Possible Blog Pedagogies for 111 and 112

Framing blogs as cultural mediators

Begin by framing the social and cultural importance of writing and blogging—the goal is to have students develop a sense of why writing is important in culture and for individuals. Seeing blogs as a genre is one way to approach this—that is, if we define genre to be a sociolinguistic act or “typified rhetorical action based on recurring situations” (Miller 1984). By exploring blogs as cultural mediators, students have the opportunity to move beyond mechanical, decontextualized perceptions of writing and see more clearly that writing is inherently social and rhetorical.

- Studies of classroom communities have shown that students have more enriching learning experiences when they are able to engage with their classmates work. Blogs can help teachers build this kind of dynamic learning environment.

- Web 2.0 is essentially the socialization of the web—the moment when sites begin adding response functions and rating systems and encouraging public dialogue. This changed the web from a static consumer model to a more dynamic model.1

Potential uses of blogs:

1. blogs as journals/discussion boards
2. using blogs for peer review
3. blogs and research—giving students a space to share experiences, synthesize information and receive feedback.
4. class blog—a central blog for class that can be used as a common meeting point with access to class blog role.
   i. having a home blog for a course accents the ways blogging takes place within a community of writers and readers.

Possible themes:

1. blogs and audience—appeals
   i. have students follow a particular blog and do an audience analysis using the rhetorical triangle. This can be done by having them choose two different blogs to look at.
   ii. what makes a blog “good”?

2. blogs and remediation of genres
   i. how are blogs connected to other forms of writing? Diaries, journals, newspapers, logs, cabinet of curiosities (see Miller article in bibliography)?
   ii. what formal elements define the blog genre?

3. ethnoblogology–blogs and online communities.
   i. students are asked to choose a community of blogs that circulate around a common purpose. Like ethnography, they explore the values and ways of this online community

through analyzing the rhetorical work the community performs in the building of shared knowledge and ways. If time permits, students can also begin participating in the community through posting. This can lead to interesting observations about what it means to move textually from outsider to insider (see Kutz, Exploring Literacy, 2004.) What are the values and ways of this community? How do you know? What do you need to know to participate in this community?

4. blogs and the public sphere
   i. Have students follow a current event blog (such as during an election or at wartime) to witness rhetoric in action. Have them compare this type of reporting to more mainstream media. This inevitably leads to an analysis of reliable information and perspective. The blog Baghdad Burning is a useful starting point.
   ii. Another angle could be to look at more radical bloggers writing about taboo subjects. Such an exploration can open up questions about free speech and blogs as a democratizing force.
   iii. The ubiquity of blogs, especially personal blogs, suggests that people are using new writing technologies to blur the lines between our public and private worlds. Rhetorician Carolyn Miller explains: “Both voyeurism and exhibitionism have been morally neutralized and are on their ways to becoming ordinary modes of being, subject positions that are inscribed in our mediated discourse. The cultural moment in which the blog appeared is a kairos that has shifted the boundary between the public and the private and the relationship between mediated and unmediated experience” (Miller 5). Coupled with the rise of social networking sites, students could explore the ways “reality” culture and mediated experience (via digital technologies) are impacting our relationship to the world.

5. blogs as visual argument
   i. what is the relationship between the content of a blog and its design?
   ii. how does design reinforce the identity being inscribed in the blog?
   iii. how does it challenge it?
   iv. what is the relationship of text and image here?

Other considerations:
- Rss feeds—gathering, managing and synthesizing information
- Connecting two or more 111/112 classes together, or another course from around the world

Select bibliography:

http://www.rebeccablood.net/essays/weblog_history.html

Brooks, Kevin et al. “Remediation, Genre and Motivation: Key Concepts for Teaching with
Weblogs.” *Into the Blogosphere*. <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/blogosphere>

Electronic Frontier Foundation: [http://www.eff.org](http://www.eff.org)

Into the Blogosphere: [http://blog.lib.umn.edu/blogosphere](http://blog.lib.umn.edu/blogosphere)


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