Twitter

Twitter is "microblogging" (blog posts – called tweets – can have a maximum of 140 characters) and is often used to spread breaking news quickly. It has teaching applications for students in the field, or for "following" the tweets of important people/offices in your field. It may also be useful for "backchannel" conversations in large classes, where the students talk to each other separate from the main conversation in the room. Can be used by desktop, laptop, or mobile device via app.

1. Visit http://www.twitter.com to create a free account
2. **Make announcements as Instructor.** Your students will need your twitter username so they can "follow" you.
3. **Students report from the field.** They attach a hashtag (ex: #ENC1101a) to each post so all of them can be quickly found by twitter search tools. Tools like HootCourse (http://www.hootcourse.com) make it possible to embed a widget showing the twitter updates directly in Webcourses
4. **Backchannel conversation, possibly in large lecture class.** Students tweet, reply, and retweet to each other, using an agreed-upon hashtag, during a lecture. Faculty member or teaching assistant can monitor and react publicly as needed to the questions posed by the students.
5. **Forge community.** Via direct (and mutual) "following" students can get to know each other.
6. **Follow updates in your field.** By following important people (or offices/agencies) in your discipline, you and your students can be notified of breaking-news changes to the field. Works well when combined with reflection statements (probably back on Webcourses)
7. **Clicker alternative.** In large classes, a hashtag can amalgamate all posts by your students in one place, giving them a free-response place to provide feedback or guess at a right answer. Also useful for brainstorming.
8. **Practice summarizing.** The 140 character limit will force students to re-write important concepts in their own (brief) words
9. **Use pictures and URLs.** Twitpic and other services allows for photo upload to twitter; bit.ly and other "link shorteners" allow for pasting long URLs as short ones

See also "50 Ways to Use Twitter in the College Classroom" from 2009: http://www.onlinecolleges.net/2009/06/08/50-ways-to-use-twitter-in-the-college-classroom/