Teaching Tips and Tools: Pinterest
By Jennifer A. Grothe Jenness
Associate Professor, Communication Arts Department

What is Pinterest?
Pinterest is a visual discovery tool that allows users to find, share, and store web-based items on “pinboards,” allowing them to curate and create collections of web objects. Although Pinterest is most commonly associated with crafting, cooking, and decorating, it is actually an amazingly flexible tool that can be used effectively in your classroom.

Because of its focus on images, Pinterest can be particularly helpful for students who are very visually oriented; students who struggle to finish even a brief writing assignment will spend hours curating an image board for a project. Also, using Pinterest feels like playing! The collaborative, social media aspect of Pinterest makes it appealing to a broad audience.

How do I use Pinterest?
Pinterest is very simple to use. The website requires users to register for a free account at www.pinterest.com. Once you have your account, you can either check out their video on getting started, or simply create a pinboard – basically, a web-based bulletin board – and start pinning.

Pins – the content you add to your boards – can be pinned directly from the webpage on which you found them, or from another user’s pinboards. You can also send your pins to others, create a collaborative pinboard, and follow other Pinterest users’ boards. You can create boards centered around a topic, a time period, or organize them any way you see fit.

Pinterest can be particularly helpful in finding and collecting creative teaching ideas and websites for your own classroom use. Professors can use Pinterest as a visual bookmarking tool for their own classroom resources, organizing articles, images, videos and sound clips for use in their classes, allowing us to easily organize and keep track of the many, many web resources available.

How can you use Pinterest in your classroom?

1. Use Pinterest for students to create a group project. Pinterest users can create collaborative pin boards, allowing students to share ideas, articles, webpages, and images for a group project.
2. Have students create a visual outline for a research project.

3. Create a web guide to accompany a lecture or course module. You can use this for presentation while lecturing, or to supplement in-class work.

4. Pinterest is a great place to run a brainstorming activity. Students can find and gather ideas for projects and activities, and use the tool to find the perfect topic.

5. Create a class interest board. Students can use the class board to share articles on current news topics or videos related to their coursework.

Pinterest can be a valuable tool for data curation, and allows you to add a visual component to your classes. It can help with organization and collaboration, and it’s fun to use. I encourage you all to give it a try!