

## **So you want your class to blog...**

### **How much are blog posts/individual blogs/etc. worth as a part of the class grade? How will I assess it?**

We all know that the majority of students don't do something solely for the love of learning. Grading on the number of posts may not foster interaction through comments, or comments may become perfunctory and bland.

### **Why will blogging achieve my classroom goals than another assignment? How does the medium fit the "message"?**

Just because the medium is different than a traditional essay doesn't mean students will want to do it more than writing papers. Blogging can be an interactive way of sharing and conveying information and analysis. Will blogging help your students take a theoretical concept and put it into practice?

### **How do I plan to get it to go beyond the classroom (be it just across course sections or into the community)?**

If you want the blog to be public, in hopes of getting your class's voice "in the blogosphere", how do you plan to do this? A 16-week course is not much time to receive traffic, and you have few guarantees that bloggers from outside AU will see your class's blog(s). Can you coordinate this with colleagues who are doing similar work elsewhere? Adding links to pertinent sites also can drive up traffic to your site via "trackbacks".

### **Does this really go beyond the classroom? Would Blackboard's Discussion boards be a better fit?**

Many teachers keep the blog private so it's a class-only exercise. Some extend the blog to be within the realm of the course, spanning multiple sections. Most blog interfaces let you decide the privacy levels.

### **Are you tech-savvy? Are your students?**

Yes, blogging is easy—mechanically speaking—even for people who didn't grow up with a computer in every household! However, we often assume that most of our students are connected online all the time and were born knowing everything about anything "technological". **In reality, our students are often unprepared to do professional and/or academic work using technology.**

Consider the following issues:

- **Technological skills:** Many students have not used computers for much beyond typing a paper or surfing the Internet.
- **Writing for an audience:** A student may have a Facebook profile but that doesn't mean s/he knows how to write for an audience, or how to differentiate the proper audiences for "OMG!!!11!1! ROFL!" and "To point out the irony in the situation X provides compared with situation Y..."
- **The Digital Divide:** There are still many students who grew up without a computer in the home, or without regular access to computers at school.

### **Do you already have a blog?**

You might want to start your own blog first, in order to play around with the interface (Blogger.com, Wordpress.com, Edublogs.com). Or, read several blogs regularly to see how they frequently they post new material or reply to comments. To find blogs you like, check out Web sites for journals in your field, mass media, and search engines like Technorati (Technorati.com).