

Online Activity: Twitter (and TweetDeck) for Journalists Quick Start

INTRODUCTION

Using Twitter for journalists – and journalism students -- requires a slightly different mindset than what we are usually use social media for. As an up-and-coming journalist, you want to show that you know social media and Twitter culture really, really well. (After all, the media professionals who will hire you did not grow up with social media the way you did.) You greatly increase your chances for a career in 21st-century media by becoming an ‘expert’ in social media – including creating viral content, knowing and developing an audience, using metrics, etc. You need ‘edge’ – and technical savvy, but also responsibility. You need to be serious-minded in a way that is often hard for us to grasp. This guide shows you how to get started with Twitter and use it in particular ways that will foster your consumption of news, and help develop a ‘virtual beat’ of following sources in your area of interest as a journalist using TweetDeck, which makes it easy to ‘curate’ a set of users to follow and get different feeds.

Journalists (and bloggers) are inherently competitive. We want to ‘scoop’ each other and get stories first. Internet culture (and especially social media) means that the speed of distributing news (and even gossip) is much faster. In fact, the goals of Twitter and social media are different than what (ethical) journalists have done for a long time. How do we slow it down a little and use Twitter (and other social media) in a responsible way?

12 TASKS FOR TWITTER AND TWEETDECK

- The following guide contains instructor-led demonstrations of setting up Twitter and Tweetdeck with a curated set of feeds, plus practice with common Twitter tasks. **Work on your own with a partner. Get familiar with using Twitter basics.** You should extend and practice these tasks at home. See the recommended activities at the end of this guide for details.

◆ TASK 1: Sign Up for Twitter Using a 'Responsible' Handle

❑ 1) In a browser, sign up for Twitter using the most responsible e-mail address that you currently use. (Your e-mail won't be public, but choosing the most 'responsible' address in your life will remind you that this is your 'serious' Twitter account.

www.twitter.com

❑ 2) Choose a 'serious' handle – we will go over some examples. (Fortunately, you can change your Twitter handle later – if you are upgrading or re-branding your identity without losing your followers.) A good default choice is to use your full name – add a suffix like NYC or CUNY or use your middle initial similar if your name is already taken. (Don't use your birthday year or zip code.)

❑ 3) You'll want to set an appropriate profile picture or graphic, as well as customize other Twitter options. (You can do this later.)

The current recommended banner photo size is 1500 x 500. (You'll want to use Photoshop to get this right.) It appears at the top of your Twitter page (www.twitter.com/??????) where ?????? is your Twitter handle.

4) Turn off e-mail notifications.

❑ 4) Click on your icon for your handle (just left of the Tweet button).

❑ 5) Click on the **Privacy and settings** option on the dropdown menu.

❑ 6) Click on **Email notifications** menu option (on the left side of the screen).

❑ 7) Click on **Turn off** button to the right of the **Email is enabled** option. Notice that this turns off email notifications (Email is disabled.) See screenshot below.

ENG 208 eng208lagcc @eng208lagcc

Email notifications

Control when and how often Twitter sends emails to you. [Learn more.](#)

Email is disabled. [Turn on](#)

Thanks, your notification settings have been saved. [×](#)

Activity related to you and your Tweets

Email me when ☒ You have new notifications. [Learn more.](#)
☒ You're sent a direct message
☒ Someone emails a Tweet to you

Activity from your network

Email you with ☒ Top Tweets and Stories
 Sent periodically [↓](#)
☒ Updates about the performance of your Tweets

Updates from Twitter

Email you with ☒ News about Twitter product and feature updates
☒ Tips on getting more out of Twitter
☒ Things you missed since you last logged into Twitter
☒ News about Twitter on partner products and other third party services
☒ Participation in Twitter research surveys
☒ Suggestions for recommended accounts
☒ Suggestions based on your recent follows
☒ Tips on Twitter business products

IMPORTANT: Once you start using Twitter (and other social media) as a 'serious' up-and-coming journalist, your entire life on social media will be scrutinized by potential employers (and, of course, readers). You need to be aware that any social media activity that is foolish, juvenile, politically dubious or careless can mean you won't get that interview, that scholarship or that job. (As you probably know, these guidelines apply to everybody. Eric Schmidt of Google believes that parents need to talk to their children about the permanence of social media and its impact on their future lives at the age of 6 or 7! What is true of everyone is more true of journalists because we are expected to be taken seriously online, in print or in our Tweets.)

Of course, you can still tweet from personal accounts, but you absolutely need to assume that anything you tweet (or post) could one day be connected to your 'professional' identity. (It will be -- remember, the Internet never forgets.)

◆ TASK 2: Send Some Tweets

- ❑ 1) Send 3 tweets from your account by clicking on the Tweet button (upper right).
 - ❑ Write a Welcome tweet.
 - ❑ Tell us who you are in another tweet and what you are studying at LaGuardia.
 - ❑ Give us another tweet on your career plans and what kind of journalism you would like to do (or are interested in).

Twitter Style for Journalists:

Write in AP style. Be professional.

Limit textspeak or abbreviations. (You can abbreviate to fit a tweet into the current 280 character limit in Twitter, but show you care about writing. You're a serious writer.)

Write with capitalization and use punctuation.

(Yes, this is different than being a private citizen on social media.)

To send a tweet, click the **Tweet** button.

View the tweets in your Twitter timeline.

Can you edit a tweet once you tweet it? How do you fix an incorrect Tweet?

◆ TASK 3: Tweet a Link Using a Link Shortener (Bitly)

- ❑ 1) Write a tweet that tells the world where you are blogging for this class:

I blog at ??????.wordpress.com .



❑ 2) Find one of your posts. Copy the link (permalink) by highlighting the headline and copying the link with the right mouse button. (**Copy Link Address** or similar).

Even though Twitter allows 280 characters, you don't want long URL / web addresses for links.

❑ 2) Go to www.bitly.com

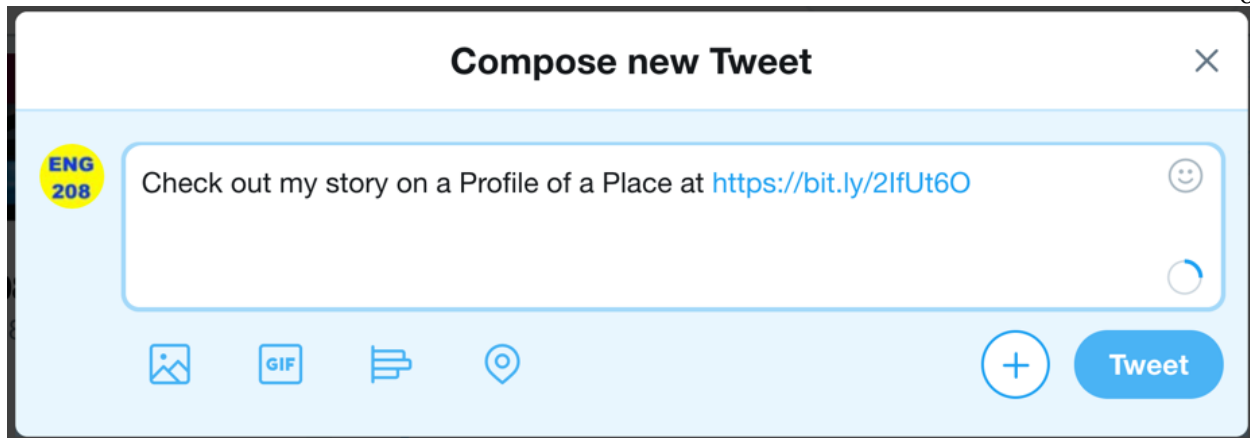
❑ 3) Paste in your link to your WordPress post / story to on the Bitly form.



❑ 4) Copy the shortened link into the Clipboard by clicking on the **Copy** button.

❑ 5) Back in Twitter compose a tweet with this shortened link:

Check out my story on ????? at <https://bit.ly/?????>



❑ 6) Click the **Tweet** button to send the tweet.

◆ **TASK 4: Tweet a Photo (and Be Aware of 2:1 and 1:1 Cropping and Recommended Sizes)**

When you're on your phone 'live tweeting,' you won't have much control over photo sizing. But if you are tweeting in 'serious' mode – and have time, you should be aware of photo sizing conventions on Twitter.

Twitter shows 2 versions of any posted photos:

1:1 (square)

In-Stream Photos 2:1 (full size)

Sizes:

- Minimum to appear expanded 440 x 220 pixels (a 2:1 ratio).
- Can tweet up to 4 images at one time.
- Maximum to appear expanded 1024 x 512 pixels.
- Appears in stream collapsed at 506 x 253 pixels on desktop.
- Maximum file size of 5 MB for photos, and 5 MB for animated GIFs on mobile and 15 MB on web.

So you will want to make sure your photos fit a 2:1 aspect (and that when you look at the center of the image, they make sense).

TIP: RESIZE YOUR PHOTOS TO 1024 x 512 PIXELS. CROP INTELLIGENTLY SO THEY LOOK RIGHT IN 1:1 MODE (WITH THE EDGES CROPPED AUTOMATICALLY BY TWITTER).

❑ 1) Create a tweet like this:

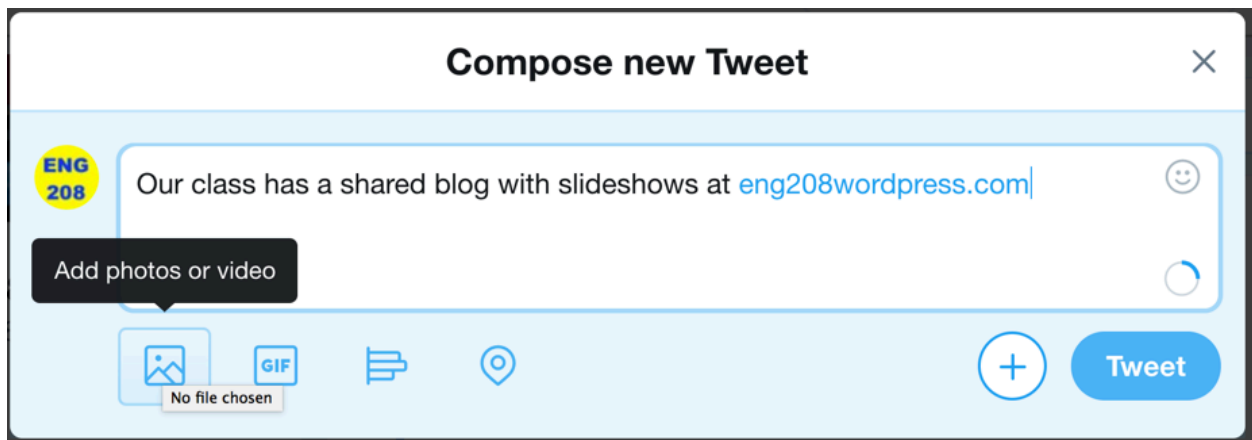
Our class has a shared blog with slideshows at [eng208wordpress.com](https://eng208.wordpress.com).

ADD A PHOTO

❑ 2) In your web browser, download this sample photo using this link to your **Desktop**:

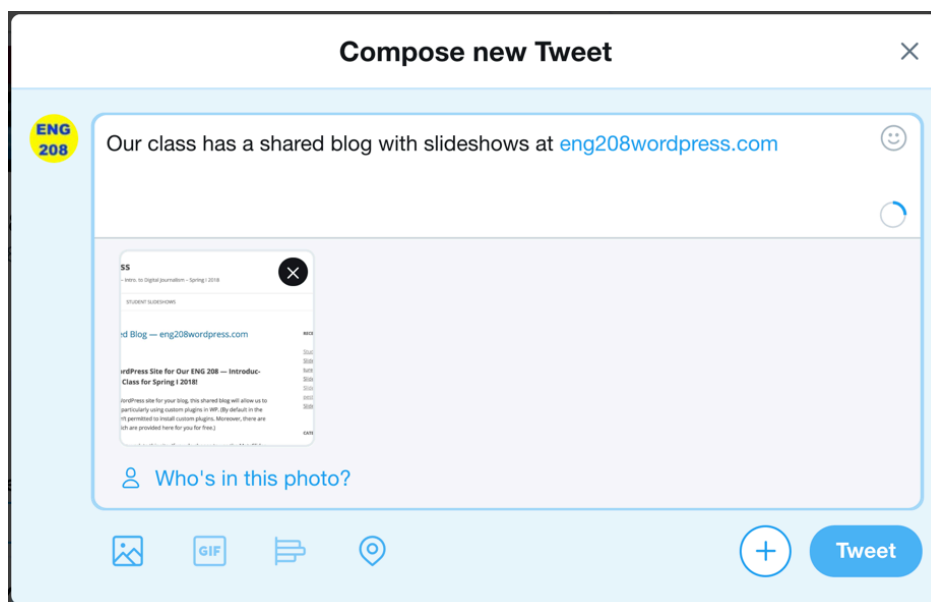
<https://bit.ly/2wfeRjH>

(This link is also posted under eng208.blogspot.org under **Course Documents** today.)



❑ 3) Click on the **Add photos or video icon**  (pictured above) to add a photo.

❑ 4) Select **samplephoto.jpg** on your **Desktop**. Click **Open** to add the photo to your tweet.



The preview of your photo (cropped to be 1:1) will appear alongside your tweet. You can post up to 4 photos at a time, but 1 or 2 is probably best.

❑ 4) Click the **Tweet** button to tweet this photo. Notice you can use tweets to add captions to photos.

(You can create your own photo and post it later – delete this tweet if you want.)

◆ TASK 5: Send a Tweetstorm of 3 or 4 Connected Tweets

Although Twitter now supports 280 characters (in most languages), you can use multiple tweets (called a **tweetstorm**) to tell a longer story or say more.

The conventions for numbering tweets are variable.

If you put your numbers at the end of a tweet (preferred as some very successful journalists do this). It also lets you continue a story / tweetstorm as you run out of characters.

BEST PRACTICE

First tweet. **1/**

Second tweet. **2/**

Third tweet. **3/**

(This is probably less distracting to readers.)

Other conventions:

1/ First tweet.

2/ Second tweet.

3/ Third tweet.

Recently Twitter has incorporated support for tweetstorms right in the interface.

(There are other apps to let you do this if you want to Google them – especially useful if you want to do this on your phone.)

Send 3 or 4 connected tweets – number them 1/ 2/ 3/ 4/

❑ 1) Describe your education and career plans.

Are you graduating in June? What's next? Tweet 1/

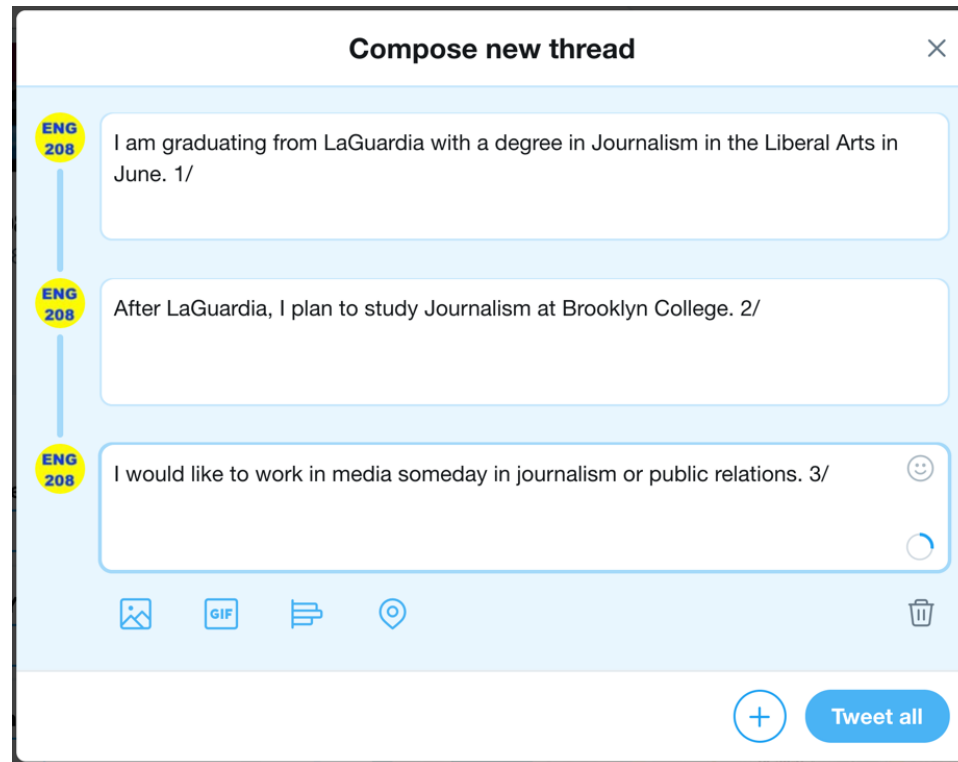
What are your mid-term goals for the next few years? Tweet 2/

What are your long-term career goals? Tweet 3/

❑ 2) At the end of the each tweet (about 250 characters, put a 1/ 2/ 3/ or 4/ (etc.)

❑ 3) Click on the plus button  to add a new tweet to your tweetstorm.

Use as many tweets as you need.



One of the advantages of this approach is that you can see all your tweets in a row – make sure they make sense.

Some writers use.... (period + ellipses) at the end of tweets and ... to start the second tweet.

These conventions are changing, and you'll want to adopt the latest 'professional' styles as they evolve.

You'll notice the writing style for tweeting for professional writers and journalists is very different from ordinary Twitter users!

❑ 4) Click on **Tweet All** button to tweet your set of tweets.

Tweet all

❑ 5) Check your timeline – how is your tweetstorm ordered? Does this surprise you? How can a user recover the 'obvious' order of tweets in a tweetstorm?

◆ TASK 6: Follow 3 Responsible News Sources

By default, Twitter would like you to follow celebrities and viral content. It doesn't care at all about the difference between 'professional' content vs. fake news, clickbait and advertising. That's up to you to use your human judgment in this process. (Eric Schmidt of Google has said that even at Google, they want human judgment to be involved when evaluating web content.)

But using Twitter in a serious way, you need to 'curate' whom you follow carefully.

(Yes, you can use a different Twitter handle for fun stuff – and friends and family.)

Right now we are going to choose 3 responsible news sources to follow:

www.nytimes.com

www.washingtonpost.com

www.guardian.co.uk

To find a Twitter handle, you can type in the Search box at the top of the form, for example:

New York Times

Washington Post

Guardian UK

Available Twitter feeds will appear on the left and on the right of the screen.

☐ As you choose sources to follow, click on the **Follow** button  to follow a feed.

☐ Check your timeline as you add feeds. What changes?

☐ Repeat this for a total of 3 or 4 sources.

We will circulate a list of our Twitter handles so we can follow each other from class.

◆ TASK 7: Retweet (RT) an Existing Tweet

An **RT** or **Retweet** means that you are sending an existing tweet to all your followers.

You can retweet something with – or without – a comment. But part of the ‘social’ aspect of Twitter is to keep the conversation going using retweets with comments.

You don’t have any followers yet, but you can simulate retweeting.

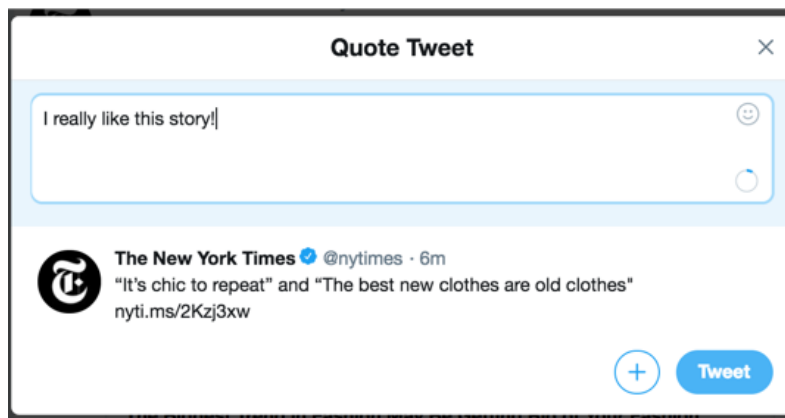
❑ 1) Find a story on *The New York Times* that you like from your Twitter timeline.

❑ 2) Locate the retweet icon  near the bottom of the tweet.

❑ 3) Click on this icon. Twitter asks if you want to retweet this to your followers with or without a comment. The normal way to do this is to retweet with a (short) comment.



❑ 4) You can then write a comment with your retweet.



❑ 5) Click on the **Tweet** button to send this new tweet (retweet).

◆ TASK 8: Reply To a Tweet (to a Specific User)

A **reply** to a specific user on Twitter allows you to have a public conversation with the writer of a story, for example. The reply will be shown in your followers and appear in your timeline. Replies are also tracked by Twitter and let writers know their work has found an audience.

Replies are really the heart of virtual conversations on the social aspect of Twitter.

❑ 1) Find a story on *The New York Times* that you like in your Twitter timeline.

❑ 2) Locate the Reply icon  on the bottom left under the tweet. It looks like a tiny speech balloon.

❑ 3) Type in your comment to the writer of this story with your reaction / praise and / or even an intelligent question / query.



❑ 4) Click on the **Reply** button to send your reply.

FYI: OLDER TWITTER SYNTAX for Replies

The older syntax for Replies in Twitter is:

@nytimeswriter Thanks for the story!

The @?????? handle makes the tweet go to that specific user (say the writer of a story referenced in a tweet). This is 'classic' Twitter and you should know this syntax, too.

◆ TASK 9: Send a Direct Message (DM)

A **direct message** to a specific user will appear in his or her messages if the user is following you or they are accepting message from any user. (You can enable this for your account in Privacy and safety, then check off the **Receive Direct Messages from anyone** option under **Direct Messages**.)



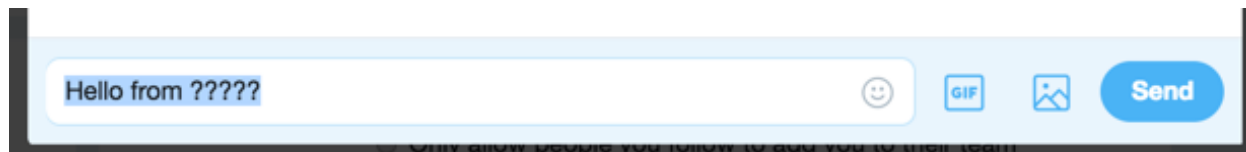
A DM is like a private e-mail and won't appear in your public timeline for your followers.

In the past, journalists have requested interviews from important sources through DM. (CEOs of startups are well-known for interacting with journalists and interested Twitter users this way. Asking for a DM from an important contact might not work, but don't be afraid to try it in the field. *No, you won't need to do this for our class.*)

Today, the best way to DM someone is to use the Twitter interface:

You can send a DM to eng208lagcc this way.

- ❑ 1) Click on the Messages icon  at the top / middle of the Twitter console.
- ❑ 2) This window will show your DMs – it looks like a chat window. (This is intentional.)
- ❑ 3) In the **Send message to field**, type in **eng208lagcc**, then click **Next**.
- ❑ 4) In this window, you could type a 'Hello' message. Then click **Send**.



(You could send me a DM when you post work on your blog, for example!)

FYI: OLDER TWITTER SYNTAX for DMs

The older syntax for DMs can still work (but today experience shows these messages don't always appear in a user's Messages window). But you should know about this syntax:

dm @eng208lagcc Hello from me

(In the old days of Twitter this syntax actually counted against your 140-character limit.)

Alternative syntax:

d eng208lagcc Hello from me

dm eng208lagcc Hello from me

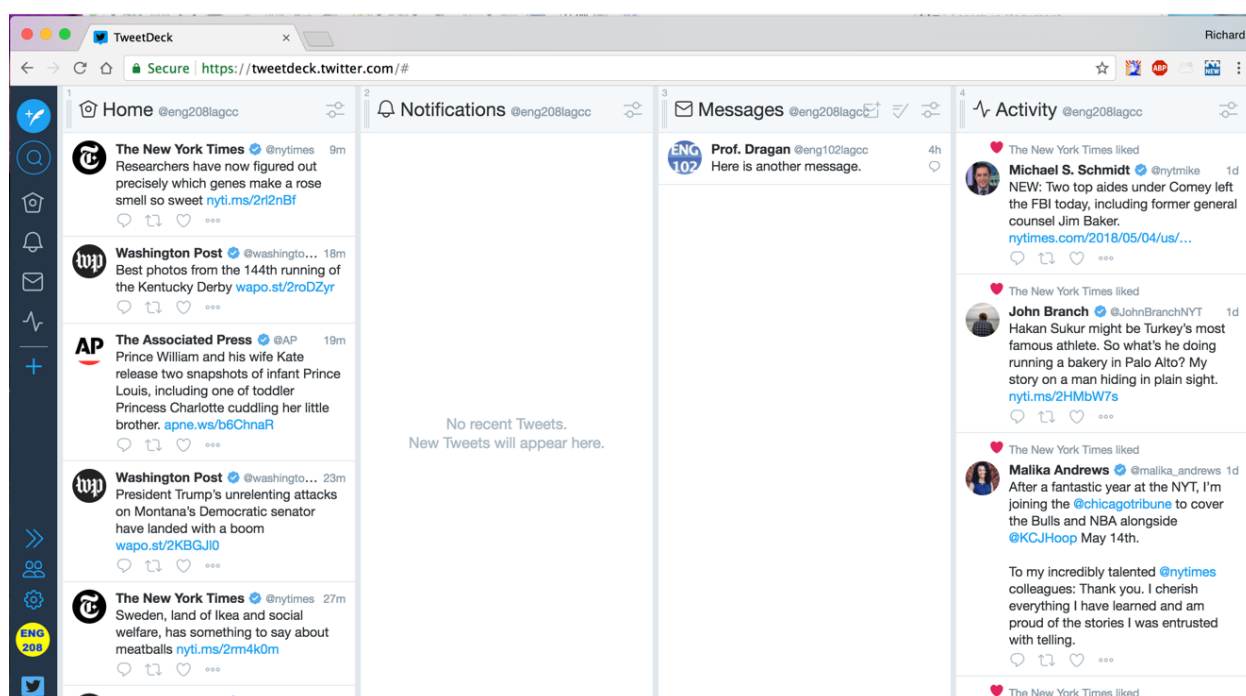
◆ TASK 10: Explore TweetDeck

❑ 1) Choose

The TweetDeck interface lets you monitor different aspects of all your Twitter feeds.

❑ 2) Navigate to this web address. (You need to be logged in to Twitter.)

tweetdeck.twitter.com



The TweetDeck interface lets you view multiple aspects of your Twitter activity in columns.

❑ 3) Click on the + icon  to view / add a columns.

◆ TASK 11: Create Your Virtual Beat - Use TweetDeck to Follow Multiple Sources of Responsible News

As you specialize as a journalist, you are expected to know what other writers in your field are publishing and what potential sources are saying.

To do this in Twitter means making a list of the ‘must-read’ sources of information on your ‘virtual beat.’

For example, if you are a healthcare writer or a food writer or cover technology, there are sources that everyone in your field reads. There are business and government sources, bloggers and professional organizations, newswires who are all on Twitter.

You would follow selected sources and use TweetDeck to get control of what’s being published. (As you already can see, just following a few major online newspapers will make your Twitter feed hard to manage – content / tweets get mixed together.)

TweetDeck makes it possible to keep track of multiple feeds – so you can skim / read the important stuff.

It also offers basic ‘analytics’ or metrics about what is going on with your life on Twitter. (Twitter analytics reside at analytics.twitter.com .)

AT HOME:

☐ Make a list of a 10-12 sources of important journalism for your interests (politics, food, lifestyle, sports, etc.) You can use Twitter not only to understand social media, but to increase your knowledge of your field(s) of interest in media.

◆ TASK 12: Add a Twitter Button to Your Stories on Your WordPress Blog

Instructor demo. of how to do this in your WordPress Dashboard. Putting a Twitter button next to your posts makes them easier for readers to share.

A Word on #hashtags

Of course, you can reference any topic (or hashtag) in Twitter within your tweets using the # character before the topic. Twitter uses tags to spot trending topics – e.g. if 1000s of users start tweeting around a #hashtag, Twitter will find this activity and highlight it. That makes Twitter a truly viral social media platform. But as one Twitter guide says, “One word of caution: don’t overdo it on the hashtags! This makes your tweet difficult to read, and it makes you look like a novice.”

TWITTER PRACTICE / AT HOME

1) Tweet a day in your life / your commute with some photos. (Take the photos on your phone and crop them correctly.)

2) Collect 10 – 12 sources of ‘responsible’ journalists / bloggers (actual people, not publications). Follow them and using TweetDeck, read their work for a week / two weeks. Respond every week to one of their stories with a reply. Ask them a journalistic question – see if you can get a response.

3) YOUR FINAL PROJECT IN TWITTER

FORMAL ASG. #2 -- PROFILE OF PERSON – DIGITAL COMPONENT

Instead of a photo slideshow using MetaSlider Pro on WordPress, do your slideshow in Twitter using a **tweetstorm** with photos that are consistently sized for Twitter (1024 x 512 pixels | 2:1) and cropped to look good for users (at 1:1, i.e., a square).

Check out **@eng208lagcc** for a quick photo essay on the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism on how you could do this.

****If you choose this option, please let your instructor know so I can look out for your tweet.*