



# Thank You For Texting

## Rethinking Technology Use in Classrooms - New Technologies, New Methods, New Concerns

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Please email me( [ekiny@uw.edu](mailto:ekiny@uw.edu)) with any questions you may have and for further resources.

### Technology Use and The Learning Environment

Some of the core concerns around integrating various technology tools into the classroom stem from the perceived harm technologies may cause to the learning environment. Mindfulness of the technological tools that structure everyday class activity is thus essential.

### Setting Up Boundaries/Signing a Classroom Technology Contract

I really benefited from facilitating dialogue with students in the early sessions about technology use. I am an advocate of technology in the classroom but too many screens (e.g., the screen in the classroom and the various screens that students use) can be distracting. In order to set rules around technology use, I use **Poll Everywhere** ([www.polleverywhere.com](http://www.polleverywhere.com)), a free online polling

system that can be used to poll students about their preferences. I also use **Google Docs** ([docs.google.com](http://docs.google.com)) to prepare the classroom technology contract that we virtually sign together as a class. I make this document available on Blackboard. Addressing the when/how/why of technology use really helps to build a better class environment and manage boundaries.

## In-Class Collaboration

I have discovered through intense in-class experimentation that one of the best uses of social media and mobile technologies is to facilitate collaborative work both in and outside of classroom. There are three core ways in which these technologies can be integrated.

### Expressing Ideas

Ideas can be expressed in class in a variety of ways: from taking notes collectively to modeling solutions through technology platforms. I encourage students to use Google Docs for collaborative note-taking. Students maintain and shift roles of note-taking and editing. I divide students into note-taking groups. I also use **Wikis** in the classroom. I ask students to write down questions in the first class and then I make a Wiki on Blackboard based around these questions. Students are then assigned to answer the questions collaboratively, building a class resource they can refer back to throughout the semester.



"On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog."

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### Thinking about Ideas

I have tremendously benefited from visual mapping tools in the classroom. Sometimes I will be stuck and will just have to imagine my ideas in a visual form. When I asked students to draw mental maps of their ideas, their projects also improve tremendously. We *Sim*think visually and respond to visual culture quickly. **Freemind** (<http://freemind.sourceforge.net/>) is a free tool that you can download and use for mind mapping. **SimpleMinds** (<http://www.simpleapps.eu/>) is a similar service with free and paid versions (both are PC and MAC friendly). A more textually-based form of these idea mapping tools is **Workflowy** (<https://workflowy.com/>) It generates mental lists and organize ideas.

Once ideas are thought out similar tools can be used to present them. **Prezi** ([www.prezi.com](http://www.prezi.com)) is a useful and publicly shareable platform based on these mind-mapping technologies - to show the flow of ideas to an audience and to facilitate better presentation. For Mac users, **Flowboards** (<https://flowboard.com/>) is a visually stunning presentation board you can make to supplement your presentations.

## New White Boards of Technology

I also supplement the whiteboard with a number of interactive technologies. I have been using **Padlet** ([www.padlet.com](http://www.padlet.com)) as a way for me to upload images for discussion. I just give the address of the Padlet page I generate. This allows for students to look closely at the images using their own devices. They sometimes write commentary as well. **Aww** (<http://awwapp.com/>) is another digital whiteboard. I also use Google Docs for in class activities for us to watch the flow of our ideas. These technologies allow us to both note-take and write down ideas while also incorporating other media such as video, photo and images. It also gives us the opportunity to share the class surfaces easily.



*"It keeps me from looking at my phone every two seconds."*  
Liam Walsh, The New York Times

## Rethinking the Classroom Assignments

I have also incorporated technologies to rethink classroom assignments. I have engaged with students in dialogues as to how we can make supplementary assignments so that we can share our work with a broader audience. Some colleagues, for example, use **Meme Generators** ([memegenerator.net](http://memegenerator.net)) that allows students to make funny memes about class topics. Memes are viral images/captions (think funny cat pictures) They then share these memes with the class via **Twitter** or **Tumblr**. (They generate a class hashtag : #baruchcom360 that they include in each of their posts)

Cathy Davidson, a professor at Duke University and a prolific contributor to debates about technology use in classrooms, also suggests that we re-think final assignments. She encourages students to collaborate to put together using tools like **Google Doc** a class magazine or book that they can share.

By jointly using micro-blogging platforms like ***Tumblr*** ([www.tumblr.com](http://www.tumblr.com)) and Google Docs and Padlet, in my classes we collaborate in list making classrooms. Buzzfeed-like platforms make sharable lists online relevant. We make lists that students can share with their friends and their community. We make these lists filled with images. Students post the lists on their class blog pages. They work on the lists in and outside of classroom.