification schemes. Of course this required that I, as the instructor, be willing to give up the role of being the sole source of information. Yet this strategy benefitted me as well, exposing me to more research, resources, and ideas than I could identify on my own. My interest and knowledge of the topic, in other words, were augmented by the contributions of my students.

**4.Blogging: Finding an Individual Voice**

Contributing to a pool of resources is valuable in and of itself, but a detailed examination of social software requires a more individualized space for reflection, which is why I asked everyone in the class to maintain a blog throughout the course. Of course, this activity also was intended to expose students to issues of identity, writing style, posting frequency, community formation, and the like that accompany the use of blogs.

In his individual self-evaluation at the end of the course, one student summarized the experience of being introduced to this new form of communication:

For the first time, I really delved into the world of blogging, examining blogs of many types, reading "blogs of note" and award winners. I really enjoyed the convoluted paths wound from one blog to the next by clicking on blog rolls. Eventually I started to get a feeling for how things worked. I explored the possibilities for add-ons for my blog. I added Sitemeter to measure traffic, included syndicated feeds from del.icio.us and feed digests, and customized the templates from each to match the look of my site. . . I started to get anonymous hits and comments on my blog. Even though there were not many, it was very exciting. I began to see the addictive nature of blogging and the excitement of participating in a large, distributed conversation. (M. Curinga, personal e-mail, December 24, 2005)

The blog also served as a journal of each student's engagement with the readings. Instead of relying upon a fixed reading schedule, I experimented with letting students read and report on readings in the order that interested or made sense to them. My hope was that by reading a review of a book or chapter posted by one of their peers, students would be motivated to read that section as well, if it matched their individual research interests at the moment. The motivation would be different than in the case of my telling students what to read and when to read it.

**5.Wikis: Synthesis and Collaboration**

While blogging encouraged individual reflection, requiring students to synthesize their knowledge in a wiki project that they could author collectively allowed the class to explore collective uses and negotiations of knowledge (c.f. Ferris and Wilder [2006](http://innovateonline.info/index.php?view=article&amp;id=258&amp;action=article)). After a series of discussions, students agreed to start a wiki to identify social software design patterns. The resulting [Design Patterns of Social Computing Wiki](http://ssa05.annenberg.edu/pmwiki/socialsoftware/index.php?n=Main.DesignPatternsOfSocialComputing) attempts to capture the essence of various problems in social software and illustrate best practices and good designs that have been employed to tackle them. We consider this a work in progress and hope that other interested parties become involved in this ongoing project, which could become a useful resource for the community.

**6.Issue Entrepreneurship: Putting the "Social" in Social Software**

I wanted the course to be more than just a review of social software and a theoretical discussion of its affordances. In my own work (c.f. Mejias [2005](http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/knowledgetree/edition07/html/la_mejias.html)), I argue that the true potential of social software lies in helping us figure out how to integrate our online and onsite social experiences. Thus, social software must live up to its name by relating to the individual's everyday social practices and fostering a desire to connect to the world as a whole, not just the parts that exist online. Furthermore, in order for software to be truly social, it must promote in the few who have access to it a responsibility for converting its benefits into benefits for a larger part of society.

With this goal in mind, the class was asked to address the question of whether social software can be an effective tool for individual and social change. Each learner undertook an issue entrepreneurship assignment (c.f. Agre [2004](http://polaris.gseis.ucla.edu/pagre/republic.html)), which involved identifying a social cause of interest of the student and using social software tools to attempt to make a meaningful contribution to the cause at three different levels: the personal, the local, and the global. Learners used their individual blogs to post progress reports, inviting comments from their peers. I informed students that they would not be graded on whether they succeeded or failed in making a meaningful contribution to their cause as long as they documented their experience and could discuss how social software contributed to their success or failure. This project was by far the most difficult of the course but, perhaps in the long term, the most rewarding as well.

Projects ranged widely in nature and scope and included the following:

* an [online community space](http://groups.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=groups.groupProfile&amp;groupID=101353999&amp;Mytoken=9D4D6851-EEF9-4086-82A36DB57341EF14802500828) for the [Youth Venture Media Network](http://www.youthventure.org/);
* a [wiki/knowledgebase](http://www.seedwiki.com/wiki/stop_extell/stop_extell.cfm) for West Siders for Responsible Development, Inc., a group protesting plans to build two towering buildings on Broadway between 99th and 100th streets; and
* a [blog](http://barriersshu.blogspot.com/) and a wiki to promote awareness of accessibility and assistive technology issues at Seton Hall University.

The goal of the project was to get students to think about using social software to promote social change. I expected that students would find major obstacles along the way since meaningful social change is hard work regardless of the technological means one utilizes to foster it. In fact, many projects failed in their first iterations, and students had to reconceptualize their proposals. I tried to make these frustrations part of the learning experience by addressing them in our discussion of the affordances of social software; such difficulties allowed us to recognize how the technology, for all its benefits, can only do so much. At the end of the semester, students considered their projects far from over and were willing to continue working on them because of their investment in the social issues they addressed. To paraphrase the rhetorical question posed by one student: Why do we need a class to get us involved in this type of activism concerning the social causes we feel passionate about? In the final review of her project, a student commented:

I am proud of my efforts thus far to introduce West Siders to the potential benefits of social software. At the same time, the process of change has been slower and more frustrating than I anticipated. If a primary goal of this project was to learn firsthand how hard it is to build networks and foster change using social software, that goal was certainly achieved. (Goldstein [2005](http://marionblogger.blogspot.com/2005/12/ie-project-recap-as-ive-blogged-about.html) , 4)

Another student remarked:

Even though it's the end of the semester, I feel it's just the beginning of my issue entrepreneurship project. It makes sense (to me) though that only after putting some time and thought into studying how social software works that I would be ready to use it effectively to pursue my issue. (Curinga [2005](http://mcuringa.blogspot.com/2005/12/issue-entrepreneurship-making.html) , 1)

One advantage of blogging about their projects as they unfolded—as opposed to waiting until the end of the class to present them—was that students recognized that they were not the only ones encountering problems, and they were able to support and critique one another.

**7.****Future Improvements and Recommendations for Practice**

I believe future variants of the course may be strengthened through some adjustments. For example, although students enjoyed being able to create their own reading schedule according to their individual

interests, in the future I will provide a document at the beginning of the course that matches specific topics with particular readings so that they can better plan their readings. I will also create wiki spaces for each major reading to collect student comments regarding that text. This will allow for some collaboration and continuing dialogue around the texts even when students are not reading the same text at the same time. Also, as a means of better preparing students for the issue entrepreneurship project, I will probably include a text on understanding and driving change—for example, Gladwell's The Tipping Point (2002).

Another improvement I will make based on student feedback is to provide more opportunities for informal online interaction. I made a conscious decision to make all of the work produced by the class accessible to the public since this would increase students' appreciation of social software dynamics. As a result, students felt some pressure to craft their blog posts carefully because they were visible not only to the whole class but also potentially to a larger audience. While I do not think this is necessarily bad, I do recognize that there should be a space (such as a discussion board, for instance) where students can interact in a more informal and conversational manner.

I believe that with the proper adjustments, the use of social software to facilitate distributed research has much potential for implementation in other learning contexts as well. Instructors in other academic fields, particularly those who seek to cultivate a collaborative ethos of engaged research in their students, may want to consider how such social software tools as blogs, wikis, distributed classification systems, and RSS feeds can be utilized to achieve this end in their own teaching. Based on my experience and the experience of my students, I have listed a number of recommendations for practice in [Exhibit 2](http://www.innovateonline.info/extra.php?id=1004).

**8.Conclusion**

As the diversity of the work produced and the depth of the student's observations indicate, I think the course was successful in what it set out to achieve: to organize students into a distributed research group using social software, to require them to think critically about the affordances of the technology, and to allow them to experiment with using it to promote social change.

One student summarized her progress at the end of the course in this way:

. . . today I can call myself a reflective social software user. I'm able to decide which social software tool (or combination of tools) is better in a specific situation based on the pros and cons of each one of them. However, I cannot say that I'm a specialist in this field: only now I understand that I have more questions than answers. (Teif [2005](http://www.livejournal.com/~jadess_/7122.html) , 2)

In conclusion, while the size of the class does not represent a large enough sample to make generalizations, I do believe based on my experience teaching this course that social software can be used to create effective distributed research communities. I also feel that a similar design can be used to teach classes in different subject matters. Most importantly, I think the application of social software in this manner supports a constructivist pedagogy where students feel empowered to take charge of their own learning.

**社交软件在教学当中的作用**

这篇文章探讨了当前的信息和通信技术(ict)，即社交软件，如何使新的学习和研究形式成为可能，让学生参与到集体构建和共享知识的网络中。这种学习方法我称之为分布式研究，可能对教育工作者和相关应用的开发者都有吸引力，因为它与基于问题的学习相比，有三个可比较的优势(参见Watson 2002;De Vry和Watson 2003)。首先，通过让学生承担集成和维护允许学习发生的社交软件系统的一些责任，它使学生参与到学习中来。其次，它促进了与促进知识聚合和组织的工具进行合作的好处，同时也表明，个人研究兴趣的多样性促进了所有人的学习。最后，它帮助学生发展实用的研究技能，他们需要在一个知识建设和传播越来越多地使用在线信息网络的世界。简而言之，社交软件允许学生参与分布式研究社区，这些社区在空间上超越了教室和学校，在时间上超越了特定的课堂或学期，在技术上超越了学校提供给学生的工具和资源。

在接下来的文章中，我首先提供了一个更详细的社交软件定义，并解释了在教育背景下研究它的重要性;然后，我将以一种与我刚才描述的相一致的方式，说明并讨论我在使用社交软件教授社交软件课程方面的特殊经验。

**1.社交软件的定义**

维姬苏特,布莱恩·亚历山大,帕斯卡卡普兰(2005)进行了审查各种社交软件的定义、识别至少有三种可能的角度定义:“社交软件作为一种工具(提高人类社会和协作能力),作为一个媒介(用于促进社会联系和信息交换),和作为一个生态(启用的系统的人、实践价值,在一个特定的本地环境和技术”)”(48)。考虑到这些观点，任何社交软件的定义都需要足够宽泛，以涵盖各种各样的技术，如:

•博客:个人网络发布系统;

•wiki:协同内容管理系统，允许任何用户即时创建或编辑页面;

•分布式分类系统:该软件允许个人用户将条目与任意数量的关键字(称为标签)相关联，从而对条目进行分类，然后由软件将这些关键字聚合起来，以造福整个社区;和

•富站点摘要(RSS)提要:当有新内容可用时，例如在博客、wiki页面或分布式分类系统中的特定标记中，向用户发出警报的订阅系统。

虽然social software一词的多义性表明了它的新特性，但是计算机如何被用于复制或增强社会动态的历史与计算机本身的历史一样长(c.f. Allen 2004)。也许让社交软件独一无二的不仅仅是新一代的工具，而且这些技术在很短的时间内就得到了广泛的应用。根据皮尤互联网项目(2006)的一份报告，网络用了不到四年的时间就获得了5000万的观众，而广播用了将近40年的时间才获得同样数量的用户。

然而，这种迅速传播有时可能意味着没有足够的时间仔细考虑这些技术的应用和可用性。在我所教授的课程中，我的意图不仅是让学生们有使用这些新技术进行分布式研究的实践经验，而且还鼓励学生们解决与之相关的更基本的问题:关于社交软件，社交是什么?社区的概念是如何被社交软件重新定义的?在社交软件中，人与代码之间如何共享社会代理?不平等使用社交软件的社会影响是什么?社交软件能成为个人和社会变革的有效工具吗?

**2.社交软件在师范学院当中的应用**

2005年秋季，我在哥伦比亚大学师范学院(Teachers College, Columbia University)教授了一门名为《社交软件的可承受性》(Social Software afford)的课程。本次研究生研讨会共有13名来自通信、计算和技术教育(CCTE)项目的研究生参加。本课程旨在让学生熟练使用社交软件进行分布式研究，同时对社交软件的可用性或该技术可能或阻止的行为类型进行批判性分析。因为课程的中心主题是探索社会软件对社会变革的影响，所以课程也要求学生运用他们新获得的技能和知识来推动他们选择的社会事业或项目。为了实现这些目标，我将学生组织成一个分布式的研究社区:一个使用社交软件的工作组，通过共享和组织资源、分析数据、报告单个研究项目以及为小组项目做出贡献，共同探索一个主题。

教学大纲列出了本学期的三个目标：

1.本课程将培养学生使用博客、wiki、分布式分类系统和RSS订阅源的能力。

2.本课程将对社会软件工具、应用程序和理论进行最先进的回顾，重点是对社会软件的可用性进行批判性评估。

3.课程成员将进行一项个人练习，研究社交软件在个人和社会层面产生变革的潜力。

虽然学生们在课堂上见了几次面(一次介绍性的，一次中点的，最后一次加上一些非正式的会议)，但是大部分的作业都是在网上展开的。一个中央课程博客传播关于课程本身、作业、建议阅读材料和其他有关课程活动的资料。使用一个免费的分布式分类系统del.icio。我们，班级贡献了一个与我们研究相关的研究资料库。学生们还建立了个人博客，在那里他们可以发表个人对研究和课堂阅读的反应，或者更新班上其他同学关于他们个人项目的信息。使用RSS聚合器(允许用户订阅和阅读RSS提要的程序)，学生能够跟踪研究存储库中的新添加内容，而不必逐个重复地检查每个资源，以查看是否进行了更新。整个班级还编辑了一个最终的wiki项目，这是我们在本学期前半部分共同定义的。虽然所有的类活动和工具都是相互关联的，但是每个活动都需要进一步的详细说明。

**3.分布式研究：记录每一个人的研究结果**

上述分布式分类系统由del.icio构成。我们将与社交软件相关的项目设置为书签，并为它们分配标签“ccte”(用于通信、计算和教育技术，师范学院的项目名称)。结果(和正在进行的)链接集合可以在这里查看。所有的学生都被要求在整个学期中贡献项目。学生也希望订阅del.icio生成的RSS提要。作为一种记录所有贡献的方式。然后，班级成员在各自的博客中探索个人感兴趣的项目并进行讨论，通常是在教学大纲指定的阅读书目的背景下进行。

但是，除了更好的信息管理的好处之外，这项练习还把学生变成了社会软件知识的贡献者，而不仅仅是接受者。学生们成为研究人员，他们可以为我们对这个主题的研究添加一些东西，同时根据自己的分类方案建立自己的资源集合。当然，这要求我，作为讲师，愿意放弃作为唯一信息来源的角色。然而，这个策略也让我受益，让我接触到更多的研究、资源和想法，这些都是我自己无法识别的。换句话说，我的学生们的贡献增加了我对这个话题的兴趣和知识。

**4.博客：个人的声音**

对资源池的贡献本身是有价值的，但是对社交软件的详细研究需要一个更个性化的反思空间，这就是为什么我要求全班同学在整个课程中都保持一个博客。当然，这项活动也旨在让学生接触到与使用博客相关的身份、写作风格、发布频率、社区形成等问题。

在课程结束时，一名学生在他的个人自我评价中总结了被介绍到这种新的交流形式的经历:

我第一次真正深入到博客的世界，研究各种类型的博客，阅读“值得注意的博客”和获奖作品。我非常喜欢通过点击博客滚动条，从一个博客到下一个博客之间蜿蜒曲折的路径。最终，我开始对事情是如何进行的有了一些感觉。我探索了为我的博客添加插件的可能性。我添加了Sitemeter来测量流量，包括del.icio的聚合提要。我们和提要摘要，并自定义模板，从每个匹配我的网站的外观…我开始在我的博客上收到匿名的点击和评论。虽然人数不多，但非常令人兴奋。我开始看到写博客让人上瘾的本质，以及参与大规模分布式对话的兴奋感。(M. Curinga，私人邮件，2005年12月24日)

该博客还作为每个学生参与阅读的日志。我没有依赖固定的阅读时间表，而是让学生按照他们感兴趣或有意义的顺序阅读和报告。我的希望是，通过阅读同辈人发表的一本书或一章的评论，学生们也会有动力去阅读这一章节，如果它符合他们目前的个人研究兴趣的话。这样做的动机和我告诉学生什么时候读什么书的动机是不同的。

**5.Wiki：整合与协作**

虽然写博客鼓励个人反思，要求学生在wiki项目中整理他们的知识，他们可以集体创作，这让课堂探索知识的集体使用和协商(c.f. Ferris和Wilder 2006)。经过一系列的讨论，学生们同意建立一个wiki来识别社交软件设计模式。计算Wiki的最终设计模式试图捕捉社会化软件中各种问题的实质，并说明用于解决这些问题的最佳实践和良好设计。我们认为这是一项正在进行的工作，并希望其他有关方面参与这项正在进行的项目，这将成为对社会有用的资源。

**6.企业家观点：将社交放到社交软件中**

我希望这门课不仅仅是对社交软件的回顾和对其实用性的理论讨论。在我自己的工作中(c.f. Mejias 2005)，我认为社交软件的真正潜力在于帮助我们找到如何整合我们的在线和现场社交经验。因此，社交软件必须与个人的日常社交实践相关联，并培养与整个世界(而不仅仅是网络上存在的部分)连接的愿望，从而名副其实。此外，为了使软件真正具有社会性，它必须让少数能够使用它的人承担起将它的好处转化为社会更大一部分的好处的责任。

带着这个目标，这门课被要求回答这样一个问题:社交软件能否成为个人和社会变革的有效工具。每位学习者都承担了一项问题创业任务(c.f. Agre 2004)，其中包括确定学生感兴趣的社会事业，并使用社会软件工具试图在三个不同的层次上为该事业做出有意义的贡献:个人的、本地的和全球的。学习者使用他们的个人博客发布进度报告，邀请他们的同龄人发表评论。我告诉学生们，只要他们记录下自己的经历，并能够讨论社交软件对他们成功或失败的影响，就不会根据他们是否成功或失败对他们的事业做出了有意义的贡献来打分。到目前为止，这个项目是课程中最难的，但从长远来看，也许也是最有价值的。

项目的研究内容很广泛，包括:

•青年创业媒体网络在线社区空间;

•为“负责任的发展”西派提供wiki/知识库，一个抗议在百老汇第99街和第100街之间修建两座高楼的组织;

•在西顿霍尔大学(Seton Hall University)开设博客和wiki，以提高对可访问性和辅助技术问题的认识。

该项目的目标是让学生们考虑使用社交软件来促进社会变革。我希望学生们能找到前进道路上的主要障碍，因为有意义的社会变革是一项艰苦的工作，无论人们利用何种技术手段来促进它。事实上，许多项目在第一次迭代中失败了，学生们不得不重新构思他们的提案。我试图把这些挫折作为学习经验的一部分，在我们讨论社交软件的可用性时加以解决;这些困难让我们认识到，尽管这项技术有诸多好处，但它的作用却有限。在学期结束时，学生们认为他们的项目远远没有结束，并愿意继续他们的工作，因为他们在他们所处理的社会问题上进行了投资。借用一位学生提出的反问:为什么我们需要一门课，让我们参与到这种有关我们所热衷的社会事业的行动主义中来?在她的项目的最终评审中，一个学生评论道:

到目前为止，我一直在努力向西方贵族介绍社交软件的潜在好处，我为此感到自豪。与此同时，变革的进程比我预期的更慢，更令人沮丧。如果这个项目的主要目标是直接了解使用社交软件构建网络和促进变革有多难，那么这个目标肯定已经实现了。(戈德斯坦2005，实施4)

另一个学生说:

虽然学期结束了，但我觉得这只是我的创业课题的开始。(对我来说)这是有意义的，尽管只有在投入一些时间和思想研究社交软件如何工作之后，我才会准备好有效地使用它来解决我的问题。(Curinga 2005, 1)

将他们的项目展开时写博客的一个好处——而不是等到课程结束时才把它们展示出来——是学生们意识到他们并不是唯一遇到问题的人，他们能够互相支持和批评。

**7.未来的改进和实践建议**

我相信未来课程的变化可能会通过一些调整得到加强。例如，尽管学生们喜欢能够根据自己的个性制定自己的阅读计划和兴趣，在以后的课程中，我会在课程开始时提供一份文件，将特定的主题与特定的阅读材料相匹配，这样他们就能更好地计划他们的阅读材料。我还将为每个专业的阅读创建wiki空间，以收集学生对该文本的评论。这将允许围绕文本进行一些协作和持续的对话，即使学生不是同时阅读同一篇文本。此外，为了让学生更好地为问题创业项目做准备，我可能会包括一篇关于理解和推动变革的文章——例如，格拉德威尔的《引爆点》(2002)。

基于学生反馈，我的另一个改进是为非正式的在线互动提供更多的机会。我做了一个有意识的决定，让课堂上的所有作品都向公众开放，因为这将增加学生对社交软件动态的欣赏。因此，学生们感到了一定的压力，要精心制作他们的博客文章，因为它们不仅对全班学生可见，而且可能对更多人可见。虽然我不认为这是坏事，但我确实认识到，应该有一个空间(例如讨论板)，让学生能够以更非正式和对话的方式进行互动。

我相信，通过适当的调整，使用社交软件来促进分布式研究在其他学习环境中也有很大的实现潜力。其他学术领域的教师，特别是那些希望培养学生参与研究的协作精神的教师，可能想要考虑如何利用博客、wiki、分布式分类系统和RSS提要等社交软件工具在自己的教学中实现这一目标。根据我的经验和我的学生的经验，我在表2中列出了一些实践建议。

**8.总结：**

作品的多样性和学生的深度的观察表明,我认为这门课是成功的在着手实现:组织学生进入分布式研究小组使用社交软件,要求他们批判性地思考相应的技术,并让他们尝试用它来促进社会变革。

一名学生在课程结束时这样总结她的进步:

。今天，我可以称自己为反思型社交软件用户。我能够根据每种工具的优缺点来决定哪种社交软件工具(或组合工具)在特定的情况下更好。然而，我不能说我是这个领域的专家:直到现在我才明白我的问题比答案多。(Teif 2005，实施细则2)

综上所述，虽然班级的规模不足以代表一个足够大的样本来进行概括，但基于我教授这门课程的经验，我确实相信社交软件可以用来创建有效的分布式研究社区。我也觉得类似的设计可以用来教授不同学科的课程。最重要的是，我认为以这种方式应用社交软件支持了一种建构主义的教学方式，在这种教学方式下，学生们感到自己有权负责自己的学习。