

Weblog Project

English 515: Advanced Professional Writing

Spring 2003

For the first five weeks of the semester, we will be studying the weblog as a new form of publishing. While it is easy to read weblog theory, browse some weblogs, and learn about the technology, it is much more difficult actually to develop one. Therefore, your first project will be to develop and maintain a weblog over the course of the semester. This weblog will not be individual (unless you prefer); rather, you will collaborate with no more than three other individuals to develop a collaborative weblog on a topic of your choosing.

Requirements for the Weblog—

As you consider how you will proceed with the development of this weblog project, you should take a few points into consideration. As we have read, the best weblogs are both well-written and link-driven. This means that your weblog should largely consist of entries that provide interesting links to articles, stories, websites, or other spots on the web, with commentary. Your weblog should be frequently updated. Since you are able to work in teams of four people, the weblog should be fairly simple to maintain. You should also keep in mind that your team members do not (and should not) necessarily hold the same points of view on the topic or subject at hand. Some of the most interesting collaborative weblogs are those that provide a variety of different views on a topic. Finally, you should see this weblog as a unique rhetorical situation, which demands that you approach this project using rhetorical concepts such as audience, rhetorical purpose, ethos, voice, logos, etc.

Project Components—

- I. A message to the class discussion email list about possible weblog topics or themes. List at least three possible topics/themes of interest and detail your level of interest. You should also mention if you plan to work alone in this email. We will form groups in class on Tuesday, January 28, based on these emails.

Email due: Monday, January 27

- II. A "project proposal" memo to me from the team outlining your proposed weblog, its rhetorical purpose, and your maintenance plan for the semester. In this memo, you should fully address the following questions, as well as any other relevant information:

- Explain the topic or theme of the weblog.
- What weblog software will you use and why? What are the advantages of this software for your topic and purpose?
- Where will the weblog be hosted and why?
- What is the rhetorical purpose of this weblog?
- How will you seek to establish ethos in this weblog?
- What kinds of people do you think will be interested in your weblog? What are their demographics? In short, what do you know about your potential audience?
- What other weblogs would you compare to your weblog and why?
- How will you divide the work over the semester? What role will each team member play?

Memo due: Thursday, February 6

- III. The weblog itself, maintained and updated on a regular basis (3-4 times per week).
Weblog established: Thursday, February 6
- IV. A reflective memo to me from each group member detailing his or her contributions to the weblog and reflecting on the evolution of the weblog over the semester. This memo should reflect on and review the original weblog plan memo submitted earlier in the semester.
Memo due: Finals week at the conclusion of the course.
- V. Collaborative Project Evaluation Form
Form due: Finals week at the conclusion of the course.

Evaluation—

The weblog project is worth 20% of your final course grade. You must complete all of the components of the project in a timely manner in order to receive credit for the project. I will also take into consideration any comments on the collaborative project evaluation forms when determining grades for the project.

Both the project proposal memo and the reflective memo should be considered persuasive documents. Therefore, I will evaluate your memos according to the following criteria:

- Correct memo format
- Fully addressing the questions listed under the project proposal memo
- Complete discussion of the rhetorical aspects of the project, including providing sound reasons for your rhetorical choices
- Full and complete reflection on the project at the conclusion of the semester
- Grammar and mechanics

Since the weblog is a public document, I reserve the right to consult outside readers who are interested in your weblog on their opinions. I will not ask them to evaluate you for a grade, but I will ask for advice about how they feel, as a readership of your weblog, about your writing. Additionally, I will evaluate the weblog according to the following criteria:

- Effective layout and format for the weblog, which includes a title, description, links to other weblogs, archives
- Posting of unique links from a variety of sources
- Appropriateness to the weblog topic and timeliness of links
- Effective commentary on those links, which means a clear explanation of why you are linking and what the reader is supposed to get out of the link
- Development of a unique voice and perspective by each writer
- Ethos of each writer, as well as the weblog as a whole
- Timeliness of updates
- Audience awareness