

Project #1 (ongoing): Weblogs

OVERVIEW

Weblogs, or “blogs,” offer a new form of writing on the World Wide Web. Unlike traditional Web sites, blogs usually require very little in the way of technical expertise. Many blog sites even offer free onsite hosting and Web-based editing features that make writing a blog a very simple process. But like many simple technologies, blogs come in an enormous range of classifications and uses. There are blogs for independent music groups, disaffected college students, professional organizations, and more. Some rely heavily on uploaded images, while others are primarily text-driven. Some are individually authored; others are collaborative works. Analyzing and designing blogs can help you think about how people read texts, how people author texts, and how different texts function for different groups of users.

PART I: ANALYZE A WEBLOG

Begin by selecting a blog to analyze. Consider searching through Google’s Blog Search (<http://blogsearch.google.com/>). You may wish to search using key words related to your major or intended occupation (e.g., interior design, sports management, speech therapy). You might also try searching for blogs based on a particular hobby or interest (e.g., volleyball, poker, cooking). Another strategy might be to go to a blog hosting site (such as <http://wordpress.com/>) and search through the lists of blogs hosted on that site.

Once you’ve selected a site that interests you, answer the following questions:

- 1) What is the blog’s title?
- 2) Who is the author of the blog? What information is provided about the author? What assumptions do you make about this person’s identity, based on their blog?
- 3) How do you think the writer envisions the blog? What is their purpose for keeping the blog?
- 4) Who reads this blog? How can you tell?
- 5) What is the average length of the posts on the site? What is the shortest entry? What is the longest?
- 6) If the site includes images, what are the images of? How do they enhance the blog’s text?
- 7) Does the blog link to other sites on the Web? How often? Where are these links provided? How does this help readers?
- 8) Does the writer belong to a larger weblog community? How can you tell?
- 9) What do you like most about this blog? What do you like least?

Type your responses to these questions – and any other observations you make about your chosen blog – and share your findings with at least one other person in class. Are there common aspects running through the analyses of blogs? Which blogs seem the most interesting? Which seem the least interesting?

PART II: CREATING YOUR WEBLOG

Using your analysis as a starting point, begin thinking about how you might use your blog as a tool for joining a particular community or discussion that is of interest to you. This process involves making several important decisions, which you will answer to develop your blog plan:

- 1) What will be the topic and scope for your blog? What will it cover?
- 2) What kind of identity to you want to present through your blog? (Professional? Funny? Angry? Something else?) What aspects of your identity do you want to conceal?
- 3) Who will your readers be? What will they gain from reading your blog? What will their expectations be?
- 4) What will you call your blog? How will the title of your blog reflect your purpose and your intended audience?
- 5) What kind of “theme” or look will you adopt for your blog?

Type your responses to these questions – and any other planning decisions you come up with – and save this document, along with your blog analysis. I will collect these items when I prepare to grade your blog toward the end of the semester.

Once you have a clear sense of your blog’s audience and purpose, go to <http://wordpress.com/> and follow the directions for setting up your own blog (this will also be demonstrated in class).

GRADING STANDARDS: WEBLOG PROJECT

BLOG ANALYSIS – 10 Points (include with your portfolio)

The Weblog analysis offers a detailed, thoughtful analysis of an existing blog. The analysis includes an introduction to the blog being analyzed, an overview of the blog's intended audience purpose, and a discussion of the blog's characteristics.

Poor Fair Good Excellent

BLOG PLAN – 10 Points (include with your portfolio)

The blog plan offers a detailed and thoughtful plan for how the author envisions their personal blog. It includes detailed responses to all of the questions provided on the handout and may include additional planning information.

Poor Fair Good Excellent

AUDIENCE/PURPOSE – 10 points

The blog's title, introduction, "theme," and blog entries are consistent with the audience and purpose articulated in the author's blog plan. The blog responds to the needs and expectations of the intended audience with appropriate choice of topics, tone, etc.

Poor Fair Good Excellent

CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT – 10 points

The blog entries demonstrate critical engagement with current issues relevant to the author's chosen audience and purpose. The author does not simply summarize current debates, but offers his or her own perspective on the topic and uses critical reasoning in support of that perspective.

Poor Fair Good Excellent

DEVELOPMENT – 10 points

At least five blog entries are included. The blog entries are substantially developed with an introduction to the issue/event/topic at hand, the relevance of the issue to the blog's intended audience, the author's personal response to that issue/event/topic, relevant links and/or examples, and critical commentary.

Poor Fair Good Excellent

COHERENCE – 10 points

The blog demonstrate a solid command of written standard English. Entries are generally free of sentence-level errors, none of which impede the communication of ideas.

Poor Fair Good Excellent

TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE: 60