In his “Brave New World of Digital Intimacy” about social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, New York Times writer Clive Thompson makes two interesting and provocative arguments: 1) social networking sites help to create the dynamics of small town life where everybody knows everybody; and (2) these networks lead to increased self-awareness and self-reflection.

Instructions for Teachers

This is a high level lesson that requires students to do analytic thinking about both “Disconnected” and Clive Thompson’s article, “Brave New World of Digital Intimacy.” It would probably work best in a college-level Introduction to Media Studies course in which a discussion pedagogy is used frequently. Many readers of the Thompson article responded to the New York Times Magazine through an online blog.

Several of the blog responses were critical of Thompson’s logic. By requiring the additional reading of the blog responses, teachers can move into a discussion of careful and slipshod reasoning as it applies to New Media. Teachers could require, for example, students to bring their own examples of the “best reasoned” and “worst reasoned” blog responses to class. Discussion could be launched by having students read aloud their examples, or by posting their examples on an online course management system prior to the class.