

# Using weblogs to promote critical reading, thinking, and writing



Michelle Dion  
Georgia Tech

# Why bother with weblogs?

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## ■ Cons

- Startup costs
- Management issues
- Grading

## ■ Pros

- Engages students with current events
- Helps students see links between class content and current events
- Encourages writing
- Uses a medium students are comfortable with

# Overview

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- Types of weblogs
- My experience
- Things to consider
- Brainstorming class blog ideas
- Technical and other considerations

# Types of weblogs

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- Personal
  - A journal
  - Informal
  - Few links to outside sources
  - No claim to authority

# Personal

*The Characters*

*Frequently Asked*

*The Media Center*

*Photos*

**Tuesday, February 19, 2008**

## Jetting Off

### *How lucky am I?*

I'm jetting off today via Silkair to Langkawi for a short trip!

It's 1056am now as I am typing this, and I haven't slept yet coz I played overnight MJ, haha... I woke up at 5pm.

Yesterday I woke up at 9pm and went to White Sands to collect a parcel at 11am (haven't sleep yet obviously).

I brought a burger into the cab on the way home, and the cab driver was like, "WAH... Your breakfast ah?!"

Tired beyond words, I just said yeah to un-complicate things, since the burger was actually more like my... supper?

And the Cab Uncle commented, **"Wah! So late then eat breakfast? Almost lunch already!"**

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Is it so unfathomable that some people sleep (extremely) late?

## *Ads & Sponsors*



I am Xixue, morning star, bringer of light.

## *Awards*



THE 2005 WEBLOG AWARDS Best Asian Blog

xixue best asian weblog 2005 weblog awards

WEBLOG AWARDS 2004 Winner BEST ASIAN BLOG

ASIABLOG AWARDS BEST SINGAPORE BLOG 2003

## *Classics*

Stop asking me why I am popular, and read these!

- » [Height Issues](#)
- » [Xixue = all make-up](#)
- » [MRT irritants!](#)
- » [Once upon a time ...](#)
- » [The Big O](#)

# Types of weblogs

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## ■ Personal

- A journal
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## ■ Pundit

- Commentary on news
- Not necessarily formal
- Many links
- Authority based on expertise

# Fruits & Votes

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« [A wish for 2008](#)

[Power wash](#) »

## The electoral path to authoritarianism?

Two elections on Sunday are worth watching as examples of an electoral path to authoritarianism. In Venezuela, voters will vote on a series of constitutional amendments that would greatly enhance the power of both the state in the economy and the president within the state. In Russia, voters will vote in legislative Duma elections that are sure to result in the outgoing President's party winning a massive majority of the seats.

In both cases, we are witnessing the consolidation of authoritarian systems despite ongoing electoral processes and the retention of formal institutions of separated powers.

The Venezuelan referendum features votes on two packages of amendments. Both packages bundle reforms on both economic and social policy claims on the state and powers of the presidency. Of course, one of the reforms would lift the existing term limit on the presidency itself.

Steven Taylor has posted an [image of the ballot](#). He also quotes from [venezuelanalysis.com](#):

Venezuelans will vote on the reform on December 2nd and will do so in two blocks. Block "A" includes President Chavez's original proposal, as amended by the National Assembly, which would change 33 articles out of the 350 articles in the constitution. Also included in block A are another 13 articles introduced by the National Assembly. Block "B" includes another 26 reform articles proposed by the National Assembly. Voters may vote "Yes" or "No" on each block.

Steven also posts a link to a [PDF of the text of the reforms](#) (in Spanish).

Polls have been somewhat mixed about the chances of the referendum, but it would be surprising if the substantial organizational

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## ■ Blogosphere

- Community and dialogue is important
- Nearly impossible to integrate individual blogs into existing community
- Easier to create community within class


# My experience—Contemporary Mexico

Home About Photos

Search

## TECH ON TEC

Posts Comments Photos



### The End

Jun 28th, 2007 by [Michelle Dion](#)

The last posts for class have been posted. Our *despedida* dinner is tomorrow. Everyone goes their separate ways on Saturday....some to Guadalajara, many back to Atlanta, and a couple will stay here.

Posted in [Uncategorized](#) | [No Comments »](#)

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### Mexico, the U.S. and the War on Drugs

Jun 27th, 2007 by [Courtney](#)

"Mexico is the top drug exporter to the United States" ([Levy and Bruhn 213](#)). While I couldn't tell you where or when I learned this information, it did not shock me to come across this statement when reading for class. What shocked me was that I had never applied the basic principle of supply and demand pounded into my head during a semester of macroeconomics: "with no demand, there would be no reason to produce" (Levy and Brunn 216). More simply put, Mexicans sell drugs to Americans because Americans want to buy drugs from

#### ABOUT

This is a blog for Georgia Tech's summer exchange program with Monterrey Tech. We are hanging out and studying in Monterrey, Mexico for 2007 summer. [» more](#)

#### CATEGORIES

- [Culture](#)
- [Economics](#)
- [History](#)
- [Monterrey](#)
- [Politics](#)
- [Uncategorized](#)

# My experience—Contemporary Mexico

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- 5 week summer study abroad course in Mexico
- 15 Georgia Tech students & 5 Tec de Monterrey students
- Two types of blog assignments
  - Group blog posts
  - Individual blog posts

# Things to consider

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- Class size
  - Large classes increase administration and grading demands
  - A mix of group and individual posts can create variation
- Class content
  - American government vs. political philosophy
  - Intro vs. upper division
- Student characteristics
  - Majors vs. non-majors
  - Class rank
- Your time and energy

# Things to consider II

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- Blogs should have regularly updated content
- Blogs should be current and relevant
- Students should be encouraged to comment on each other's posts
- Students will appreciate tie-in of posts to class discussions

# Brainstorming class blog ideas

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- Groups of 2-3
- Design outline of class blog assignment
  - Groups and/or individual posts?
  - Posts: How many? How long?
  - Organized around topics or open?
  - Which news sources would be most appropriate?
  - Will all posts be graded? Will comments be required?
  - Will you blog with your students?

# Class blog ideas

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# Technical & other considerations

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- Which blogging tool to use?
  - Blackboard Vista Enterprise and CE Enterprise have weblog/journal tools
  - Edublogs is designed for education

Username:  Password:   
  [\[students login here\]](#)  
[\(lost your password?\)](#)

## Join the largest education community on the internet

-  Sign up for a free education blog in seconds
-  Use it to transform your teaching or talk to other teachers
-  Powered by WordPress, the best blogging tool on the web
-  Safe, secure, supported and free of any advertising
-  Embed video, create podcasts and customise your space




10 ways to use your blog with students



Start a conversation using your edublog



### Edublogs Supporters

-  [blk](#)
-  [art ed digested](#)
-  [Mobile Technology in TAFE](#)
-  [enlightenededucation.edublogs.org](#)
-  [Kevin's R&D Planning Blog](#)
-  [Kevin's Meandering Mind](#)
-  [The Global Sociology Blog](#)
-  [Miss W. and her Smartboard](#)
-  [Larry Ferlazzo's Websites of the Day...](#)
-  [Religious Studies at Chiswick Community School](#)

[Become an Edublogs Supporter](#)

Take a quick video tour of edublogs above.



**Featured edublog**

### Latest news

[Widgets, themes, languages and more!](#)



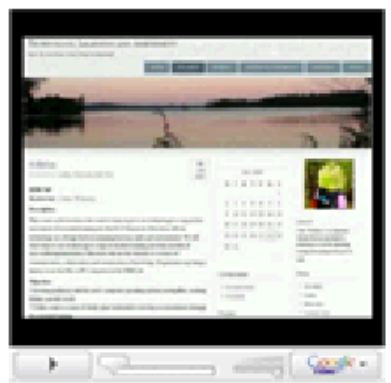


"a wonderful community and world of possibilities"

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- [HOME](#)
- [ABOUT](#)
- [FEATURES](#)
- [BLOG](#)
- [TESTIMONIALS](#)
- [SUPPORT](#)
- [CAMPUS](#) - for your school

Hallo, mdion96 [Sign Out] - My Dashboard  
[Get your account](#)



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Sign up for **FREE**

### Edublogs Supporters

- Teaching with Technology
- Reflection 2.0
- art ed digested
- Kevin's Meandering Mind
- Jason Rhode
- Religious Studies at Chiswick Community School
- BlogWalker
- Labyrinth of Learning 2.0
- Miss W. and her Smartboard
- Psychology and More

[Become an Edublogs Supporter](#)



10 ways to use your blog with students



Start a conversation using your edublog

### Latest news

- Widgets, themes, languages and more!  
February 16th, 2008 - 30 Comments
- Introducing Edublogs Supporter  
February 15th, 2008 - 23 Comments
- The rise of the widget!



### Featured edublog

**The Edublogger**



# Technical & other considerations

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- Which blogging tool to use?
  - Blackboard Vista Enterprise and CE Enterprise have weblog/journal tools
  - Edublogs is designed for education
  - Blogger and Wordpress also offer free blogging tools

# Technical & other considerations II

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- Preparation
  - Set up blog before class
    - Enlist a student assistant to add “users”
  - Provide list of appropriate news sources
  - Discuss issues of “authority”
  - Provide examples of ideal blog posts (or blog with your students!)
  - Discuss issues of plagiarism & fair use of content

# Technical & other considerations III

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- Keeping the blog going
  - Mention posts in class
  - “Comment” on posts
  - Allow some class time to coordinate group posts
- Privacy concerns
  - FERPA
  - Edublogs option
  - Using a penname or alternative assignments

# Technical & other considerations IV

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- Grading
  - Posts can multiply or accumulate quickly
  - Grading/marking first post important for student feedback
  - Grading holistically can save time
  - Some use peer rating/grading
  - Writing surprisingly good—perhaps peer pressure?

# Resources

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- In your folder
  - Syllabus, sample instructions for students
- On my webpage

<http://www.prism.gatech.edu/~md177/blog-resources.html>

# **Michelle Dion**

This website was created to support my workshop at the 2008 APSA Teaching and Learning Conference, San Jose, CA, February 22-24.

## **Resources for Class Blogging**

### **News Sources**

- [Getting started with RSS Feeds and News Readers](#)
- [LA Times](#)
- [RSS feeds from the LA Times](#)
- [NY Times](#)
- [RSS feeds from the NY Times](#)
- [Washington Post](#)
- [RSS feeds from the Washington Post](#)
- [Chicago Tribune](#)
- [Miami Herald](#)
- [Yahoo News](#)
- [Yahoo! RSS feeds - subscribe by category](#)
- [BBC RSS feeds subscribe by category](#)
- [Google News](#) - subscribe to RSS feeds of results of keyword searches.
- [LexisNexis News](#) - news portal

### **Finding other blogs and posts related to recent news**

- [Blogrunner](#) - Blogrunner monitors news articles and blog posts and tracks news events as they develop across the Web.
- [Technorati](#) - Technorati is an Internet search engine for searching blogs.
- [Google Blog Search](#) - google search engine optimized for searching blogs.
- [Icerocket](#) - blog search engine
- [Global Voices](#) - Global Voices aggregates, curates, and amplifies the global conversation online.
- [Blogs in Political Science and Political Theory](#) - A list of Political Science blogs.

### **Tools for managing news and blog updates**

- [Getting started with RSS Feeds and News Readers](#)
- [Bloglines](#) - Bloglines is a free online service that helps you subscribe to and manage lots of web information, such as news feeds, weblogs and audio.
- [Google Reader](#) - online RSS newsreader
- [iGoogle](#) - create a homepage with RSS headlines
- [MyYahoo](#) - create a homepage with RSS headlines

This list is not meant to be exhaustive. Feel free to email me with additions.

- [The Moderate Voice](#)
- [The Democratic Piece](#)
- [The Reaction](#)
- [Votelaw](#)
- [Election Law](#)
- [Two Weeks Notice](#)
- [we move to canada](#)
- [Kwiblog](#)
- [Bloggings by boz](#)
- [Informed Comment Global Affairs](#)
- [Lawyers, Guns & Money](#)
- [A Good Beer Blog](#)
- [Crooked Timber](#)
- [Political Arithmetik](#)
- [Make My Vote Count](#)
- [simon jackman's blog](#)
- [Arms and influence](#)
- [strange maps](#)
- [Seen Through a Glass](#)
- [Jacob T. Levy](#)
- [Signifying Nothing](#)
- [Pith and Substance](#)
- [On the Fringe -- Al Tzitzit](#)
- [No Right Turn](#)
- [PolySigh](#)
- [Swords and ploughshares](#)
- [Crawl Across the Ocean](#)
- [Prospects for Peace](#)
- [SevenPack Beer Blog](#)
- [La Profesora Abstraida](#)
- [Sustainability Blog](#)
- [One/Change](#)
- [Another Brilliant Idea](#)
- [Latin American Politics](#)
- [PoliBlog](#)
- [Colombia: A PoliBlog Sideblog](#)

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## **Additional resources**

- [Sample syllabus with class blog](#)
- [Blog produced by above syllabus](#)
- [Sample technical guide for student bloggers](#)
- [Sample non-technical guide for student bloggers](#)

Additional concerns or questions?

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