

Non-technical Blogging Tips and Assignment Summary

Finding content to include in blog posts

Most bloggers find content for their blogs by daily reading of online news sources and other blogs and by being keen observers of the world around them. You'll need to stay on the look out for interesting ideas to blog. Get in the habit of reading at least 2 news sources online a day and bookmark the stories that you think might be interesting to write about.

If you find a story online (or even offline) that you think you'd like to write about, use google to look up background from the story to include in your blog post. For instance, if the news article is about a new government program, see if you can find the government's web page for the program or see if you can find the President's press release announcing the program. If the news article includes event or name you are not familiar with, do a news search for them on the Mexican newspaper's website to see if you can find earlier stories. If a politician is mentioned, see if you can link to their webpage in the Senate or Chamber of Deputies. For important places or historical figures, you can include links to Wikipedia. (Any Wikipedia link will *not* count toward the minimum required number of links.)

Remember: Our class blog is hosted on Georgia Tech servers. I will not censor your posts, but you should make sure that your posts do no violate (or show students violating) the standards of student conduct of either Monterrey Tec or Georgia Tech.

Use the list of resources (which includes links to good sample posts) listed on the page labeled "Blogging resources." The link is at the bottom right corner of our class blog.

A note on the "authority" of your news sources or blogs

The news sources and blogs to which you link in your blog posts should be sources or blogs with some claim of authority or expertise related to the subject. For example, if you use Google News to search for news on "drugs in Mexico," you will likely get a variety of stories from different sources, including a story on the webpage of the *San Marcos Daily Record*. Unless the story takes place in San Marcos, it's likely that the story was originally written by a reporter working for a news agency, like the Associated Press, or a bigger paper, like the *LA Times*. You should look carefully for the original source for the article and attempt to link to the origin of the article.

Likewise, you should be careful when you link to other blogs to choose blogs that have acquired "authority" in the blogosphere (e.g., have large numbers of hits on Technorati) or that are written by experts in the field of your blog post (e.g., professors, researchers, lawyers, etc.). Exceptions to this rule might apply if you are using the blog to which you link as evidence to support your argument. For example, if you are writing a post about

how Mexican citizens are using blogs to criticize a government policy, it would be appropriate to link to sample posts, even if they were not from “authorities.”

Any Wikipedia link will *not* count toward the minimum required number of links.

Blog-related assignment details

Group weblog assignments (8% of final grade each, 32% of total):

The class will produce a weblog about Mexico during the summer program. Students in the class will be divided into five groups. Groups will have the opportunity during class Friday to plan their article for the coming week. The articles should discuss a topic or issue of import to Mexico, and may reflect upon course material or site visits. The articles should fall under one of the following five categories and no category can be repeated by each group more than once: politics, economics, history, culture/sports, or local (Monterrey).

Each group will be required to post one article (500 words maximum, with at least two links to web-based articles or content) per week, for a total of four articles. Original photos may be posted with articles. All articles must be posted by 11:00 p.m. the due date indicated below. The entire group will receive the same grade for the article and late articles will be penalized 10%. Articles submitted more than 24 hours late will not receive credit.

Group 1 due dates: June 3, June 8, June 14, and June 22

Group 2 due dates: June 4, June 10, June 18, and June 24

Group 3 due dates: June 5, June 11, June 19, and June 25

Group 4 due dates: June 6, June 12, June 20, and June 26

Group 5 due dates: June 7, June 13, June 21, and June 27

Individual weblog assignments (5% of final grade each, 15% total):

During the summer semester, students are expected to post three shorter articles or photo essays to the class weblog on a topic of their own choosing. These posts can either be in the form of a short essay (150-200 words, with at least one web-based link) or a photo essay (three original photos with captions describing each photo and how they are related).

During the first class, students will sign up for the day of their posts. Posts will be due by 11:00 p.m. and late posts will be penalized 10%. No late posts will be accepted after 24 hours.