

Pedagogical Benefits of NowComment Online Discussion

[NowComment](#)[®] can help students intellectually engage in ways traditional in-class discussions cannot. Consider these differences (equally applicable to text readings, videos, and/or images):

NowComment Online Discussion	Face-to-Face Discussion
Overcomes Time Constraints	
Each student can make as many comments as desired (subject to Instructor's limits).	Only time for a relatively few comments. Some students get no turn to speak, some don't get to make important points.
Students can voice more detailed and nuanced thoughts; long comments don't take time away from others.	There's usually no time to fully communicate complex ideas, explore tangential themes, etc.
Advanced conversational threading encourages "back-and-forth" interactions to explore divergent perspectives, related ideas, interesting implications, etc.	Few chances to talk through differing perspectives in depth, rarely able to ask follow-up questions or pose challenges.
Comfortable Online Social Context	
Students can take time to think through and fully express their thoughts; everyone can get equal time and no one is ever interrupted. Shy students and non-native speakers often "come out of their shells."	A few extroverts can dominate the conversation. Students have to speak up quickly or risk losing their turn, even if their ideas aren't fully formed. Shy students rarely participate.
Students can comment on whatever they find interesting. Tangential observations provide information without any interruption.	There's only one conversation, which may not touch on what a given student finds most interesting. Tangents derail the conversation.
Writing is done in private, often from home or other "safe" environment. Students can respond to whichever comments they choose.	Relatively high social pressure (all eyes on the speaker). The Instructor and/or each student's verbal assertiveness determine who gets to respond to which comments.
Online discussion leverages students' comfort with and enjoyment of online social media.	A familiar but not exciting format.

Pedagogical Benefits of NowComment Online Discussion (page 2 of 2)

NowComment Online Discussion	Face-to-Face Discussion
Logistics	
No need to split attention for note-taking; a full discussion transcript is always accessible for student review and instructor evaluation.	Students and Instructors must juggle listening and note-taking; retention is hampered by imperfect memory and skill at note-taking.
One upload provides ongoing access to both the document and a discussion transcript.	Time and expense of distributing paper copies (which students often lose or don't bring).
New Technology, New Options	
Online comments on assigned readings are a relatively good indicator of which students did the reading.	Harder to assess who has or hasn't done the reading.
Ability to hide comments until a certain date and time (either to minimize peer influence or for assessment).	Inescapable influence/pressure of previously voiced comments.
Sort and tag comments, skim summaries, reply privately.	N/A
Information can be quickly shared; text, images, and videos are visual high bandwidth.	Relatively little information can be shared; speech is low bandwidth.

NowComment is a perfect tool for distance education, but it's most commonly used to complement face-to-face discussions and lectures in traditional and flipped classes. Instructors can employ it flexibly, e.g.:

- use online comments as organic starting points for face-to-face discussion
- review online commenting to see what students understand *before* a lecture
- assign online discussion to reinforce concepts *after* a lecture

Other NowComment educational resources are at <https://nowcomment.com/education>

For more information please contact us:

Email: info@nowcomment.com

Twitter: @nowcomment

[NowComment](#) is a project of public interest group Fairness.com LLC.