

We will maintain a class weblog as part of the course, and one aspect of the graded coursework for each student will be to write three posts to it during the semester. Blogs come in many different styles, and our goal here is to (collectively) create one that contains information and commentary on topics related to the course, with the goal that at the end of the semester we will have a resource of value both within the context of the course and to outside readers as well. To facilitate this, we will host the blog at the National Science Digital Library (NSDL), a project co-directed by researchers at Cornell, which seeks to improve the dissemination of scientific information.

The blog will be readable by anyone on the Internet (this is in keeping with the goal of creating a useful resource); however, only students and instructors in the class will be allowed to post to it. More information on the mechanics of posting to the blog will be provided in a blog post linked from the course home page.

There are three important aspects to making the blog run successfully: the format of posts, the timing of posts, and the issue of privacy.

- *Format:* Each post should be at least two paragraphs; it should include
  - A link to an on-line resource relevant to the course (e.g. a recent news article, an academic paper, an on-line discussion or essay, a company or organization doing novel work in this area, or any other kind of Web site with a useful reflection on the course material).
  - Some commentary about the resource being linked to.
  - A discussion of how the resource connects to some topic covered in the course.

Each student is required to write three posts to the blog over the course of the semester, and these will be graded on their relevance to the class, their novelty, and the quality of the insight and writing. You can produce additional posts if you want, and provided that they are of high quality, this can lead to a (modest) improvement in the grade for this part of the course; overall, however, we are not grading based on the volume of text you produce, but rather its relevance and quality. We'll try to mention some of the more interesting posts in context in the lectures, and we'll also maintain a parallel digest blog with summaries and comments on a small sampling of posts from the class blog.

This blog was run during the previous offering of the course, and all the posts from last year are visible on the site. You should feel free to look at these to get a sense for the range of topics that people posted on. While it is acceptable to write a post about a topic that was discussed last year as well, in such a case you should make sure that you're providing a new perspective on the topic, and you should also cite, via a link, any relevant earlier posts that you consulted. (Posts from last year's offering of the course should not constitute the primary resource that you're linking to as part of your post.)

You should keep in mind, as you write your posts, that if you refer to a company, organization, or research project in the outside world, the people you're talking about may well end up reading what you write. This happened a number of times last year (for example, we got feedback about posts — all of it positive — from the founders of two different companies, and a press representative from the New York Stock Exchange).

Finally, adding inappropriate, rude, or disruptive content to the blog will result in a 0 for this part of the course grade, and (depending on the nature of the content) potentially stronger actions. Plagiarism is also not acceptable; see the course home page for a further discussion of this.

- *Timing:* The blog will be most useful if the posts arrive continuously over time; this way, posts can sample material from the different parts of the class as they happen. As a result, it would not work simply to have a single due date for each of the blog posts: this would result in a huge number of posts all arriving in a short amount of time, rather than spread out uniformly.

Given this concern, we have created a schedule that your three posts should follow, and it works as follows. First, find the first letter of your last name in the table below. Using the corresponding row in the table, your first post should be generated between the date in the second column and the date in the third column; your second post should be generated between the date in the third column and the date in the fourth column; your third post should be generated between the date in the fourth column and the date in the fifth column. If you want to create additional posts, these can be done at any time; but at least three of your posts should conform to this schedule.

First letter of last name	Start date for 1st post:	End date for 1st post and start date for 2nd post:	End date for 2nd post and start date for 3rd post:	End date for 3rd post:
A	Feb 12	Mar 5	Apr 3	Apr 25
B	Feb 5	Feb 27	Mar 27	Apr 18
C	Feb 8	Mar 3	Apr 1	Apr 23
D	Jan 29	Feb 20	Mar 13	Apr 11
E	Feb 13	Mar 6	Apr 4	Apr 28
F	Feb 4	Feb 26	Mar 26	Apr 17
G	Feb 15	Mar 10	Apr 8	Apr 30
H	Feb 19	Mar 12	Apr 10	May 2
I	Jan 29	Feb 20	Mar 13	Apr 11
J	Feb 13	Mar 6	Apr 4	Apr 28
K	Feb 14	Mar 7	Apr 7	Apr 29
L	Jan 31	Feb 22	Mar 24	Apr 15
M	Feb 18	Mar 11	Apr 9	May 1
N	Feb 1	Feb 25	Mar 25	Apr 16
O	Jan 30	Feb 21	Mar 14	Apr 14
P	Feb 11	Mar 4	Apr 2	Apr 24
Q	Feb 12	Mar 5	Apr 3	Apr 25
R	Feb 6	Feb 28	Mar 28	Apr 21
S	Feb 7	Feb 29	Mar 31	Apr 22
T	Jan 30	Feb 21	Mar 14	Apr 14
U	Feb 15	Mar 10	Apr 8	Apr 30
V	Feb 19	Mar 12	Apr 10	May 2
W	Feb 12	Mar 5	Apr 3	Apr 25
X	Feb 11	Mar 4	Apr 2	Apr 24
Y	Feb 6	Feb 28	Mar 28	Apr 21
Z	Feb 18	Mar 11	Apr 9	May 1

- *Privacy:* In keeping with course privacy guidelines, no student will be required to make their true identity public as part of this activity. The blog is configured in such a way that each student can choose an arbitrary user name that can be unrelated to their real name or Cornell NetID; this will be the only identifier that will appear associated with a given post. The course staff will keep a private record of the user names and the corresponding real names for purposes of grading. (And naturally, nothing prevents students from including their real names in the text of their posts, if they choose to do so.)