

All About Blogging ...

*This page gives you all the background information you need about blogging and how to join and start posting entries and comments on our own class blog. Send any comments to **bheidkamp@oprfs.org**.*

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I. The definition of a blog

Weblogs, or blogs, are a way of publishing (“posting”) to the web one idea at a time. By simplifying the process of publishing to the web – allowing authors create posts easily and seamlessly link to related ideas on the web – blogs make updating a website virtually effortless and enable almost anyone to become an active part of an online community.

The simplicity and immediacy of weblogs has made them extremely popular in a very short period of time, and they're being used today by everyone from large media outlets to ordinary citizens wanting to keep in touch with friends and family around the world.

As the weblog medium has evolved, the collective posts which make up the millions of existing weblogs, along with the links that they provide to each other and to other relevant content on the web, represent an important new outlet for expression and communication.

II. The reasons for having our own class blog

Our class blog is classified as a “group” or “team” blog, since we have many authors contributing to the same blog.

Blogging is a great addition to the other work we do in class – on many levels:

1. It allows us to continue discussions we have begun in the classroom and explore texts and issues often with more depth and thoughtfulness. The blog format forces us to “slow down” the discussion, listen the complete ideas and interpretations of others and put our own arguments in writing.
2. It allows us to discuss issues that have not been addressed in the classroom (because of time limits or the particular focus of the units) but that are relevant to our study of literature and culture. You, as the authors of the content of the site,

have control of what we talk about. You own the conversation.

3. Since the weblog is public (people can find it through Google and other search engines and other bloggers and websites can link to our site as well as individual posts), everyone in class has a public voice and is a published writer. This “publicity” offers a wonderful opportunity to have an audience for your ideas and an important responsibility to present ideas that you truly believe in while developing a mature, confident style.

For more information on what exactly are your responsibilities as an author of our class blog, see the individual assignment sheet for your course.

III. How to become guest author of a blog

When you are invited to post as an author on our class weblog, an email invitation is sent to you by the “owner” of the weblog. This email contains the special link for you to follow that leads to the “**You’ve been invited to join a TypePad weblog!**” page at the TypePad site where you view your invitation.

Here, you need to accept the invitation. Since you are probably not an existing TypePad member, you need to register for free guest access by pressing the “**Register for Free**” button within the box for “Accept the Invitation.” Here you will sign up for your user name and password to log in to TypePad. Enter your information and complete the registration by following through the steps.

When entering your information, make sure you give a member name and a password you will remember.

Also, when you are given a chance to review your registration, make sure the info is correct and click the box “I agree to Typepad terms and service.” Don’t click on the other boxes unless you want to get more junk e-mail. Just click on “Begin the Free Trial.”

After registering, you will then see the “Accept Invitation” button to accept the invite. After accepting, you will be forwarded automatically to your Home tab. The weblog that you were invited into, and are now a member of, will be listed. You will also receive a registration confirmation email message after signing up for TypePad.

To access the system from now on, go to the TypePad homepage: www.typepad.com and click on “Members Login” at the top of the page. Then use your member name and password.

***One thing you might want to do immediately is make sure your “nickname” is appropriate: it should be your first name and just your last initial (for example: Bernie H.). Your nickname is the name that will appear on the bottom of every post you make.

To add/change your nickname, click on the “Control Panel” tab and click on the “Edit your profile” link. You’ll see a blank space for your nickname.

The reason you need to use your first name and last initial is to 1) allow the teacher to give you credit for posts you make 2) identify yourself to your classmates and 3) in regards to using just the last initial, maintain some anonymity to the outside world.

IV. How to post an entry in our class blog

An entry in the blog will be listed by date (the most recent entries will be displayed at the top) on the main page of the blog. You can comment on an entry and each entry will be “archived” by date and category. Even after the entry is no longer on the main page (only one week of entries will appear on the main page), it always has its own “Permalink” page (in case you – or anyone else – wants to link to that particular entry).

To post, simply click on the “Weblogs” tab and then click the “Create a new post” link. Then do the following:

1. *Give your entry a title.* Remember, the title is very important, since the posts will be listed only by their titles in the “Recent Posts” column and many people will decide whether to read a post on its title alone. Be specific but brief.
2. *Choose a category for the post* – using a pre-selected category from the pull-down menu. This is important because someone might just want to view all the entries on a specific topic. If I know particular topics will come up in discussion, I will try to create a specific category. Otherwise, pick the most relevant one.
3. *Write your entry.* Don’t be afraid to create multiple paragraphs (when journalists write for the web – as opposed to newspapers or magazine – they try to use shorter paragraphs). To create a new paragraph, simply hit return twice. There is usually no indenting on the web.

Your entry will be out there in the world for everyone to see – so you must check and double-check your writing for any spelling or grammatical errors. Please use the spellchecker function in the blogging software (click on the appropriate button above the posting box).

If you want to format your writing in any particular way, the program uses what is called HTML code – which is the universal language for the web. If you want to **bold** something, for example, the computer needs to see particular code: `bold`.

Fortunately, one of the cool things about the blogging software we are using, is that you don’t need to know about HTML code to use it. It has a WYSIWYG (what-you-see-is-what-you-get) editor. Just highlight the portion of text you want formatted and then click on the button for bold, italic, underline, etc. The program will automatically insert the code.

If you are HTML savvy, however, you can click on “Edit HTML” tab and have at it.

4. After writing the entry, click on “Save” (don’t worry about “Comments” or “Trackbacks”). Realize, though, that as soon as you click on “Save” your entry is on the blog – open for everyone to see and comment on. Make sure you are comfortable with the substance and style of the post before you proceed. If you want to preview your post, you can hit “Preview” instead of save. If you want to save your post but not have it appear on the blog yet, you can change “Posting Status” to “Draft.”

Be careful not to hit “Save” more than once, even if it is taking a while to save your post. You might end up posting the same post or comment twice.

V. How to post a comment to the blog

To post a comment on a specific entry, you don’t need to login to Typepad. You just need to go to the blog itself.

Then simply click on the “Comments” link below a specific entry. Enter your name (again, just include your first name and the initial of your last name), your e-mail address and write your comment. You can preview or post your comment, but once you hit post, the comment is permanent.

VI. How to start your own blog

Blogging is a great outlet for presenting your ideas or simply chronicling your life for everyone to see. If you are inspired to create your own blog, do it! Being a published writer takes courage and it is a lot of responsibility – but having an audience can be very empowering and encouraging.

Our class blog uses **Typepad** software – which is one of the most powerful and customizable blogging programs (although anyone can learn how to use it with a little practice). Creating your own blog with it would cost about \$5/month

A less powerful but quicker-to-start program is **Blogger** – which has the added advantage of being **free** (if you don’t want many options).

Many, many other programs exist as well. Just google “blogging.”