

The class blog



PRESENTATION FOR THE AAPT CONFERENCE

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PHILOSOPHY



Who are your students?



My students at SJC:

- Often first generation college attendees
- Non-majors taking Core classes
- Solid “B students” with exceptions
- Skill and knowledge needs

How these factors play into using the blog idea: who are your students and what do they need?

Planning ahead



- How will the blog function within your class? Why develop a blog?
 - Articulating learning goals:
 - ✦ extending learning beyond classroom for engagement with course content
 - ✦ introducing web media, new ways to use technology
 - ✦ involving students in creating and maintaining course material
 - ✦ Honing critical thinking and writing skills and dialogic thinking

Stating outcome expectations



- Incorporating it into your syllabus: be clear what responsibilities are entailed: spell it out.
- Articulate point values and number of entries which are suggested, length, expectations for commenting upon one another
- Model the kind of enquiry you want to encourage

Choosing the software



- What platform might work best?
 - ◆ Choosing a user friendly source: Blogspot, Tumblr, Wordpress? Or....?
 - ◆ Familiarity with platform
 - ◆ Ease of use: templates, add-ons, maintenance
 - ◆ Stability of provider

Three Key Factors to Consider



- Curb Appeal
- Take it for a spin
- Under the hood



Decisions in Designing a site



- 1. basic blog modalities:
 - ✦ Choosing a template
 - ✦ Pages vs. posts
 - ✦ Setting up home page: static or changing?
 - ✦ menus for organization
 - ✦ Allow comments? Controlling for spam
 - ✦ The level of control: Authors, commentators, administrators

More Decisions



- 2. Wordpress for its sharp design and ease of use
- 3. Their place or yours?
 - Your own site:
 - ✦ Choosing a host
 - ✦ Registering your own domain name
 - ✦ Installing Wordpress
- 4. Wordpress site: wordpress.com vs. wordpress.org
 - ✦ Choosing a name
 - ✦ Ease of setup

Three sample approaches to the course blog



- **1. SJC100: Islands as Metaphors—integral but supplemental**
- **Goals of the blog site:**
- Complement the course readings and content
- Help Freshmen become involved with technology beyond SnapChat and text messaging
- Students had an active role in building aspects of the site by being authors as well as commentators

Syllabus instructions for SJC100



- Associated with our class is an **online blog** to which I will ask you to contribute ideas, links, images, whatever you find that you would like to share. You can find the blog at this url: <http://www.sjc100-islands.org>
- Active participation in this online blog will contribute to your final grade. You should post a minimum of **seven** posts over our term; as new posts will appear each week we discuss them in class. I will give guide prompts in class to help you formulate your own post. You would also respond to the posts of others.

Tour of SJC100



- Hosted on Dreamhost, an independent server
- Registered the domain name
- <http://www.sjc100-islands.org/welcome/>



2. Course extension Blog



PHI160: Introduction to Ethics

Designed as a technology integrated course with the blog being one aspect of introducing technology

Goals:

- provide case studies for commentary
- encourage class dialogue online
- enhance their familiarity with blog technology as commentators

- Hosted on Wordpress.com

Syllabus guidelines for PHI160 project



- **Course blog:** Every week for six weeks a new ethical issue will appear, drawn from the media and a wide range of important issues in our personal and professional lives. You must read the issue and post a viewpoint, link, commentary on the issue. If you have never participated in a blog before, this is an excellent opportunity to become familiar and comfortable with this online tool. Many businesses and educational institutions use blogs as a main form of communication. Expect around six issues to appear. These will be some of our discussion topics in our final classes on applied ethics. Credit is earned for the following actions on your part:
 - Posting a comment during the live two week period for each issue 5 points
 - Adding a link **or** other relevant information 5 points
 - Responding to other students' comments 5 points
 - Connecting the issues and discussion to our readings 5 points

Tour of PHI160



- <https://phi160sjc.wordpress.com>



Philosophy and Women



3. A course in which students developed sustained post reflections on the topic of women

- Creating content for class discussion and exploration beyond the assigned readings
- <http://www.sjc-philosophy-of-women.org>

Suggested topics



- COMMENTING ON THE HISTORICAL READINGS
- COMMENTING ON WORK ISSUES
- MOTHERS, FATHERS, COUPLES: WHAT ARE THE RULES?
- : COMMENTING ON CONCEPTS OF HARASSMENT AND THE QUESTION OF PORNOGRAPHY
- COMMENTING ON APPEARANCE, MEDIA IMAGES, AND HOW WE USE LANGUAGE
- WOMEN ON TV/IN THE MOVIES
- THINKING ABOUT CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND SAMENESS
- : WOMEN AND ART—WHERE ARE THEY?
- WHAT IS LIBERATION? FOR MEN? FOR WOMEN?

Positives in Including Blogs



- Involves students in building a site, contributing ideas, and it expands the course beyond the classroom.
- Opens up opportunities for larger and extended engagement with course themes.
- Encourages students to become familiar with web tools beyond Facebook and Twitter.
- Facilitates a community of discussion among students.

Other Options?



- Using established philosophy blogs: pro/con
- Having students create their own independent sites

Negatives or concerns ... or are these opportunities?



- Students are overwhelmed with yet another responsibility—and you might be as well.
- Students are unfamiliar with blogging and working online and become frustrated.
- How much control do you want to yield to students? The art of yielding power and the implications thereof.
- Concerns about flaming
- What do you do after the term is over?

Discussion and activity



- Form groups of four and discuss the issues on the handout to share with the whole group.



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