## Public Blog Proposal

Before beginning work on the [public blog project](http://copyvillain.org/blog/2321-public-blog-assignment/) students must complete a short proposal, explaining their desired blog topic and listing some preliminary resources the student will draw on as examples and sources as they start writing.

Students will complete many of the pieces of the blog proposal as homework assignments during the first weeks of class. The final proposal simply asks you to collect these pieces, along with some new work, and submit them to the instructor via elearning for feedback.

### Blog concept paragraph

Write a single paragraph (150-200 words) explaining what you want to blog about and why. Review the "blog topic" section of the [public blog assignment](http://copyvillain.org/blog/2321-public-blog-assignment/) before beginning. When you first draft this paragraph, at beginning of week 2, you will likely be just beginning to think about your blog community. That's ok. By the time you turn in the final draft of your proposal, however, you should be sure to have selected a specific topic within a well-established blog community.

Your concept paragraph should answer the following questions:

* What will your blog be about?
* Who do you expect to read your blog?
* How will you distinguish yourself from other bloggers working on similar topics?
* Why will readers choose to read your blog, as opposed to another source of information?

### Annotated twitter list

During week four of class, you will prepare a list of seven twitter sources relevant to your topic. Following good sources on twitter can be a great source of timely information for your blog! For your proposal, include your list of seven twitter sources, along with a brief explanation of what makes each source valuable. For example, if you were proposing a blog on popular science and wanted to include Phil Plait as a twitter source, you might write:

* **Phil Plait**(@BadAstronomer): Phil Plait is a well known and outspoken astronomer and skeptic. He blogs for Discover magazine on science topics.

Complete one entry like the one above for *each* of your seven twitter sources.

### Annotated blogroll

It is vital that you find high-quality blogs in your topic area to use as examples for your blogs, and as sources of information! We'll discuss how to winnow your list down to the highest quality blogs near the end of week four, but to succeed, you should really start looking for blogs to serve as examples much sooner, as soon as you have an idea for a concept. Use the search techniques discussed in three in your search.

For the blog proposal, include a list of five high-quality blogs in your topic area. For each blog, give an explanation of why you think it is a high-quality site and a good example for you to follow. For example, if you were proposing a blog on technology and geek culture, and wanted to use the blog BoingBoing as an example, you might write:

* **BoingBoing**([http://boingboing.net](http://boingboing.net/)) BoingBoing is an extremely well known and well regarded technology and geek culture blog. BoingBoing is consistently linked to by other well known, high-quality blogs in the community, including Slashdot, io9, and gizmodo. The blog’s authors include: nationally known science-fiction author and copyright law critic Cory Doctorow, who has published many award winning books with major publishers, and Xeni Jardin, who has a heavily followed and often quoted twitter presence and has been quoted as a source on technology and culture issues by national news organizations including CNN. BoingBoing links to high-quality sources including major news outlets, government documents, and other high-quality blogs. BoingBoing also provides unique and informative commentary on the material they link to. For example, one recent post discussing alleged bad deeds Google committed while dealing with a Kenyan charity not only linked to a reliable story on the case, but also included Cory Doctorow’s analysis of the story in his own words. This analysis showed the reader Doctorow’s expert opinion on the matter. BoingBoing also published updates informing readers of Google’s side of the story.

Write an entry like the one above for each of your five example blogs. Be sure to include the blog's name, URL, and a description like the one given in each entry.

## Public Blog Assignment

The public blog project asks students to create and maintain and publicly accessible blog on a subject of their own choosing. This blog will be accessible to a real audience, a community of bloggers and readers interested in the blog's topic. Working with a real audience will give students important experience in the skills necessary to be successful producers of online content.

### Blog Topic

There is no set list of "acceptable" topics for this assignment. Blogs cover a vast area of topics, and students are free to choose a topic that interests them. However, to be successful, blog topics should follow the guidelines listed below:

* **Be connected to an active blogging community:** Students will need to locate high-quality blogs to use as examples for their own projects. Many, many topics have active blogging communities associated with them. You will need to locate and document the community you want to join as part of your public blog proposal.
* **Be specific:** It is vital for public blogs to occupy a unique niche in the blogging community they join. For this reason, students need to select as specific a topic as possible for their public blogs. For example, a “sports blog” would be too broad, a blog devoted to a particular sport, team, or region would be appropriate. You will be asked to describe your specific topic, and how it fills an un-met need in your blogging community, in your public blog proposal.
* **Be exciting:** You will be working on your public blog for many weeks, and writing multiple pieces *per week* on the blog during this time. This schedule will become exhausting if you do not select a topic you are excited about. That said, since this is a class about both research and writing skills, it may be better to choose a topic you have not yet mastered completely. You will be expected to research your topic and learn new information in the process of writing your posts, and asked to reflect meaningfully on this topic. This will be difficult to do unless you pick a topic where you still have new things to learn!
* **Be evidence-based (at least sometimes):** This class asks students to learn to read and evaluate sources and evidence, and to write arguments supported by a variety of forms of evidence. It is not that unusual for bloggers to rely solely on personal experience as evidence. For example, many food bloggers write pieces based entirely on their experience preparing or consuming food. However, while the public blog project will ask students to prepare a variety of sorts of posts, and some posts may call on personal experience as evidence, you should select a topic that will allow you to use other sources of evidence for at least *some* of your posts. For example a pure movie review blog, which would contain only the student's personal responses to films, would be a bad choice. A better choice might be a blog that would combine the student's personal reviews of movies with pieces in which he or she would consider and respond to film history, other critics, and film scholars.

### Project Instructions

We will spend weeks one through five of our class preparing to blog and completing the [public blog proposal](PUBLIC%20BLOG%20PROPOSAL%20URL). Starting in week six, students will be expected to update their public blogs roughly twice per week. These posts will follow four basic templates, based on the four genres of blogging Howard Rheingold describes in *Net Smart*. The four templates are:

* **Filter Posts:** The simplest style of post is the filter post. To succeed, a filter post needs to succinctly demonstrate the student's ability to select and pass-along other sources of information to his or her audience. Each filter post you complete should consist of a link and one or two sentences clearly explaining why the link is valuable and why your readers might want to visit it. Filter posts should be *timely* and link to sources relevant to current events. Filter posts should not exceed 200 words.
* **Connector Posts:** The connector post is slightly more involved than the filter post. To succeed, a connector post needs to quickly demonstrate the author's understanding of how two or more sources are connected in the context of your blogging community. For example, a food blogger might compare the relative strengths and weaknesses of two different restaurant review blogs (maybe one has stronger images, and the other reviews more diverse establishments). Or, a political blogger might explain how a secondary source (like another blogger or journalist) helps us to better understand a primary source (like the text of a bill or law). Each connector post you complete should consist of at least two sources and three or four sentences clearly explaining the connections between the sources given. Like filter posts, connector posts should be *timely*. Connector posts should not exceed 300 words.
* **Critic Posts:** The critic style post, like its cousin the advocate style post, asks the student to make a sustained, evidence-based argument. To succeed, a critic post should build a *counterargument* in response to another blogger in your blogging community, or another source. As Rheingold puts it: "You don't have to hate a meal or find an incorrect statement of fact to be a critic. Debate the logic or possible bias of an author. [...] Indicate what the author leaves out. Voice your own opinion in response." Each critic post should consist of a brief (no more than 200 words) summary of the argument being refuted, a link to the original source (or if the original source is not online, a link to a purchase link for the source on Amazon or a Wikipedia summary of the source), and a 350-500 word argument explaining what you think is wrong with the original source and why. Your 350-500 word argument should include at least two links to sources supporting your argument (or, if the sources aren't online, references giving at least the title, author and date of publication). Critic posts should not exceed 700 words.
* **Advocate Posts:** The advocate style post is structured as an evidence-based argument, just as the critic post does. However, instead of arguing *against* something the advocate-based post builds an argument *in support* of something. To succeed, an advocate post should build an evidence based argument in favor of something of interest to your blogging community. For example, a local politics blogger might write a post in favor of a planned new park, or a health blogger might write in support of a patient's right to access his or her own health records. Each advocate post should consist of a brief (no more than 200 words) summary of the argument being supported, a link to the original source (or if the original source is not online, a link to a purchase link for the source on Amazon or a Wikipedia summary of the source), and a 350-500 word argument explaining *why* you believe your readers should support the idea or plan proposed. Your 350-500 word argument should include at least two links to sources supporting your argument (or, if the sources aren't online, references giving at least the title, author and date of publication). Advocate posts should not exceed 700 words.

See the [course schedule](http://copyvillain.org/blog/emac-2321-schedule/) for details on assigned posts for each week!

### Evaluation

The Public Blog assignment will be worth 30% of the student's total grade. Each post to the public blog will be evaluated according to the appropriate rubric below:

#### Filter and Connector posts:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Needs Improvement** |
| Source Quality | The sources included are reliable, appropriate for the blog's audience, and demonstrate the author's skill at curation. | The sources provided are reliable, but perhaps not the most appropriate to the blog's audience, or so widely covered as to obscure the author's skill at curation. | The sources included are unreliable. |
| Explanation Quality | For filter posts, the explanation quickly and clearly expresses *why* the source is valuable to the reader. For connection posts, the explanations clearly explains *how* the sources are connected and *why* this connection matters. | The provided explanation attempts to accomplish the tasks outlined for the "excellent" level, but perhaps includes distracting information, unprofessional grammar errors, or unclear language. | The explanation is absent, unconvincing, inappropriate for the blog's audience, or contains grammatical errors that seriously obscure meaning. |
| Timeliness | The sources provided clearly relate to discussions unfolding within your blogging community, or news and events relevant to the community. | The sources provided connect to current events of interest to your community, but the link is somewhat obscure or forced. | The sources provided are not connected to any current issues or concerns relevant to your blogging community. |

#### Critic and Advocate Posts

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Needs Improvement** |
| Argument | The post makes a clear, specific, defensible *claim.* The entire post clearly relates to and supports this main claim. | The post makes a clear claim, but this claim is over-broad or difficult to defend. Some content may stray from the main claim. | Post lacks a clear main claim, or is badly incoherent. |
| Evidence | The post supports its claim with high-quality evidence. The links between evidence and claim are clear and well-established. | The post supports its claim with evidence, but not all of the evidence is high-quality, or links between evidence and claim are unclear. | Evidence is lacking or extremely low in quality. |
| Style | The post maintains a unique voice for the writer, while still following all appropriate grammar and usage rules. The tone and word choice are appropriate to the student's blogging community. | The post follows all appropriate grammar and usage rules, and is clearly written, but does not establish a compelling voice or uses some language inappropriate to the student's blogging community. | The post makes grammar errors that prevent understanding, is unclear and difficult to read, or very inappropriate to the needs of the blogging community. |

No credit will be assigned to posts that are incomplete, or use sources in an unethical and unacknowledged manner.

In-class participation is a crucial part of learning in this class, and a key part of your class grade! You are expected to be in class, prepared and engaged for every class meeting. Be sure to read the absence policy explained in "Be In Class" on the [course policies page](http://copyvillain.org/blog/emac-2012-course-policies/).

In addition, specific expectations for student class participation are outlined below.

### Discussion Participation (10%)

Students should come to every class meeting ready to discuss the reading or pre-class exercise assigned for the day. To prepare for discussion, carefully read the assigned material, or complete the pre-class exercise prior to the class meeting.

During the class meeting, be prepared to discuss questions asked by the instructor and respond to ideas introduced by your classmates. *Be bold!* Remember, discussion isn't about being right or showing how clever you are. Discussion should be an experiment, where everyone can try out different ideas and see how they work. As long as your contributions to discussion show that you are prepared for our class meeting, they will be successful!

In addition, there will often be small exercises or in-class activities during our class meetings. To receive full credit for the class participation assignment, students must be engaged participants in these in-class activities.

#### Evaluation:

Discussion Participation is worth 10% of the class grade. You will be assigned half of the participation grade at mid-semester and half at the end of the semester. Participation will be evaluated based on the following simple rubric.

* **Excellent Participation:** The student is always attentive and alert in class. The student makes substantial contributions to every class discussion. The student's contributions always demonstrate that he or she has done the required reading or pre-class exercise. The student's contributions often demonstrate his or her original thought. The student is an active participant in all in-class activities, often taking a leadership role in group activities.
* **Good Participation:** The student is always attentive and alert in class. The student makes substantial contributions to most class discussions (at least once per week). The student's contributions always demonstrate that he or she has done the required reading or pre-class exercises. The student plays an active role during in-class activities.
* **Satisfactory Participation:** The student is usually attentive and alert in class. The student makes substantial contributions to at least a few class discussions. The student's contributions usually demonstrate that he or she has done the required reading or pre-class activity. The student is sometimes not an active participant during in-class activities.
* **Less than Satisfactory Participation:** The student is inattentive in class. The student rarely makes substantial contributions to class discussions. The student's contributions strongly suggest he or she has not done the required reading or pre-class activity.

### Workshop Participation (10%)

Two *blog workshops* will be held during this class. Each workshop will be a class day dedicated to pairs of students discussing their progress on the blog assignment and giving each other constructive criticism. The first workshop will focus on the blog proposal, giving students a chance to get peer feedback on their blog topics and examples prior to starting the blog project. The second workshop will be a final reflection on and audit of the blog project, giving students a chance to think about where they succeeded in the project and what they still need to learn.

Details for the blog workshop assignment will be posted here well prior to the first workshop meeting (Tuesday, September 25).

Students will be evaluated on their workshop performance *both* by the instructor and by their workshop partner, so be sure to give good, conscientious feedback!

### Platform Presentation (5%)

During the closing weeks of class we will discuss how New Media writing is often spread across a wide variety of technical *platforms.* Being effective writers in the New Media environment requires that we be able to think critically about these platforms, their technological affordances, legal relationships with authors and audiences, and social norms. Students will be split into groups and tasked with collectively researching a variety of platforms and preparing a 15-20 minute presentation on their findings, to be given in the last week of class.

Further details will be posted here as the start date of this assignment approaches.

## Digital Participation Assignment

### Course Collaborative Documents (10%)

This course asks students to participate in the production of several *collaborative documents,* that is to say, to work together with classmates to author and edit a single piece of writing. We will use *wiki* software (the same software that powers Wikipedia) to allow us to work together on the same document. If this is your first time editing a wiki, you may want to check out the [basic wiki editing instructions](http://copyvillain.org/emac2321wiki/index.php?title=Basic_Wiki_Editing_Instructions)

Over the course of this class, three collaborative documents will be created. Click through the links below to access the wiki page for each document, which includes a document outline and goals to get you started.

* [Class Goals Document](http://copyvillain.org/emac2321wiki/index.php?title=Class_Goals_Document)
* [Class Infotention Guide](http://copyvillain.org/emac2321wiki/index.php?title=Class_Infotention_Guide)
* [Class Blog Style Guide](http://copyvillain.org/emac2321wiki/index.php?title=Class_Blog_Style_Guide)

Students are expected to participate in all three of these collaborative documents. Your contributions to the wiki will be tracked by the wiki software and reviewed by the instructor! Participation in each document will be evaluated based on the following simple rubric:

* **Excellent Participation:** The student drafts *more than* the minimum number of words given in the document description. He or she is a frequent (at least every two weeks) contributor to the process of revising and improving the document, and edits and improves both his or her own work and the work of his or her classmates. He or she is an active participant on the document's talk page, and is able to discuss the document in depth during class. The student's contributions are recognized as valuable by his or her peers, who build on them with their own work.
* **Good Participation:** The student drafts *at least* the minimum number of words given in the document description. He or she edits the document multiple times over the course of the semester, and makes at least one meaningful comment on the document's talk page.
* **Satisfactory Participation:** The student drafts the minimum number of words given in the document description. He or she makes at least one edit to the document, in addition to drafting content.
* **Unsatisfactory Participation:** The student does not draft the minimum number of words given in the document description, or his or her contributions are off-topic, nonsense, or plagiarized.

### Contribute to Wikipedia Assignment (5%)

During Week 10 of our class we will discuss mass collaboration online, and especially the pre-eminent example of online collaboration: Wikipedia. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia anyone can edit (which should not be confused with the *wiki* software that powers it and our class wiki) is a collection of millions of articles written by thousands of contributors all across the globe. Wikipedia is one of the most visited websites in the world, and many people (maybe even you!) use it as a daily source of information.

This assignment asks students to contribute to *one* Wikipedia article related to their public blog topic. Any article connected to your topic is acceptable. For example, a political blogger might contribute to an article about a candidate he or she has written about, or a food blogger might contribute to the culture section of an article about a city. Select an article you feel you can make a useful contribution to! Use the sources, knowledge, and experience you have gained in the process of researching and writing your public blog to improve this article. Remember to follow the Wikipedia guidelines for contributors discussed in class on October 31.

#### Contribution requirements

Your contribution to your selected article must accomplish the following:

* Add *at least* two well-sourced facts, with citations, to the article.
* Include necessary connecting language to link your facts to the existing body text of the article.
* Make *at least* three constructive edits to the existing text of the article. Examples of constructive edits include: clarifying unclear language, adding useful links to other wikipedia articles, adding appropriate images (either in the public domain or licensed for re-use of course!), removing inaccurate or biased information, and adding appropriate sources for uncited statements (marked with the "citation needed tag").

#### Contribution follow-up and documentation

Visit Wikipedia frequently to check up on your edits and see how they are received by the Wikipedia community. If your edits are reverted (removed from the page), try to engage in conversation with the other editors on the talk page before attempting to restore your edits (WARNING: Restoring reverted edits without engaging in conversation first could be construed as *edit warring* and get you banned from Wikipedia!). Observe how Wikipedia editors build on your additions to the article, and try to assist them if you wish.

To document your contributions to Wikipedia, you will need to submit a link to your Wikipedia user's "contribution log." To access this, login to your Wikipedia account and click on the link labeled "My Contributions" in the upper right hand corner of the screen.

Copy the web address of this page out of your browser's address bar and paste it into a text document. Add a short (100-200 word) summary of your experience to this document, and submit it to the "Contributing to Wikipedia" assignment on elearning prior to November 27.

You may also reflect in depth about your experience editing Wikipedia for the fourth Reflection Essay, if you are so inspired.

Students who complete all requirements for this assignment will earn full credit. Students who complete some fraction of the requirements will receive partial credit proportional to how much of the assignment they completed.

### Attention Journal, Network Analysis Assignment, Class bookmark collection, etc. (10%)

In addition, there will be a variety of other, small digital participation tasks students will need to complete throughout the course of our class. Chief amongst these will be the Attention Journal, Network Analysis Assignment, and Class Bookmark Collection, linked to below. However, students should be watchful for other small tasks they may be asked to complete. Successful completion of these tasks will be worth 10% of the student's grade.

* [Attention Journal Assignment](URL%20FOR%20ATTENTION%20JOURNAL)
* [Network Analysis Assignment](URL%20FOR%20NETWORK%20ANALYSIS%20ASSIGNMENT)
* [Class Bookmark Collection Assignment](URL%20FOR%20CLASS%20BOOKMARK%20COLLECTION%20ASSIGNMENT)

## Reflection Essay

The reflection essay assignment asks students to think carefully about their work in the course, and discuss their experience working on various course assignments. Studies have shown that careful reflection helps students retain lessons and build awareness and skills! Many of the learning experiences in this course will consist of short, in-class or at-home exercises, and the reflection essay gives students a chance to think carefully about these experiences, and better absorb the learning that took place during these exercises.

Much of the work in this class will be public, but the reflection essay will not. Students will submit reflection essays to the instructors alone via elearning.

### Essay structure

Essays should focus on what you learned from your experience in class. This can include events that frustrated you, or things you are trying to learn but are still struggling with! However, try to focus on the events and details that influenced your learning, and leave other details aside.

Your essay should consist of one to three well-structured paragraphs. Remember that a paragraph centers around discussing a single idea. Use your paragraphs to organize your thoughts!

For each reflection essay, a series of questions has been provided below. These questions are designed to get you started, and focus your thinking on learning and class work. *Your essay should NOT be a list of answers to these questions.* Essays that do not directly answer the questions listed, but still provide a clear, detailed discussion of specific learning experiences the student had are acceptable.

### Reflection Essay One

For reflection essay one (due August 31) consider the following questions:

* What did you expect this class to teach you when you signed up for it? How have your expectations changed or been confirmed by our initial conversations?
* What are your goals for this class? What do you feel you need to know about writing and research online?
* What about the Rheingold reading most surprised you? What most confirmed your expectations about the digital environment?

### Reflection Essay Two

*Prompts TBA, check back immediately before the assignment*

### Reflection Essay Three

*Prompts TBA, check back immediately before the assignment*

### Reflection Essay Four

*Prompts TBA, check back immediately before the assignment*

### Other requirements and assessment

Reflection essays must be 350 to 500 words in length.

Reflection essays written in the first person are acceptable. Essays do not need to use "formal" language, but should avoid offensive or inappropriate language. Essays should be clearly written and avoid grammar mistakes that obscure meaning.

Submit your essay via the elearning system in one of the following formats: - Word (.doc or .docx) - Open Office (.odt) - Adobe PDF (.pdf) - Rich text (.rtf)

*Please do not submit essays in other formats, such as microsoft works or apple pages files. These files are not openable by the instructor. Submitting an unopenable file may result in your assignment not receiving credit!!*

Reflection essays will be graded based on the rubric below.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Excellent | Good | Needs Improvement |
| Class Content | The essay clearly shows the student's learning experience and makes detailed, specific references to relevant class activities and reading. | The essay attempts to show the student's learning, but leaves out crucial supporting details, or includes irrelevant or distracting information. | The essay does not directly address the student's learning experiences in our class. |
| Structure | The essay is organized into 1-3 coherent paragraphs. The essay does not directly respond to the prompt questions given, but uses them as a jumping off point for analysis and synthesis by the student. | The essay is organized into 1-3 paragraphs, each addressing a single argument, but some distracting or unorganized content is included. | The essay lacks a paragraph structure, or consists of a series of unconnected answers to prompt questions. |
| Style | The essay uses clear language, avoids serious grammar errors, and communicates a sense of the student's unique voice. | The essay uses clear language, but may contain some grammar errors. | The essay has many grammar errors which obscure meaning, or uses inappropriate or offensive language. |