PLATO'S EU

Philosophical Learning Applied To Online Surroundings in EU

Draft and example for PRP2 workshop:

"Is social media ruining the way we communicate?"

Co-funded by the European Union

PLATO's EU

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0. STRUCTURE OF WORKSHOPS

Every workshop developed through the course of *Project results package 2* should loosely follow a common structure. This structure will allow a uniformed publication (both online and in PDF) of all workshops together, and will further help in user friendliness of the outputs. Structure to be followed consists of **a few basic titles/chapters** that each individual material should include as its building blocks. It is important to note that methodology of workshops, materials to be used, as well as medium to convey the message of outputs may vary. **These are the chapters/sections that each individual open educational resource should include**:

a. TITLE OF THE OER

A title should be phrased as a simple question, possibly constructed as a provocative one, with a potential to spark a debate or discussion, for instance: *"Is my virtual identity real?"* or "Why should I pay taxes?"

b. INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

This section serves as a soft introduction to teachers or those who are going to implement the OER in the classroom. Section should not exceed more than 10 sentences, and it only serves to affirm the context of the following activities. For example: *"Online identity is a staple of digital environment which builds an overall picture of human being with the help of social media… The issues of online identity arise from…"*

c. LESSON OVERVIEW

Also a very short chapter explaining how the topic in question will be addressed, mentioning methodology and finishing with learning outcomes of the lesson. For instance: *"The subject of online identity will be discussed through structural debate…. The duration will be 90 minutes.*

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Materials that should be issued include: *LCD monitor, computer, and a couple of medieval swords.*

Learning outcomes that will be attained through workshop:

- *developed critical thinking;*
- *awareness of virtual identity;…"*

d. LESSON BREAKDOWN – WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

This is the most important chapter, as it presents the core of the OER, and all the practical actions that should be implemented in the classroom. This is also the section that could greatly vary from workshop from workshop. Nevertheless, all OER's should attempt to precisely describe all the necessary steps of implementing a lesson here. It is also recommended that each OER starts with a "hook" or "stimulus". One example will be provided on the next page.

e. DISCUSSION CHECK

This section can list from 5 to 10 questions to further push the debate on the topic, as well as offer sub-questions to deepen the understanding of the main topic of a lesson. For instance, if the topic is *"Is my virtual identity real?"*, this section could look like this:

- *"What is virtual reality? What does* real *mean?"*
- *"What is the difference between my physical reality and my virtual reality?"*
- *"Do I behave differently in virtual reality than in physical world? Why is that so?"*

f. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A list of links and materials on subject for those who wish to read/explore/learn more.

g. ANNEX

Materials for the workshop which can be extracted, printed and/or presented for the workshop.

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0. EXAMPLE OF A WORKSHOP: "IS SOCIAL MEDIA RUINING THE WAY WE COMMUNICATE?"

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

"I grew up in a physical world, and I speak English. The next generation is growing up in a digital world, and they speak social," Angela Ahrendts once said. And there is no denying that social media has impacted the way we connect with each others in a drastic way. Over the past two decades, communication has experienced a substantial transformation. What was a rather local offline world is now truly a worldwide web of information sharing and data distribution that doesn't sleep 24/7. Social media plays the most significant role here – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok became the necessary medium of social exchange, and, as their popularity exponentially rises, so do their critics who yearn for the good old ways.

2. LESSON OVERVIEW

The issue of social media and how they impact the way we communicate will be addressed through the adapted version of the Socratic dialogue. The purpose of the workshop is to address the main issues connected with social media and discuss them in an objective and constructive manner inside the classroom. Through the use of Socratic dialogue, the teacher's role in this workshop is to ask a set of questions that will spark the debate, and lead the students to come to their own conclusions. Thus, teacher's role is to moderate the discourse, and not to offer any pre-concluded values on the topic. The workshop can be conducted equally well online, through a virtual classroom, and in the physical environment. The duration of the workshop can be from 45 to 90 minutes.

Materials that should be issued include: Computer, projector, and pen and papers for the students. If it's not possible to gain access to a computer and projector,

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teacher may use a paper template with quotes that are offered up to discussion during the workshop.

Learning outcomes that will be attained through workshop:

- better understanding of value of social media;
- encouraged responsibility for online communication;
- supported the development of dialogue skills;
- supported the development of critical thinking.

3. LESSON BREAKDOWN – WORSKHOP ACTIVITIES

Comment before breakdown: *Workshop begins with the presentation of a hook or a stimulus, which students are invited to comment on. Stimulus can be visual, as follows:*

Example 1. *A "Hook" or a "Stimulus": lesson can begin with a visual introduction that evokes a certain type of reaction. It can be an illustration, or a short 10-second video, or a quote. This particular*

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workshop will use a quote to set up a workshop, on the next page, but it can also use the illustration above.

Stimuli can also be used through quotes, which will be presented in this example. This lesson breakdown begins as follows:

1. Workshop begins with the moderator reading students (or asking students to read for themselves from the screen) next quote:

CRITIQUE OF TWITTER

"Superficial, sudden, unsifted, too fast for the truth, must be **Twitter.** Does it not render the popular mind too fast for the truth? […]. What need is there for the scraps of news **in a minute**? How trivial and paltry is **Twitter**? […] That it **is** of very great use cannot be questioned, but how will its uses add to the happiness of mankind? Has **Twitter** done any good? Has it banished any evil, mitigated any sorrow?" […] **Twitter** is not a very clear narrator of facts."

2. After the quote has been presented, moderator opens the discussion. You can lead with next questions:

- Who agrees with this quote? **Why?**
- Who disagrees with this quote? **Why?**
- Do you agree with the claim that Twitter is not a very clear narrator of facts? What does that mean?
- Does Twitter have an obligation to "do any good"?

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- How can you explain the “need for the scraps of news in a minute”?
- Is Twitter truly “too fast for the truth”? What does that mean? What is “truth” here?
- Is this quote realistic view of Twitter?

3. After the first round of discussion, which can last from 10 to 15 minutes, moderator reveals that this is not a real quote. The original was taken from The New York Times, published on August 19, 1858, and it is actually a critique of telegraph. Moderator shows the real quote, asking students to compare it with the first one while reading:

CRITIQUE OF TELEGRAPH

“Superficial, sudden, unsifted, too fast for the truth, must be all **telegraphic intelligence**. Does it not render the popular mind too fast for the truth? […] What need is there for the scraps of news **in ten minutes**? How trivial and paltry is the telegraphic column? […] That it **will be** of very great use cannot be questioned, but how will its uses add to the happiness of mankind? Has **the land telegraph** done any good? Has it banished any evil, mitigated any sorrow? […] **The telegraph** is not a very clear narrator of facts.”

4. Moderator then leads the second round of discussion, asking questions such as:

- Can you compare critique of Twitter and critique of telegraph – are there really similarities to observe?
- Do you think that telegraph negatively impacted the way we communicate? Can you observe any consequences today?

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- Knowing that the first quote is fabricated – does it lose any value to you?
- Does the first critique of Twitter seem different to you now that you know that people criticized another invention almost 200 years ago in a similar fashion? How and why?
- Is there positive or negative value in both Twitter and telegraph that can be assigned *objectively*? What makes them *positive* or *negative* inventions?

5. After concluding first part of a workshop, moderator takes few minutes to introduce students to the next discussion (which is to be started if there is enough time). Moderator explains that:

- Communication is a living organism, and it constantly evolves, changes and adapts to the available tools and inventions of humanity. Every revolution brings with it skepticism, fear of the new unknown, and critique of the changes, which don't necessarily have to be positive or negative. Similarly, as students now discussed critique of digital and telegraphed word, every time when we change the way we communicate, we can find objections, so next example that will be shown is critique of pressed word, and critique of written word. Students will now observe 4 stages of communication critique, arranged chronologically:

    - **Critique of the digital word (current)**
    - **Critique of the telegraphed word (cca. 200 years old)**
    - **Critique of the pressed word (cca. 500 years old)**
    - **Critique of the written word (cca. 2500 years old)**

6. Moderator show students next two quotes:

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CRITIQUE OF GUTENBERG

"It was okay that the act of copying was hard. It built character, in Trithemius opinion, the same way as chopping wood. For monks, labor was part and parcel of devotion, and if you weren't good at writing, you could do binding, or painting, or for heaven's sake practice. And it goes even further: the labor of manuscript writing was something for monks to do — for there was no greater danger for the devout soul than idleness. For among all the manual exercises, none is so seemly to monks as devotion to the writing of sacred texts."

Historical analysis of a
15th century Luddite abbot Johannes Trithemius

CRITIQUE OF WRITTEN WORD

"If men learn this [writing and reading], it will implant forgetfulness in their souls. They will cease to exercise memory because they rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks. What you have discovered is a recipe not for memory, but for reminder. And it is no true wisdom that you offer your disciples, but only the semblance of wisdom, for by telling them of many things without teaching them you will make them seem to know much while for the most part they know nothing. And as men filled not with wisdom but with the conceit of wisdom they will be a burden to their fellows."

Pharaoh criticizes Thoth's invention of written word,
as told by Socrates in Plato's dialogue Phaedrus

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7. Moderator then opens another round of debate with next questions:

- Did you find anything in the critique of Gutenberg that you agree or disagree with? What and why? Is this an objective critique?
- Did you find anything in the critique of written word that you agree or disagree with? What and why? Is this an objective critique?
- Concentrating on Twitter, if you compare it with other quotes, can you find any similarities?
- What are the main differences between these four quotes?
- What are the quotes truly criticizing?
- Do they criticize the invention, or the way people use/will use it?
- Do the tools we use to communicate have inherent responsibility for proper use?
- Who is responsible if any of these inventions can be perceived as having negative impact?

8. This round of discussion can be concluded when students, with the help of offered directed questions come to the conclusion that the main responsibility of the communication tools lies in their users. Humans are ones that are can attribute positive or negative value to an invention, which depends on the way they use it. The intention of these activities is to develop dialogue skills and critical thinking used on a concrete issue of a contemporary digital environment.

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4. DISCUSSION CHECK

As this workshop is built completely on a set of discussions, next questions can be used to expand on the topics explored through the course of the workshop:

- Imagine if all mobile phones stopped working at the same time. How would it affect you? Can you imagine what communication would look like without phones?
- If you could be in charge of Twitter, what would you change? Would you design a new set of rules for its use?
- What does freedom of speech mean to you? Would you allow anyone, even war criminals and corrupted politician with a track record of telling lies to use it? Why?
- What responsibility do we have towards telling the truth?
- Is there any way to check the truth behind Tweets? How can we do that?
- Do you communicate differently face-to-face and online? Are you a different person online? What are some main differences between these two types of communication?
- What can be done to make online communication better and more effective? Is there a need to do that?

5. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Online article “In 1858, People Said the Telegraph Was 'Too Fast for the Truth” [https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/07/in-1858-people-said-the-telegraph-was-too-fast-for-the-truth/375171/]
- Plato, dialogue Phaedrus [https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1636]

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- Online article “But my rage is the machine: Using Twitter to make philosophy hilarious” [https://qz.com/568220/but-my-rage-is-the-machine-using-twitter-to-make-philosophy-hilarious/]
- Online article “Would Plato tweet? The Ancient Greek guide to social media” [https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20210922-would-plato-tweet-the-ancient-greek-guide-to-social-media]
- Online article “Does Twitter Prefer Analytic or Continental Philosophy?” [https://www.carneades.org/2021/09/20/does-twitter-prefer-analytic-or-continental-philosophy/]
- Online article “What Would a Stoic Do? Twitter Edition by Massimo Pigliucci” [https://modernstoicism.com/what-would-a-stoic-do-twitter-edition-by-massimo-pigliucci/]
- Online article “Twitter as an Enabler of Critical Thinking” [https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/2011/10/twitter-as-an-enabler-of-critical-thinking/]
- Paper “Can Twitter be used to Teach Critical Thinking?” [https://www.academia.edu/353604/Can_Twitter_be_used_to_Teach_Critical_Thinking]

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6. ANNEX

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