

Teaching with Perusall

Perusall is an e-reader platform that allows students and faculty to annotate assigned online readings, text, images, video and more. The tool supports students' engagement comparable to posting on social media. As students are able to comment, question, highlight the online materials, they are processing the material at a deeper level and prepare themselves for discussion with peers.

Listed below are some practices to consider while using Perusall:

Communicate expectations regarding the nature of both annotations (e.g., length, number, quality) and students' comments on their peers' annotations to raise awareness and help students practice social annotation. You may consider annotating a portion of text together with the students in class and review it based on the established expectations. You may show students sample annotations (some effective, some less effective) and invite them to analyze them based on the expectations.

You may **discuss qualities of an effective annotation** and/or elements of an effective comment on an annotation to highlight what goes into effective annotation and make it explicit to the students; this explicitness will be particularly helpful to students new to using annotation.

Consider the social element of annotation. While students may have privately annotated their notes, readings, they may have never shared their annotations with peers. The social element of annotation, sharing with peers, may be concerning to some students as it makes their thought processes public. You may explain to students why you are using this tool and how it benefits their learning in this particular course.

Review students' annotations, questions, comments prior to class and bring common points of confusion, interesting questions, insightful observations, examples of engagement/interest, diverging viewpoints to the class for further exploration. For example, in small groups students may engage with interesting questions and propose answers.

Invite student feedback on how they are experiencing working with Perusall; e.g., what has been helpful? What has been challenging? How has working with Perusall helped you understand the text? Consider their feedback and adjust, as appropriate.

Sample syllabus statements (adjust as reflective of your use of Poll Everywhere):

"We will be using Perusall, a social annotation tool, to interact with the online course materials in a style akin to social media posting. It will help engage you and your peers with the readings, images, and videos. You can comment, highlight, share notes, ask questions directly within the online materials and your peers and the instructor will see them as well. For example, this online tool will assist you in close reading, analysis, and interpretation of texts and bring you closer to the text by working with others."

"We will use Perusall, an online annotation tool, in this course to help you experience reading as an engaging, social and collective experience rather than a traditionally solitary one. We learn more from reading when we can comment, highlight, ask questions directly in the text in preparation for class. We are more likely to join class prepared and are motivated to contribute to in-class discussions. We can support our comments or perspectives by referring to our annotations."

[Link](#) to information for students

References:

Prepared by VITAL, August 2022