

HON 312  
Spring 2008

**A guide for writing a “journal blog” or “reflective blog”**

**What is a reflective blog and why should you use one?** (Adapted from Professor Wayne Iwaoka, the University of Hawaii at Manoa and UMaine’s SMS 491/EDW 472).

The blog is used in this class as a modern replacement to the more traditional journal. It is an instrument for practicing writing and thinking. Unlike your typical class notes in which you “passively” record data/information given to you by an instructor your blog should reflect upon lessons you have learned-- a personal record of your educational experience in class.

Maintaining a blog serves several purposes:

- A means of communication, conversation (e.g., between material and yourself, yourself and instructors).
- Provides regular feedback between you and the instructors and helps to match expectations.
- Platform for synthesis of new knowledge and ideas
- Helps to develop critical thinking
- Helps to elicit topics of interest, challenging topics that need improvement, etc.
- Help to clarify troublesome concepts

Teaching is a life-long learning process. As with any other skill, developing good teaching skills requires practice and reflection. A good way to begin thinking about teaching is to self reflect about your own learning. This is the purpose of the class’ blog.

**How to set a blog?**

You can set a blog with many different companies. Below we provide instruction on how to do it with Google blogger.

1. Create a Gmail account if you don’t have one yet (Google: Gmail)
2. Go to [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com) and enter your Gmail address and password
3. Follow the instructions: (a) sign up for blogger (b) click: create a blog and follow the instructions given to you. Click on start posting and your blog is ready.

To keep your blog private go to “setting”. Several questions will appear on the page.

- Change the setting for “add blog to our listing” from “yes” to “no”
- Change the setting for “let search engines find your blog” from “yes” to “no”
- Go to permissions: under Blog readers choose “only blog authors”. This will permit only the course instructor to read and comment on your blog.
- To allow the course instructor view and comment on your blog add him as an author using the following email addresses: boss.emmanuel@gmail.com

**For help: go to <http://help.blogger.com/>**

### **When and what to write?**

You are expected to write every week and post your blog no later than each Friday of the week at 12:00 PM.

Below are guiding questions that will help you with writing your blog and reflecting upon your learning experiences.

1. “What have I learned this week?”
2. “What excited me about the week’s activities and why?”
3. “What would I suggest to change if the class was offered in the future?”

In addressing these questions, record your own thoughts, ideas, responses and reactions to any of the week’s activities. Make notes about concepts, questions you have, and any confusion you may have had. Record new insights and problem solving strategies realized during discussions with fellow students and instructors. The blog reflects your own thoughts and ideas. Be as original and critical (constructive) as you can. You can use whatever writing style you are comfortable with as long as it is clearly written and sensible.

### **What am I looking for when I grade your blog?**

You will not be graded upon whether your ideas are correct or not, and there will be no docking of points for poor writing or grammar (unless it is not clearly written).

The table below presents the four “essentials” I look for in your blog:

- **Blog is posted on time.**
- **Blog is readable and clear.**
- **Blog reflects upon all guiding questions above.**
- **Blog is thoughtful**

If all components are satisfied you will get an A, one is missing or of poor quality, a B, two are missing or of poor quality, a C, three are missing or of poor quality, a D, and an F if no blog is posted within a week’s time.

Below is an example for what I expect from your blog:

#### **BLOG EXAMPLE**

- What have I learned this week? Programming is new to me. While working with Alice I realized that programming is really a relatively simple task. It is a problem solving method which involves breaking a large task into a series of small tasks (commands). The analogy to storytelling was new to me as well. Watching Pausch’s lecture provided me with the larger concepts associated with how a product like Alice came to be. It also made me aware of how individuals can make a huge difference while being focused on doing what excite them the most.

- What excited me about the week's activities and why? Realizing how programming is relatively simple suggests I could do it for my own needs (e.g. setting up a web site, etc'). I am realizing that software and programming are all around me and that if I take the time I can use programming to better control appliances and produce graphics closer to what I am imagining. Working in groups of two seems to be a great method to learn as we kept helping each other along the way and exciting each other. I can see how it may be boring to work at it alone.
- What would I suggest to change if the class was offered in the future? I think a longer lecture about the history of programming may be useful to provide a historic context to the project. If some readings were offered prior to class we could jump straight to the project rather than begin in the middle of the period following the lecture.

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