Social networking as augmentation to in-class discussion

Constructivism is an epistemological philosophy that views all knowledge as constructed. As a learning theory, constructivists’ pedagogies develop around the notion that students learn from their experiences. Learning is an active rather than a passive endeavor where students use their existing knowledge and life experience to construct unique meanings. Contemporary college students use posting boards on web-based social networking sites to communicate with others in their university sphere. These sites are part of the everyday, real-life experience of existing and communicating in this environment. This paper describes benefits and problems with using Facebook, a popular online social network, to communicate with college students and have them communicate with peers during a semester long course. Findings show that using a social network in the context of a class helped to engage students and facilitated richer in-class discussions. Students overwhelmingly supported the use of Facebook for coursework after the experience. These findings were counter to an earlier focus group that had not used Facebook for a course but generally rejected the idea.