# Using Twitter to enhance learning

There are millions of voices on the Internet all shouting at once. Twitter is perhaps the quickest and simplest way to curate all those voices into a manageable community of perspectives that you value. You can use the platform to curate a network of experts for your students to follow, or have students create their own class network by tagging content with the name of the course.

Creating an account is as simple as picking a unique username and then uploading your photo. That's all you need to start "tweeting" (posting your own updates) and viewing the "tweets" of others.
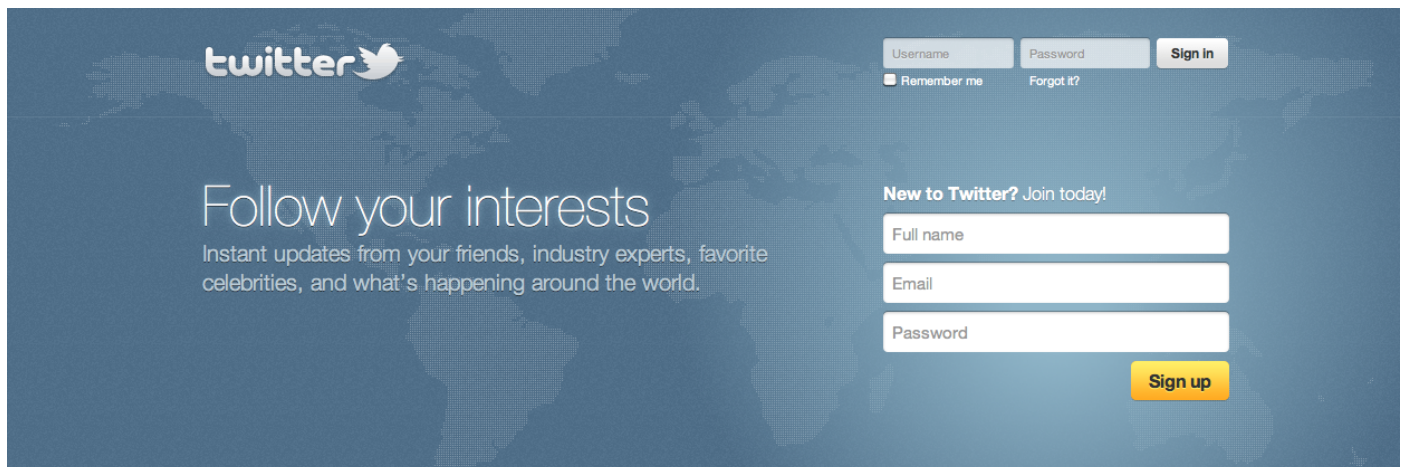
Once you've created a Twitter account and set up the basics of your profile, here is the main screen you'll be working with. The numbered items correspond to key options, with notes below on how they relate to academic goals.
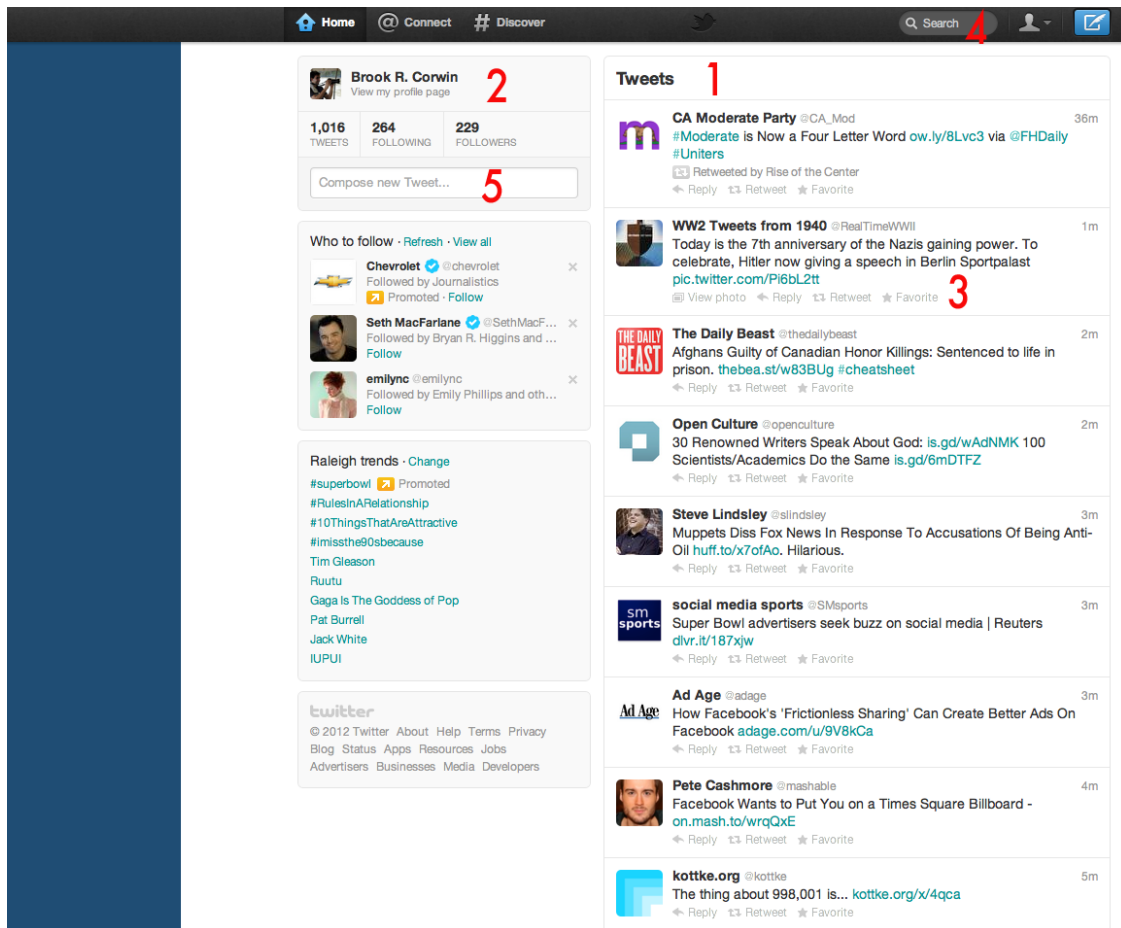
1. The Twitter stream is the content of users you've chosen to "follow." What you see here are the most recent updates — sorted chronologically .

2. This snapshot of your profile shows how many users you're connected with. This will allow you to see if your students are following your updates.

3. Each additional "tweet" has options underneath. You may want to "retweet" so students following you will also see the content. By hitting "reply" you can message the user.

4. The search bar here will be key for finding useful info, as we'll discuss next.

5. Here is where you'll enter content to share with your followers. It can be text only, or a pasted link. The best educational tweets are a combination of both — a link to useful content with a brief statement on why students should care.

The key to making Twitter work for your class is effective use of its search options. Whenever you enter a term into the search bar you'll see the following screen. The numbered sections are explained in more detail below.

1. Just like in Google, you can search for a word or a group of words. Here is where the hashtag comes in handy. Twitter users frequently categorize their updates using a hashtag. Updates about biology, for instance, have a "#biology" placed at the end. That way you can search the hashtag and find related content from users you wouldn't have known about otherwise.

The hashtag #edchat is a good example. Search for "#edchat" and you'll get tweets related to teaching and learning. Not only will this help you find useful information as a teacher, but it may also help you find education experts to follow. Updates for your class can be marked with #ClassPrefix so that you can sort through tweets from students directly related to the course while filtering out the rest of their tweets.

2. After you've conducted a search, you can sort view the results as individual tweets or as specific twitter users. A minority of twitter users use the platform to share photos and videos. If any of those are related to your search, they will be displayed here.

3. It's easy to start following any of the users who show up in a search. A great way to get

started building your Twitter network is to search for a topic of interest, find a few users who post valuable content, and then see who they follow. As you start following more people, Twitter will suggest other users whose content is popular within your new network.