

WRITING AN ACADEMIC BLOG

The purpose of blog writing is to present ideas in an accessible and more informal way than in formal academic papers. Blog posts are typically short pieces that **integrate your personal experiences with analysis**. Blogs are a great place to focus in detail on an interesting topic related to class discussion or on readings that you have not been able to bring up in class. Blog posts demonstrate that you have been actively reading and listening, and they often provide building blocks for more formal papers later on. An additional benefit is professors often ask students to respond to each other's blogs, extending the discussion beyond class meetings.

Differences between Blog Posts and Formal Academic Papers

Blogs are a more informal platform to present an argument that builds on your own perspective. Compared to a formal academic analysis, blog posts give you more freedom to discuss personal experience and emotional reactions to course material before delving into analysis. Just as in a formal academic paper, you need to **include citations** and **analysis of evidence** in a blog, but by no means do you need to use a very rigid structure. This is a place to let your thoughts meander a bit. A blog post does not necessarily need to **cohere** as a uniform piece of analysis, but it still should **make sense**. With this looser framework, you can be creative with structure. You can emphasize important points in a range of ways: short paragraphs, bullet points, bold text, italics, underlining, and headings. Because blogs are an electronic platform, images, videos, and links are helpful to demonstrate your thinking. See student examples of blending of analysis and personal observation, page two.

Common Traits of Strong Blog Posts

- Funny, interesting title
- An initial paradox, controversy, anecdote
- Common, typical experience as evidence, with some insightful, unusual twist
- Credible evidence supporting your claims, with links to journal articles and other sources
- Relevant photos/video clips/visual images of data
- Evidence provided tactfully and without suffocating your own argument
- Your VOICE: a unique argument building upon your perspective
- A clear position and perspective
- Organized logic (between paragraphs and within paragraphs)
- Active voice, concise sentences
- Clear, well-edited writing

Types of Blog Posts

Blog post assignments and expectations are diverse and vary across disciplines and professors. Blog posts will typically fall under one of the following four categories: textual analysis, personal experience, current events, or response to specific questions. See the table below for tips on each of these categories. These categories, however, are not cut and dried. Many blog posts will incorporate aspects of several categories, so use these types of evidence as you see fit. Even within disciplines, individual professors may have different expectations, so ask your professor for specific advice.

What kind of blog are you writing?

Response Expected	Disciplines Likely to Use It	What it Requires	Tips
Textual Analysis	History, Literature	Conduct a close reading of a passage or passages; analyze the passage(s) and draw conclusions; not a summary	This blog doesn't necessarily require a thesis, but often it still contains an argument.
Personal Experience	Environmental Studies, Literature, Sociology, Women's Studies	Connect a personal experience to a topic you are studying in class	Go further than just demonstrating that your experience connects to the class; explain the significance of the connection.
Current Events	Environmental Studies, Government, Sociology, Women's Studies	Connect a current event to a topic you are studying in class	Go further than just demonstrating that your experience connects to the class; explain the significance of the connection. Link to relevant newspaper or journal articles.
Response to Specific Questions	History	Demonstrate your understanding of a reading or subject by answering in depth a question provided by your professor	Refer to specific examples from your reading or class discussion to back up your response.

Examples from Student Blogs

“This article prompted me to think once again about the larger implications capitalism and social class have on LGBTQ segment of the queer community. My mind immediately goes to the rapid failure of lesbian bars throughout the country.” Anonymous

“Code-switching refers to the practice of shifting the languages you use or the way you express yourself in your conversations (Deggans 2013). It occurs daily and, for me, is most noticeable in greetings. Back home in Brooklyn, I'd greet a black friend by saying, “What's good?” Using this language sends a message to my friends that I know the jargon of the “hood” and it reaffirms my blackness. On the contrary, at my current school, Hamilton College, I tend to greet my white friends with, “Hey. How are you?” in a very lively tone to convey that I am friendly and welcoming like every other student.” Kureem Nugent '18

“While the hype around Yuna, the Malaysian pop star, is exceptionally positive, this publicity can also be conceived as quite objectifying. In all of the articles I have read, Yuna is not being highlighted for her music but for her clothes.” Sara Nolan '16

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