

# Is social media creating a digitally dependent culture?

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Has social media invented a digital culture, or simply removed the red tape to a bevy of information? Credit: Stock.xchng

Unless you've taken a time machine back to the dark ages, you're well aware that social media is everywhere. The question many ask is whether social media has invented a digital culture or simply removed the red tape to a bevy of information.

Suzanne Scott, assistant professor of Film and Media Studies in the Department of English at Arizona State University, teaches two courses

on the impact of new and [digital media](#) on the media industry and fan culture.

"People want to talk about [social media](#) as if it is groundbreaking, which it is on many levels, but ultimately, it is just an extension of something we've always been attracted to, like building out our network of friends and colleagues. Platforms like Facebook have just made it easier to curate and broadcast this information like never before," she said.

Networks such as Twitter have provided individuals with unprecedented access to celebrities and brands.

"Twitter is oriented around making connections outside of your circles. You may have gone to Comic Con and waited in line for an hour just to ask Dan Harmon a question about 'Community.' I, on the other hand, can simply tweet him a question and he is more inclined to respond."

Scott also references how social media is being used as an extension of the community following television shows. Shows such as *The Walking Dead* (#TheWalkingDead) and *Scandal* (#Scandal) list their tags at the bottom of the screen on each episode, encouraging the audience to go online to connect with fellow fans, producers and cast members. This increases the lifespan of a show that normally lasts only one hour each week.

But what happens when social media meets the classroom? Many professors will list electronic devices as unnecessary distractions for their students during lectures. Realistically, that is probably true. Scott says that in her class, she notices students browsing the web, but that banning the devices altogether is not the solution. Instead, she sees it as a personal challenge.

"Simply telling students they can't bring their devices to class doesn't

solve the problem. My goal is to find a way to turn this distraction into something that they critically engage with," she said.

For example, Scott encourages students to use YouTube and Google to find content related to the subject matter at hand that can be shared with the class. She also notices that [students](#) will search Twitter to see if there is a handle or hashtag they can follow. Students are also required to create a Storify page where they treat social media posts as scholarly evidence analyzing fan culture.

Provided by Arizona State University

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