Blog Instructions

https://writingforthepublicspring2016.wordpress.com

This term as a class you will collaboratively author a blog on Wordpress.com. You will have sole responsibility for the design and execution of all aspects of the blog. I will support and structure project management but will not prompt or author any content apart from determining that the **subject is writing for the public, and your ideal readers are those who might benefit from your experiences as people learning to write for the public yourselves.**

The purpose of this project is twofold: 1) to give you experience writing for a web audience, and 2) to give you practice collaborating on a large-scale project with a team of individuals. Each blogging round half of the class will be responsible with coming up with a theme or concept that response in some way to the work we've been doing as a class. The remaining students will either be responsible for design elements or other content, or for commenting. These roles will rotate so that each person will blog three times, comment twice, and design once.

RESPONSIBILITIES BY ROLE/EVALUATION CRITERIA

Bloggers must:

- Actively participate in the discussion board to help brainstorm an appropriate theme/concept for this round of blogging, offering ideas as well as responding to others.
- Offer micro-drafts with enough depth and breadth that it is clear how their individual post will contribute to the chosen concept/theme.
- Author final posts of around 400-500 words in length that feel appropriate for the concept but do not duplicate the content of others' posts.
- Include as a part of the content of the post *at least one other* text/media to which their ideas are reacting with an appropriate citation so readers can easily find their way to original texts/media. This may be a text we've encountered as a class or brought in from elsewhere.
- Polish the post with meaningful tags, a thoughtful engaging title, useful hyperlinks, and a post or feature image (take care not to use copyrighted images we do not have permission to use)

Designers/Other Content Generators must:

- Actively participate in the discussion forum to determine what design features or other content is needed for the blog that does not fit into a traditional post format (e.g. pages, widgets, customizations for the blog theme, images/galleries, social media integration, etc.)
- Take up a substantial role in designing/generating that content, including micro-drafts, summaries, or examples at the end of the planning phase so it is clear what role each individual is taking and how the work contributes to the blog overall.
- Contribute around 400 words or some equivalent (e.g. time spent on design aspects, gathering resources, etc.) worth of new content appropriate for the needs of the site.
- Give informational tours/tutorials in class to walk the class through the steps you took to generate the new content you produced on the blog. Ideally, each round will introduce new features or

options not yet encountered so that by the end of term everyone has a wide range of knowledge of the affordances of the Wordpress.com platform.

Commenters must:

- Contribute to the discussion forums by reading what the bloggers and designers are planning and offering feedback that helps content creators generate better content. This means asking thoughtful questions, offering encouragement by detailing what seems exciting to you as a reader, and offering suggestions for the improvement of the content. You should *read with* your peers (as in, consider how and what is trying to be done versus jumping in to critique).
- Respond to the final posts on the blog in substantive comments that continue the topics started in the posts. Respond thoughtfully to issues, concerns, or questions the authors brought up, and ask questions to further develop the issue. Bring other resources to the table, either from other posts on the blog (create dialogue across posts) or from elsewhere on the web or in other texts (ones we're reading for class, or ones you know about otherwise). Comments must do more than agree/disagree with the post!

TIMELINE FOR EACH BLOGGING ROUND

- **Thursday-Sunday:** Discussion Forum threads on Courseweb open after class on Thursday for designers and bloggers to brainstorm ideas and for commenters to provide feedback. Final decisions on the overall plan should be made by Sunday *at the latest*.
- **Monday evening (10pm):** Each blogger pitches micro-drafts (rough plans/sketches) to the forum. Each designer summarizes the content they plan to incorporate. Commenters provide feedback to help others finalize content up until class time Tuesday.
- **Tuesday, in-**class mini-workshop (10-15 minutes): We'll spent some time in class debriefing about the discussion forum conversation and finalizing decisions, as needed.
- **Wednesday evening (10pm):** Blog content posted/completed on the blog.
- **Thursday, by the start of class:** All commenters respond to at least two posts on the blog.
- **Thursday, in-**class:
    - **Design Tours/Tutorials (15 min):** Designers will give informal tours/tutorials, walking everyone through the steps they took to create what they did in Wordpress.
    - **Workshop (20-30 minutes):** I'll choose excerpts or examples from the blog to highlight and workshop what we might think about again or differently in the next round of blogging.

HOW BLOG CONTRIBUTIONS WILL BE EVALUATED

Individuals who contribute on time and in earnest to each stage in the process will be eligible for the full 15% of the blogging grade. *It is paramount that all planning occurs via the Discussion Board. I cannot evaluate participation at each phase unless I see evidence of it.* Late participation will reduce eligibility by .25% per late contribution and missing participation at any stage will reduce eligibility by .5% per missing contribution. Compositions on the blog itself (posts, comments, and design/other content) will be evaluated by the terms laid out on the syllabus. I will provide regular feedback to the class via the Instructor's Digest blog and via in-class workshops and activities.

Commonplace Log Instructions

We borrow the genre of our collaborative reading log from the notion of the commonplace book, a genre of reading log wherein readers capture excerpts from texts and organize them by themes. The above images are from Lewis Carroll (author of *Alice in Wonderland*). His commonplace book is a wonderful historical example of what we're trying to accomplish digitally. He kept not only scraps of texts but visual ideas, reflections, things he found out in the world. As you might imagine from this example, the items kept in such logs considered items that would be *useful* for some future purpose. For us, these items will be useful for your projects and our discussions in-class. What exactly you'll log will vary, as it will depend on the other work you are doing to prepare for class, so make sure to look at our detailed schedule first. We'll keep ours through a discussion forum on Courseweb. This isn't an ideal platform, but does easily allow you to connect up with others' interests through direct reply. *Note: Posting to the commonplace log is not means to be time-consuming. It should take you 15 minutes to think of or find something to contribute and to post, and that time spent will ensure that you always have something to work from in class discussions and activities and places to start when you are drafting and revising your composition projects.*

How the Commonplace Log will be evaluated:

Individuals who contribute on time and in earnest will be eligible for the full 10% of the commonplace log toward your final grade. Late participation will reduce eligibility by .25% and missing participation will reduce eligibiligy by .5% (so missing a couple posts won't hurt, but missing a lot will). At the end of term, you will receive full marks for your participation provided that your contributions meet the following requirements:

- **Contributions are made on time** (by the evening prior to class so that I wake up to see it).
- **Contributions are of appropriate depth and breadth.** Most often I'll ask contributions to the commons to be excerpts and examples. These examples should be substantial, meaning full paragraphs or the equivalent in any other media (no pithy, one-sentence passages).
- **Reflections show thoughtful attention** to the example you're bringing to the table in direct relation to what we're working on for class on any given day.
- **Contributions are situated in the context of others' contributions,** seeking to make connections, extensions, complications, etc. In other words, you should try to post material that advances discussion, that somehow extends, complicates, or responds to what someone else has offered, beyond agreement/disagreement. *Of course, do this with respect toward others' contributions. This is not the place for critique.* If you are the first person to post on the forum, you might think of how your post will invite other responses.

The "My Story" Project/Topic Proposal

Many blogs or websites with blog features have an "About" page that includes the personal story of the site/organization's founder(s) (see, for example, the [Thirst Project](#), which we'll look at in more detail, or [Joan Garry's story](#), former Executive Director of GLAAD and non-profit consultant, or the blogs you researched already). Certainly not all blogs/websites have narratives like this, but since we're getting started with a blog and attempting to find issues of public importance that will sustain your interest for the rest of term, we'll use these examples as our models for the your first projects.

Your purpose for this project is to tell the story of the defining moment(s) that brought you to care about an issue in order to persuade your reader of its importance and how and why you are in a unique position to make a viable impact/intervention/vie for change. When you choose your topic, think of issues of public importance in narrow and specific terms. You might have become exposed to this issue through your own experience or through the experiences of others, through your major or career aspirations, through your current experience as a college student, through your hometown or local community. It should likewise care about a thing or community you have access to.

Logistics:

- Drafts are due January 27 to Courseweb. Workshop in-class Jan. 28.
- 600 to 900 words
- MLA, Chicago, or APA style for citations
- Final versions due to Courseweb Feb. 2, including a cover-page with brief reflection. In the reflection, tell me what challenges you faced in writing this project, what you felt your successes and difficulties were (with specific examples), how you applied what you've learned in-class, and anything else you want me to respond to in my feedback.

REQUIREMENTS/EVALUATION CRITERIA

The genre of this project is incredibly flexible, much less so than other genres you'll practice in this course, so take advantage of that flexibility. I will, however, expect to see the following:

- First-person narrative style and form, including personal anecdotes and reflections on an event or events that exposed you to the issue of public importance you want to take up this term. Be descriptive (specific! detailed!).
- Attention to general audience (not me, or the members of this class). We'll get more specific with audiences in other projects, the important thing for now is that your work does not call attention to the context of this course.
- The narrative should articulate to your reader what interventions need to be made and why you are in the unique position to make such interventions. Remember that "issue" does not necessarily mean "problem." What is needed might be community-building, education, advocacy, development (think especially of interventions that can be made via writing).
- Include some early research to include in the narrative what has to come next in this journey (what the following projects will help you *do*). Incorporate at least two other sources (one may be a text from our readings) of any type (scholarly, popular, etc.). Cite appropriately.

White Paper Instructions

A white paper is a heavily researched informational document produced in order to appeal to people in positions of authority to make specific interventions (to do something with the information) with the information you provide. Typically this means your target audience is made up of law/policy makers or administrators/directors of some kind. The appeal must depend on the information you provide and its logical arrangement rather than personal or direct address.

Logistics:

- Bring ***three hardcopies*** ***of two unformatted single-spaced pages*** for Feb 9 workshop.
- Full drafts due the evening of Feb. 10 in advance of Feb 11 workshop.
- Final versions are due Tuesday, Feb. 16 before the start of class.
- The essay is worth 10% of your final grade.
- White Papers should be around 1500 to 2000 words
- MLA, APA, **or** Chicago in-text citations and references, so long as you stay consistent.

Requirements:

- **Your primary resources for the white paper should be reputable sources** such as scholarly articles, government reports, or other official studies or documents (i.e., no Wikipedia or Dictionary.com). You may, however, use a popular journalism or reputable blogs as a way to call attention to your issue as a "current event."
- **You should open with an introduction that clearly and concisely describes the issue and the rhetorical situation.** It should detail what the issue is, who it concerns, what the exigence is for intervention and toward what end (or if not an end, why resolution is not the aim), and what your paper contributes toward addressing the issue.
- **The body of your essay should present your argument** through organized segments. These body sections should be separated into reasonably-sized chunks and be titled with headings and sub-headings that indicate the content (if not the argument) of each section.
- **You should close your paper with a conclusion that presents ONE of the following for the issue-at-hand:**
  - recommendations for actionable interventions or solutions
  - a new approach to interpreting and understanding the situation
  - a statement that articulates the complexities at stake (in lieu of resolution)
- **Your appeal must draw from data and the logical delivery of your information** rather than personal stakes or emotional appeals. As such, the first- and second-person should be avoided entirely. White Papers benefit from clear, segmented (bullet points, numbered lists, etc.) formatting so readers can grasp the material quickly but thoroughly.
- **The essay should be formatted in an easy-to-read style appropriate for your topic,** double-spaced, and in a 12-point font of your choosing. You may choose to use a colored or graphic theme/template, though make sure to keep the style professional.

Visual Arguments

Arguments are made in a variety of forms, including through typographical decisions and formats and through visual graphical representations of data. But visual arguments do not have to be dry pre-formatted pie charts or line graphs, they can be exciting imagistic representations via infographics or other visual media like video, photo campaigns, etc. The purpose of this project is to produce *two* visual arguments, one infographic or text data visualization and one other visual argument in a medium of your choice (vlog, photo gallery, etc. or another graphical argument)

Logistics:

- The graphical visual argument drafts are due Wednesday, Feb. 24th in advance of workshop on Thursday, Feb. 25th. The final version is due Tuesday, March 1.
- The second visual argument is due at the time you turn in your final website.
- Each visual argument is worth 5% of your final grade, for a total of 10%
- You need not reach the technical proficiency of some of the infographics and data visualizations we'll look at

Requirements for your Graphical or Data Visualization Argument:

- As long as you are presenting information, data, or knowledge and paying attention to *graphical elements*, I'll count what you're doing as your visual argument.
- Your graphic must *make an argument*. Consider what you're able to do with data visually that you cannot accomplish in prose. In order to make this argument, you should aggregate (bring together) information from at least two different sources.
- Aim for clean, visually striking design that makes your information easy to understand and interpret. This means selecting a coherent and thoughtful color palette and font, as well as careful arrangement of your information so that it is complex but not overburdened.
- It is perfectly fine if you craft your graphical argument using a free infographic design app or the Voyant Tools, or feel free to use a program of your choice. Do not, however, use the pie charts etc. in Microsoft Excel.
- Be sure to cite the tools you use in the caption of your graphic so that appropriate attribution is given. Also make sure to cite the sources where you are deriving your data or information. MLA, APA, or Chicago is fine, so long as you're consistent.

Requirements for the other visual argument:

- As long as you are presenting information, data, or knowledge and paying attention to *visual elements*, I'll count what you're doing as your second visual argument.
- You may produce another graphical or textual data visualization argument, or you may present some other kind of visual argument. This is entirely up to you.
- Since this argument will debut on your final website, take care to attend to what is possible via WordPress. If you want to do an Instagram campaign, for example, there's a widget for embedding Instagram photos. If you want to put together a vlog, you can embed the video into a post or page.
- Be sure to cite all relevant sources of your information and/or tools you used.

Project Rationale

Project Rationales are the part of project development where you pitch to an audience who can approve of, fund, or give you the go-ahead to work toward implementing your ideas (in this case, that audience is me). In this rationale, you'll offer your reasoned account of your plan for your final Wordpress site by rearticulating (and in some cases potentially reassessing) in detail the elements of the rhetorical situation and the exigence(s) that call you to respond to it in writing. The rationale should be supported both by the rhetorical theories you've encountered in this course as well as the practical work you've already done to research your topic and your personal investment in it.

Logistics

- Bring three hardcopies of the first page of your rationale to class for workshop on March 15.
- Turn in full drafts by Wednesday evening, March 16, for in-class workshop March 17.
- Final versions are due by class time, March 22, including a cover page with reflection.
- This project is worth 10% of your final grade. Rationales should be of an appropriate length to articulate your plan with depth and breadth, around 1500 words.

Requirements

- Your rationale must include the following three elements, though how you incorporate these elements is up to you, so long as your choices are rhetorically sound.
    1. Your particular understanding of rhetorical citizenship and your responsibility to the issue of public importance you are addressing in your project. You should rely on at least two of the rhetoric-specific pieces we've read this term (Bowdon & Scott, Grabill, DeVoss & Ridolfo, or Rice) for support, and you may pursue research in the realm of rhetorical theories of citizenship to support your perspective.
    2. A clear and concise rationale (reasoned argument) for your plan for your final Wordpress site. Remember that you're aiming to make a *viable* impact—to *do something* through your writing, not just provide general information (any Wikipedia page can do that!). Are you building a blog or a website? Building an archive? Starting a social campaign? There are many options! Even though for the moment I am your primary reader, do not rely on my familiarity with your topic and *leave out explicit references to this course.* You need to offer your rationale on the basis of your concern for the issue of public importance you've chosen as your focus and your intended interventions, not the fact that the work you've done so far has been assigned to you as a part of this course.
    3. A clear sense of *all aspects* of the rhetorical situation, including the exigence/purpose, audience (*a generalized public audience will no longer suffice!*), subject, and your role as rhetor as well as the reception you hope for, the logistics of producing the kind of Wordpress site you want to build, and the context it fits within in terms of others' work on this topic. You must not only define these aspects, but think intelligently about the relationships between them.
- You may use the first person but make sure the personal is supported and balanced with information from your research. Do make use sources from your research in a citation style appropriate for your purpose.

Profile Piece

By now you should have been in contact with some individuals in the area specifically involved in your public issue as a part of your research, either with community members impacted by the issue-at-hand or people in positions of authority who can help you (e.g. members of related organizations, etc.). For this project you should conduct at least one substantial, pre-planned interview, though you may also interview more than one person. You may conduct the interview over email, in person, or over Skype. Your purpose is two-fold: 1) to gather direct, primary research on your topic, and 2) to feature an individual directly concerned with your topic on your final website. If your topic is of a sensitive nature you may want to assign a pseudonym.

Logistics:

- You will "turn in" your profile pieces on your final project WordPress site. Drafts are due Wednesday evening of March 30 in advance of our in-class workshop on March 31. Turning in the link to your cite via Courseweb signals it is ready for me to look at.
- Final versions are due by class time, Tuesday April 5. Turn in your cover page with reflection to Courseweb with the link again to signal it is ready for me to look at.
- Cite your interview and any resources you end up pulling in as information in an appropriate citation style of your choice (MLA, APA, or Chicago) so long as you are consistent.
- Profile pieces should be substantial (roughly 2000 words).
- You may want to borrow audio and video equipment from [CIDDE](). If you use it for class purposes you do not need to pay a rental fee, but you will have to have me sign a [permissions form]() prior to reserving equipment. Please plan appropriately.
- Write and have your interviewee sign a release form so that he/she/they are aware of how you intend to use the information and for your interviewee to elect for you to use a pseudonym, where appropriate. Turn in a signed scan of the form to with your draft.

Requirements:

- The style of the profile piece can take any form you find appropriate for your purpose. You may represent the interview in full or create a piece that selects moments from the interview that have the kind of impact you're looking for. There are many ways to use interviews to inform your writing, so the form of the profile piece is flexible and will depend on your objectives for your final website. We'll look at several models.
- You'll turn in your profile piece by setting up your final website. As such, I'll want to see that you've taken the affordances of WordPress into consideration as you make decisions on how to present your profile piece. How will your site feature or prioritize this piece? Will it be a post? A separate page? (You can change these decisions later).
- Include media other than text in your profile, including images, video, sound, hyperlinks to outside resources, or whatever else might be a way of fleshing out your interview and making it striking for the web. There are many ways of thinking about this, but consider how you might include sound, image, and/or video. For example, you might include an embedded SoundCloud recording of your whole conversation, or images of your subject, or video excerpts. As always, be careful not to use material without attribution or permissions.

Final Website and/or Blog

Your final website is (finally!) your opportunity to release the thinking you've done this term to the public. As I've been saying from the beginning, you should imagine your final website/blog as something you could continue after the semester is over (in other words, your site should not just be a web portfolio of the work you've done this term), so its design has to be dynamic and sustainable, but entirely your own as attuned to your ideal target audience(s). Your final website will include revisited material from past projects as well as new pieces of related to your specific objectives. Many of you proposed social media campaigns, pamphlets, informational visits, etc. and here is your chance to actualize, promote, and describe these works for your public and link or include the appropriate material you've generated for this/these purposes.

Logistics:

- Drafts are due for workshop in the final two weeks of the semester. On the day of your workshop you should have questions you would like to solicit your peers for feedback and response. Presentations are not formally graded but do count toward participation grades.
- Final websites are due April 29, by 5pm. At that time you will also turn in to Courseweb a short introduction wherein you will describe the rationale behind your decisions (what you learned in this course and how you employed it), how your site changed from the idea you started with in your proposal, and how you imagine the site developing as you continue to work on it (regardless of whether or not you actually do). I appreciate honesty over flattery, so please be sincere in your reflections about the course.

Requirements:

- Your website must feature at least SEVEN substantial pieces of content. One of these will be the profile piece. Three or more should be remediated or revised versions of prior projects, and two or more will be brand new content. You will be evaluated, in part, by how well you revise and recompose your projects' content for the purpose you designed in your rationale. If you must change your approach, tell me why in your reflective introduction.
- The material you revise from your earlier projects should be incorporated into the WordPress environment with attention to your purpose and the affordances of writing for the web, taking care at the sentence-level to produce polished, public-ready work.
- The design and implementation of your work should take full advantage of WordPress's features, as you've learned about through your work on the blog. This includes embedded media, hyperlinks, visuals, widgets, categories and tags, etc. as well as appropriately themed and organized posts and pages.
- Overall, I expect to see thoughtful, clear, rhetorical decision-making. It should be evident that you are thinking about your decisions as a part of your overall argument, and working to appeal to your ideal audience(s). Your position in relation to this rhetorical work as a burgeoning public figure should be clearly articulated, either directly or through the overall argument of the site. The ideal outcome for this project is that you should be proud to refer to it in a future job application cover letter or resume, via your social media, or other future web-presence opportunities.

Reflective Introduction Requirements

Your introduction to your final website if your opportunity to not only reiterate to me how you responded to your particular rhetorical situation through your final website but to reflect on how the final website is the culmination of the full semester's worth of work.

- **You'll want to tell me what you felt like you learned and made this term and how the projects we worked through together (including the blog, commonplace log, discussions/workshops, etc.) contributed to what you were able to do/make in your final site.** *As I say in the website instruction sheet, I appreciate honesty over flattery, so please be sincere in your reflections about the course.*
- **You'll also want to go through each of the final website requirements and tell me how you met each one.** Doing so will inform me about the content you've revised/remediated, what new content you've generated, and how you've composed for the web via Wordpress's affordances. Do not just list what you've done, reflect thoughtfully on how and why you feel you met each requirement, *I will take your own sense accomplishment seriously when I determine a final grade for the site, especially if you took some ambitious risks, even if those didn't quite pan out.* You'll also want to tell me if/how the site changed from the vision you put forth in your rationale and why and how those changes were rhetorically necessary.
- **Close up your reflection by telling me (as per usual) what the challenges and successes of the final project were for you, and how you imagine the site developing if you continue to work on it** (even if you are not planning to do so, pretend for the moment that you are). If you do plan on continuing the site and you would like written feedback, please let me know and I will write up a paragraph or two to help you think toward future development.

A reminder of logistics:

- Your introduction should be more substantial than the typical reflective cover letter. **Aim for around a page and a half, double-spaced, or one full page single-spaced.**
- Turning in your reflective introduction to your final websites is your signal to me that your website is done and ready for evaluation. ***If you do not turn in your reflective introduction your final website will not be evaluated.***
- **Final websites are due April 29, by 5pm.** Please make sure to repost the link to your website along with your introduction, so I don't have to hunt back through previous assignments to get to it.