THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Conducting Independent Enquiry About Social Media

Teacher pack

In this pack

This pack builds upon the highly successful major research project, Why We Post (UCL) which focuses on the uses and consequences of social media. It specifically aims to engage teachers and students using a range of relevant contemporary social research activities. The activities are designed to support the knowledge and skills required for the Independent Enquiry Study of HKDSE Liberal Studies. In particular these activities seek to address the gap between learning about conducting inquiry through textbooks, notes and teacher led pedagogy rather than learning about real research experience first-hand. This project also draws on the topic of social media which is both highly topical and relevant to students own lives and is therefore accessible and familiar. The research based activities culminate in a knowledge exchange between students based in Hong Kong and the UK, facilitated and funded by The University of Hong Kong.

This project provides opportunities for a range of differentiated teaching and learning styles thus suits students from a range of backgrounds, abilities and aptitudes. Furthermore, the project furnishes students with the skills to think reflectively about their own use of social media in a global context. Finally it provides students with opportunities for learning how to be autonomous learners and develop the kinds of skills which are undoubtedly useful for employment and university as well as developing effective interpersonal skills.

Why We Post

Why We Post (2016) was a large research project undertaken by a team of nine of anthropologists at University College London, including Dr Tom McDonald. Funded by the European Research Council, the research set out to examine the impact of social media in a range of sites around the world. The research focuses on a wide range of themes, including education and young people, work, business, online and offline relationships, gender, inequality, politics, visual images and individualism. Each of the anthropologists spent fifteen months living and working in their respective fieldsites which include China, Chile, Italy, Britain, Trinidad, Turkey, India and Brazil. A range of research methods were used including the ethnographic method and surveys. This research is unusual in the fact that it seeks

not just academic engagement but also wider public participation, meaning it is highly accessible for HKDSE Liberal Studies students.

The results of this research challenge much existing knowledge and research around social media. For example, among other things, the project finds that social media is not making us more individualistic and it is not making the world more homogenous. In fact social media tends to be quite conservative and reflects the people using it rather than reflecting the platform itself. In other words, social media is not changing people, it is providing an alternative method of expressing existing values and attitudes already in existence.

The research led to a range of open access resources including eleven highly accessible ethnographic books, a wide range of short films (over 100), a free online learning course, a website summarising the research and key findings. The project has already enjoyed considerable success, for example the books, including the comparative edition *How the World Changed Social Media* (2016, UCL Press) has been downloaded over 98,000 times.

Sharing this pack

If you've enjoyed using these materials, we would be delighted if you could share it with your colleagues or other teachers who you think might find them useful! All our teaching materials from this project are provided under a *Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International* licence, which means that you are free to copy and redistribute these materials, and also to edit, transform and build upon them! However, please note that you can't sell these materials, or use them for commercial purposes.

We'll be updating these materials regularly based on feedback from teachers like yourselves, **so please register at sociology.hku.hk/impact-social-media** so that we can let you know when improved versions are available.

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA
Suggestions for using the resources
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Suggestions for using the resources

There are three ways to approach the delivery of these resources depending upon institution specific requirements and needs of your students.

1. **Teach the resources as a continuous programme, lasting approximately one week.**
   You can directly use the resources to teach your students how to do IES. This method of delivery enables students to engage in skills and content work, encouraging synoptic thinking and drawing from a range of different areas of the course. A visiting speaker from the project can be arranged in advance. A selection of activities can be used from the project or adapted by teachers as suits.

2. **Use the teaching resources individually as naturally occurring throughout the course.**
   The structure of HKEAA's Structured Enquiry Approach, part A, B, C and D is adopted in the resource pack. If you have school-based resources for IES, you can select relevant and interesting parts to use as supplementary materials. You are resources which stand alone or work in combination.

3. **Distribute the resource pack to autonomous students who feel interested in studying social media.**
   You may not have enough lesson time to teach the resources but you may have some capable and independent students who feel interested in studying impact of social media. You could distribute the resource pack to these students so that they can get multimedia resources and step-by-step guidance on how to carry out their IES. They can also get introductory literature to study impact of social media.

Learning outcomes

Below you'll find the learning outcomes for each section of the student pack.

S-1.   What is the Structured Enquiry Approach?
- Students can explain the following:
    - The weighting of IES in their HKDSE Liberal Studies grades.
    - The issues they can study.
    - The different parts of the Structured Enquiry Approach

S-2.   Part A: What are the issues I should focus my research on?
- Students can choose the issue they want to study and explain controversies related to the issue.
- Students can explain the aim of their enquiry.
- Students can explain the significance of the issue.
- Students can set one major enquiry question and at least three concrete and relevant focus questions.
- Students can define the scope of their enquiry.

S-3.   Part B: What concepts and methods are relevant to your IES?
- Students can identify the literature they can read about their enquiry issue.
- Students can define the key concepts relevant to their enquiry question and focus questions.
- Students can delineate how their key concepts are measured in their enquiry.
- Students can explain how they apply their concepts in their enquiry.
- Students can choose a method to collect data for analysis.
- Students can collect the data they need.

S-4.   Part C: What areas should I explain in detail for my enquiry issue?
- Students can present quantitative data and qualitative data they have collected respectively.
- Students can use the data they have collected to explain multiple views on the enquiry issue.
- Students can answer all the focus questions.

S-5.   Part D: How do I formulate an argument?

- Student can formulate and explain their argument of their enquiry issue.
- Student can present reasons and evidence to support their argument.
- Students can explain counter-arguments and rebut them.

S-6. Use of footnotes and compilation of bibliography
- Students can cite literature properly.
- Student can compile their bibliography list.

Model answers
The student pack can be downloaded for free from **sociology.hku.hk/impact-social-media**. We've also provided a copy of the pack with model answers for you to download.

The resources produced for this project are collaborative and draw from the following people.

Laura Pountney

Laura has been teaching Sociology for 15 years, she currently teaches Sociology at Colchester Sixth Form College. She is a senior Examiner of Anthropology for a major exam board and has authored a number of recent textbooks on Anthropology and Sociology. Laura also runs student revision courses and teacher INSET and writes articles for the *Sociology Review*. Laura became involved with the Why We Post project as an editor.

Tom McDonald

Tom is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Sociology, The University of Hong Kong. He received his PhD in Anthropology from University College London in 2013. As part of the Why We Post project, he spent 15-months living in a small rural Chinese town investigating how social media use was transforming the Chinese countryside.
sociology.hku.hk/mcdonald

Candy Hiu Wa Chan

Candy teaches Liberal Studies at a leading secondary school in Hong Kong. She is also an e-learning co-ordinator. She has a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from The Chinese University of Hong Kong, and an MSc from The London School of Economics and Political Science

Laura Haapio-Kirk

Laura is a research assistant and public engagement fellow on the Why We Post project. She is currently pursuing a PhD on smartphones and smart ageing in Japan, as part of the ERC-funded ASSA project at UCL Anthropology. She has a Master's degree in Visual Anthropology from the University of Oxford.

Why We Post
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/why-we-post

Why We Post books (free to download)
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-press/why-we-post

Department of Sociology, The University of Hong Kong
http://sociology.hku.hk