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Incorporating Technology: Blogging
for TCU Graduate Instructor Pre-Semester Workshop

COMPARING THREADED DISCUSSION & BLOGGING

	eCollege Threaded Discussion	Blogging via Blogger
what it is	A discussion board hosted through eCollege course site. Instructor posts topic and all students respond on same page. Can create a new TD for each assignment or can use single page for general discussion.	An external site where anyone can create a blog for free. Students create individual blogs at the beginning of the semester. Topics can be posted on the instructor's blog, included in syllabus, or given in class.
pros	• Supported by TCU technology • Students may have familiarity from using in other classes • Students can easily read posts by classmates • Easy to grade because they're all in one place • Keeps discussion private and only accessible by class members	• Allows students to have ownership over page, which can lead to discussion about rhetorical choices • Depending on frequency of assignments, gets students writing on a regular basis • Ability to respond to each student's post on individual basis (especially on paper topics) • Can be used on regular basis to post agenda and/or questions, so all students are on same page when they come to class • If students are used to checking blog regularly, can be used to post announcements or information related to class discussions, etc. • Easy to access for grading or commenting if using a blog subscription tool (like Google's)
cons	• First semester students are completely unfamiliar with tool, and some need extra support • No room for personalization • Must plan ahead to set up TD with topic in order to tell students	• Not supported by TCU (some issues with blogs being flagged by Blogger and temporarily disabled) • Students don't generally read and comment on peer blogs unless required
my experience in 10803	Reading Responses posted on TDs • Total of 5 required posts • Requiring students to comment on their classmates' posts can make in class discussion awkward because they've already discussed virtually, but if students don't read each others' posts, seems almost unnecessary to use TD rather than typing and submitting by paper/email	Included Reading Responses as part of regular writing activities • Total of 11 required posts • Posts about essay topics, planning, revising, etc. • Didn't assign posts as often as originally planned • Only required them to comment on each other's posts twice (will require more often in future)
examples	will show examples from 10803 and literature course during session	For 10803: http://patrick10803.blogspot.com/ For 20803: http://patrick20803.blogspot.com/ and http://irvin20803.blogspot.com/ For Lit Course: http://patrick2305.blogspot.com/ and http://earlyaml.blogspot.com/

IDEAS FOR INCORPORATING BLOGS INTO THE CLASSROOM

Separate Blogs	Commenting	Invited Contributors
As in the example pages above, students are given instructions for creating their own blogs using Blogger. The instructor has a blog where he/she can post prompts, questions, and announcements for students. The page can also have a list of links to all student blogs.	Instructor creates a single blog for the class and posts questions or prompts. Students respond through the comments feature. This can be a good way for getting into blogging because it's more simple and operates much more like the TD tool in eCollege.	Instructor creates a single blog for the class and uses Blogger and students' email addresses to invite them as contributors to the blog. Then, students and the instructor can all add posts to the page. Depending on the size of the class and planned use of the blog, this can get quite complicated, but this method offers the option of keeping the blog private and password protected.

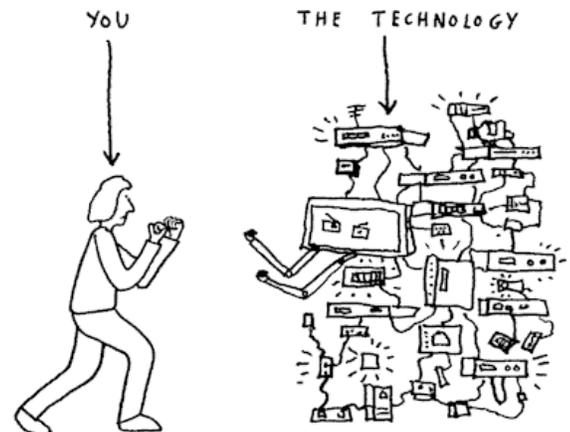## SOME INTERESTING AND EXCITING WAYS TO USE BLOGS IN A COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

[from *Blogs, A Primer* - http://www.bgsu.edu/cconline/barrios3/barrios3.htm]

- <u>Blogs as Journals</u>: If you've ever used journaling in your classes, a blog is a great way to move this pedagogical practice online. Students can complete the same sort of journal assignments you might ordinarily give, but placing their responses online gives you ready access to these journals. It also allows other students to see what their classmates have written in response to the assignments. This solidifies classroom community and implicitly creates collaborative learning. Blogs with a commenting feature allow you and other students to respond to journal postings, which only enhances the kinds of collaboration possible.
- <u>Blogs and Voice/Ethos</u>: If you've asked students to blog throughout the semester, have them reflect on their development at the end of the course. For a final assignment, then, you can have students write about their blogs, noting the places in which their voice and ethos changed.
- <u>Blogs and Peer Review</u>: Because so many blogging tools now have integrated commenting systems, blogs can be useful tools for peer revision. Students can post brainstorming ideas, paragraphs, or whole assignments to their blogs and peers can then respond to the work through comments.
- <u>Blogs and Research</u>: Some academics have already started using a blog to keep notes of their research. Blogs would be a useful addition to any research writing course, particular as students turn increasingly to the Web to perform their research. Students can use the blog to record their reflections on various sources, sketch out their emerging arguments, or point to links that relate to their topic. The visibility of blogs records this research process for evaluation, comment, and review while peer participation through commenting can help students determine the validity and reliability of Web sources by asking students to comment on the various sources listed in the research blogs.

PENCIL AND PAPER?! TALK ABOUT *OLD SCHOOL!*

SOME TOOLS TO HELP IN THE FIGHT AGAINST TECHNOLOGY

- Setting up a blog on Blogger
  - Video Instructions: http://www.youtube.com/BloggerHelp
  - Blogger help for customizing your blog: http://help.blogger.com/bin/topic.py?topic=12439
- Using reader sites to keep track of blog posts
  - Google Reader: http://www.google.com/googlereader/
  - Bloglines: http://www.bloglines.com/
- Computers and Composition Online
  - Main Page: http://www.bgsu.edu/cconline/home.htm
  - The Year of the Blog: http://www.bgsu.edu/cconline/barrios/blogs/index.html
  - Blogs, A Primer: http://www.bgsu.edu/cconline/barrios3/barrios3.htm

YOU   THE TECHNOLOGY

THE BATTLE WE ALL FACE

Wording from my 10803 Syllabus regarding Blogs

Each student must set up a blog at Blogger.com for the purposes of this course. Even if you already have a blog, you will need to set up a separate blog for the explicit purpose of English 10803. You will be writing responses to the readings and discussing class matters on their blogs. Since the purpose of these entries is to prepare you for class discussion, *late blog entries will not count for credit.* (you can, of course, post them early if you know you will be gone.) Student blogs for this course will be hosted on Blogger. Full instructions for setting up your blog and your first blog activity are in a separate handout. Remember that this is a graded portion of the class and that a blog is a public forum, so please keep in mind how professionalism impacts your grade and compose your blog entries with your readers (both your instructor and your classmates) in mind. **Your blog will total 15% of your grade.**

Blog Overview and Blog Assignment

[OVERVIEW] Over the course of the semester, you will be responsible for keeping an online journal or weblog. With the help of technology at Blogger (http://www.blogger.com/), you will build your own weblog or "blog" and post your responses to prompts from me about the assigned readings. This activity will replace the reading responses or quizzes in many English classes. Your blog entries must be posted by midnight the night before the assigned date. I will provide your writing prompts and assignments at least 24 hours in advance of the due date.

[STYLE] Blogs are less formal than essays; they are a forum for reflecting on readings, free-writing and pre-writing, and discussing topics from class that particularly interest you. While I will not be strictly evaluating your grammar/spelling/punctuation in the blog, keep in mind that it is a blog for English class and not an entirely personal blog. It gives me a sense of how you write and who you are as a reader/writer, so avoid internet abbreviations that you might use on an instant messaging program (LOL, BRB, BTW, LMAO, IMHO, etc.), writing in all lowercase or without punctuation, profanity, and anything else that could be construed as disrespectful to our class community. Your blog entries will be graded, and while I don't anticipate a problem with this, I reserve the right to lower your grade based on inappropriate content in your blog.

While I will be the primary reader of your blog, I will require you to read and comment on other students' blogs, and thus, other students will read yours. Keep in mind that it is a public forum, accessible to anyone who has access to the internet, so do not post anything that you would not share with the classroom and the internet community. Furthermore, feel free to read your peers' blogs at any time to get a sense of their ideas on the topic at hand.

[GRADING] I will check blogs periodically throughout the semester, and will make sure to comment when my feedback will help you complete the next assignment for the class. Sometimes, I may only read and comment on a few blogs, while other times, I may check all of the blogs. I will grade your blog based on its relevance to the topic posted and your understanding of the medium. As I mentioned above, blogs are treated less formally than essays with less attention to grammar and mechanics and more attention to content depth and quality.

[SETTING UP YOUR BLOG] Your first assignment related to the blog is to actually set up your personal blog and to post your first entry on the page. This first assignment will be graded as a daily/homework assignment rather than as a usual blog.

[1] Set up your blog: To do so, go to www.blogger.com, and follow the on-screen directions for setting up a free blog. Please take some time to personalize your blog. This is a way for both me and your classmates to get to know you, so feel free to include a photo, links to other sites you enjoy, etc. Please make sure that your name (first/preferred name and last initial) is clear on your blog. As I mentioned in the syllabus, I know that some/many of you already have a blog where you write posts; however, for the purposes of this class, you will need a separate blog that is focused on reflecting about your reading. Feel free to provide a link to your other blog if you would like to share that with your classmates as well. Keep in mind that I will post your blog address on the course website, so your class members will have access to your blog. You can restrict general public access to your blog, however, under "Settings" by marking "no" for the question "Add your blog to our listings?"

[2] Write your first entry: Write a letter of introduction about yourself. In addition to the basics—where you are from, what year you are at TCU, what major you are considering, etc—I want to know a few things related to your participation in this course. Please find the questions listed on the course blog: http://patrick10803.blogspot.com/. At the end of your letter to me (it should be around 500 words), please write a final statement letting me know that you have read, understand, and agree to the terms of the course syllabus, which I see as a contract for our course. Also let me know if you have any questions regarding the syllabus or anything discussed in our first meeting of the course. Remember that all of your blog entries should be in paragraph form.

[3] Follow up: Email me at april.patrick@tcu.edu with your blog address (http://____.blogspot.com), so that I can add it to the list on our course page.