

Assignment #1--Blogging and Website Design

The Writing and Design Process

The Design Process:

First, you will need to create your website. You may already have a content management system that you prefer (WordPress, Blogger, Wix, etc.), and you are welcome to use these sites. Most Humanities Core students use either Google Sites in UCI Google Apps or WordPress. Directions for using Google Sites can be found at <http://support.google.com/sites>. If you build your site here, you may use a Google Sites template, one of which one is designed specifically for this assignment (the "HCC Template"). Whichever template you choose, please ensure that one of your web pages is set up as an "announcements" page, for blogging.

Some students find Google Sites too constraining and aesthetically unappealing, turning instead to WordPress. Directions for using WordPress can be found at: <https://learn.wordpress.com/>.

If you need additional guidance, please check the Web Resources and Tutorials link on the Assignment #1 prompt. There, you will find a number of links to tutorials for Google Sites and WordPress. If after that you still need help creating your site, please attend the Website/Blogging workshops during the first two weeks of fall classes.

Once you have created your site, you will begin website construction, a process that, like other forms of writing, requires brainstorming and drafting. You may prefer to work backwards by first composing the subpages of your site. Or you may challenge yourself by designing your homepage, which integrates all components of your site by articulating your purpose. Will your site be politically oriented, focusing on how our studies in Humanities Core relate to global events? Will it be community oriented, investigating connections between HCC and your local community? Ethically oriented, examining moral problems that arise in the course? Artistically oriented, using art as a framework to analyze the texts we interpret? Or a combination of these? You might discover that your purpose--and thus the look and content of your website--will change as the quarter progresses.

Remember that your site is not a personal diary. You are creating a website for a broad audience composed of people invested in politics, humanistic study, ethics, education, and military culture. They may include your professors, members of the military, pacifists, refugees, people of all political orientations, lawmakers, parents, people who identify strongly with their race, gender, sexual orientation, or nationality, and other members of your local community. This audience will be interested in your interpretations and reflections on issues of common interest, not in day-to-day problems arising in your personal life.

Design:

Design is part of your content. Be thoughtful about how you will use color, font, images, video clips, links, etc. to convey your voice and purpose. As you plan, ask your peers for suggestions; and keep yourself open to revision.

One of the best ways to discover compelling design is to explore other blogs. In addition to sample [student blogs](#) from last year, look at how the website design of these academic blogs reinforces content:

- David Bordwell's [website on cinema](#) includes a blog written both by Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, entitled [Observations on film art](#). The title is well-conceived, as the blog often includes film stills and clips that highlight how we observe film. You will find it worthwhile to read Bordwell's posts, not only to learn more about the blogging but also to learn about film analysis, a practice you will undertake throughout the year.
- Bruce Holsinger, a scholar of medieval literature, hosts [Burnable Books](#), a blog dedicated to historically-minded conversations among writers, scholars, publishers, and others bringing the past to life in relevant and inspiring ways. His blog uses a parchment-style backdrop and an early modern typeface on post titles, but the body of his writing is clean, easy to read, and filled with relevant hyperlinks and images. The site is easy to navigate and the reader has a strong sense of Holsinger's authorial presence.
- Patrick McCray, a historian of science, hosts [The Leaping Robot Blog](#), where he writes about how understanding the past can reveal useful things about science and technology today. He grabs his readers with punchy post titles and writes in engaging prose. Like Holsinger's, McCray's blog posts visually juxtapose the present and the past. They are full of interesting hyperlinks and videos that are set alongside historical images and photos.

Non-academic blogs can also serve as good models, though their purpose and format differ from the academic, single-author blog examples shown above. Many general editorial magazines now host consistently updated web-only blogs in addition to their long-form print articles, and this content can be used to model what topical, research-based, opinion-driven, short-form blogging can look like on its best day. The blogs hosted by [The Atlantic](#), [The New Yorker](#), [Harper's](#), [The Economist](#), and [The Paris Review](#) are great places to start and often cover subjects directly related to HCC lectures and readings. [National Public Radio's](#) news blog is also a fantastic resource and often links to longer-form radio pieces that may be useful as models when it is time for your Literary Journalism project in the spring quarter.

Lawrence Lessig's [website](#) is another example that demonstrates the potential power of blogging. His blogpost "Why I Want to Run" (Aug. 15, 2015) announces the "formation of a committee to explore [his] entering the Democratic Primary for President." Especially important here is the fact that Lessig is not running for president in the way most candidates do, but is employing a strategy he calls "a Presidency as referendum." With this strategy, voters cast their vote to enact a policy--the removal of private funding from elections--and, in so doing, return electoral power to individual citizens. Rather than remain president, Lessig would resign within weeks of his election to retain focus on the constitutional issue of voting rights, not on his person. His candidacy, in other words, is largely symbolic. This risky political move would not be possible without the support of many individual voters bound only by a commitment to divest private interest groups of electoral control. And blogging is not only a means of reaching these voters but also a means of placing power in their hands. They can choose to read; they can choose to debate and critique policy on a public forum; they can choose how to vote. By using this particular genre and medium, Lessig meets his political ends in ways that other genres and

media might not allow. Whether or not you agree with his politics, Lessig's blog exemplifies the potential power of this written form.

Lessig's blog is organized simply, with tabs that are easy to locate and color and image choices that help focus, instead of distract, the viewer. His blogging identity is matter-of-fact, as he often speaks directly to the reader in focused, precise sentences. His design and blogging persona correspond to his politics, which seek to make power transparent.

Privacy:

A blog is a genre that allows you publicly to voice your opinion and, thus, to engage in debate. On topics as contentious as war, this debate may get heated. While you may run the risk of offending some members of your audience, you also facilitate collaboration and debate. Simply tread with care, considering possible counterarguments or objections to the claims you make. Here, as in all forms of writing, you are responsible for what you create.

Decide carefully how you will determine your privacy settings--whether you want to limit access to members of your class, require a password, etc. You should know that, in UCI Google Sites, the default setting allows anyone with a UCI Google Apps Account to edit your webpage. You may change this by clicking on the "Share" button and adjusting the settings. If you are unsure what kind of access you want to allow, begin by making your settings private until you have a better sense of your audience.

You will want to be especially careful about divulging others' private information, the opinions, for example, of friends and family members sharing their thoughts at the dinner table. To protect others' privacy, focus on the issues themselves.

The [APA Style Blog](#) offers general guidelines for its blogging participants that may be of use to you. Some of the most important guidelines are:

- Be critical and thought provoking, but not malicious or degrading.
- No personal attacks, hate speech, or threats toward individuals, religious figures, or other comment posters.
- No [flaming](#), [trolling](#), or [baiting](#).
- Do not post comments or images that defame . . . or violate the copyright or other intellectual property rights of any third party.
- To protect users' privacy, we discourage the inclusion of your or others' personal information, such as email addresses, in your comments.
- When quoting any other blog or publication, link to the original and use quotation marks or indents for longer text.

-- APA Style Blog. (2009, June 29). Blog Guidelines. Retrieved from <http://blog.apastyle.org/apastyle/blog-guidelines.html>

Intellectual Property

You will undoubtedly be inspired by many images, articles, videos, etc., that you find on the web. Please keep in mind that these are the work of another person and must be cited

appropriately. The citation style used within blogs is a matter still up for debate. While you will find resources on how to cite a blog, you will not find definitive guidelines on how to cite all materials within a blog. Your instructor may prefer a citation style and may offer you guidelines for citation. If he or she has no preference, you can use the following as general guidelines:

- When quoting from another electronic resource, use quotation marks or indentation and provide a hyperlink to the original.
- When citing print material, lectures, or other non-Internet sources, use quotation marks or indentation and cite using MLA or APA style footnotes.

For information on these citation styles, see the [Purdue Owl website](#) and the [UCI Libraries' guidelines for citing images and videos](#).

Some images you encounter may still be under copyright and might require you to receive permission from the copyright holder prior to publication. Copyrighted materials can be used under the Fair Use Doctrine, but only in specific contexts of teaching, learning, and scholarship. To better understand these limitations, visit the [UCI Libraries Guide on Fair Use](#).

If you want to include an image whose copyright status you are unsure of, you may use the [Digital Image Rights Computator \(DIRC\)](#) to determine an image's copyright status.

Blogging

The blog is a difficult genre to define, as its purpose varies widely. Most would agree, however, that blog postings announce "news" or introduce and analyze a pertinent issue on which readers can comment. Blogs have a clearly identifiable author whose post focuses on his or her opinion about an issue. Over multiple postings, comments, and responses, blogs often show development of an issue or position.

You will mostly be writing academic blog posts, which should be analytical and may sometimes be reflective or anticipatory. They should pose and respond to a humanistic research question: an arguable question that requires exploration, interpretation, and analysis to be answered. In answering that question, they ought to integrate and analyze credible evidence; make connections between texts, previous posts, or the blogs of others; and consider multiple perspectives or arguments. Though your content is analytical, the blog genre allows for a wide range of writing voices or personae. Take the opportunity to experiment with different voices until you find one that suits your purpose.

While blogs, as a genre, sometimes appear to be written spontaneously, coming straight from the mind of the writer, they, like most other forms of writing, are deliberately crafted and revised. You will rely upon the comments of others to make these revisions, or to add posts. For that reason, it will be important for you to read the blogs of your peers, to serve as a sounding board for their ideas. Your section leader will likely ask you to comment on others' blogs, respond to comments written by others on your blog, and may him-or-herself offer comments; however, it is unlikely that she or he will respond to each blog you write.

Your blogs will be graded holistically at the end of the quarter, both for their content and as they relate to your website design. Keep a .doc file of all blogposts, which you will upload to turnitin.com at the end of the quarter. Your instructor will privately provide evaluative comments

on this file--not on the website itself. See the Website and Blog Rubric linked to the Assignment #1 prompt for a clear sense of how your project will be assessed.