

Web 2.0 Tools: Blogs and Microblogs

What are blogs and microblogs?

Blogs are threaded posts to a webpage. New blog entries are threaded at the top of a webpage, while older blog entries are moved down and then archived. Blogs can be fed through RSS readers so that users can easily follow updates to the blog.

Microblogs allow users to blog about their current activities by providing small snippets of information to their microblog followers.

What are the benefits of using blogs/microblogs?

Blogs and microblogs are inherently reflexive because they often take the form of journals/diaries on the internet. Blogs and microblogs allow for interaction through commenting. Blogs allow users to upload rich content easily (photos, videos, audio) while microblogs allow users to upload simple content quickly and through mobile devices. Blogs and microblogs can help instructors to build rapport in the class, incite critical thinking, and promote students' sharing of information and knowledge.

How might I use blogs in my courses?

- 1. Discourse between students** – Students can interact with each other through blogs. You may ask your students to create a blog, read each others' blog posts, and comment on each others' blog posts. Students may provide feedback to other students on assignments posted to their blogs. Blogs may also be used to help students work through group projects.
- 2. Critical thinking and self-reflection** – Blogs are inherently reflexive because of their widespread use in the mainstream internet as journals and news sites. You may ask students to reflect on class content through their blogs. For example, an instructor teaching a Diversity class may ask students to reflect on diversity in their families.
- 3. Discussion of current topics/course content** – Students may blog about current events as they relate to the content of a course. This allows students to synthesize classroom knowledge with the outside world. Blogs allow students to embed rich media, so students can post videos, links to web pages, audio, and documents that relate to the content of the course. The result may be student blogs that incorporate elements of critical discussion and synthesis of various media related to course content. An example of this is a history instructor who asks students to post audio or video clips related to their study of 19th century historical figures.

Free Blog Services

Blogger

<http://www.blogger.com>

Edublogs/Wordpress

<http://edublogs.org/>

21 Classes

<http://www.21classes.com/>

Microblogs: Twitter

<http://www.twitter.com>

Microblogs: EdMondo

<http://www.edmodo.com/>

How might I use microblogs in my courses?

1. Analysis of events/culture – Microblogs allow students to track trends, follow famous people, and analyze current events. Instructors can use microblogs to make course content applicable to students, by asking them to synthesize their microblogs with course content. For example, in a Linguistics course, students may track the use of a word (such as “Googling”) in the blogosphere.

2. Expanding the classroom walls – Instructors can use microblogs to expand the reach of the classroom beyond classroom walls. Interacting with students via microblogs gives instructors the opportunity to build rapport and create communities with learners. You may also ask students to microblog about course-related findings when they are outside of the classroom. For example, a Sociology instructor may ask students to microblog about TV shows they view that address partner violence.

Resources

Academhack Blog - <http://academhack.outsidethetext.com/home/>

The Chronicle of Higher Education – <http://www.chronicle.com>

Learning Tools Directory - <http://c4lpt.co.uk/Directory/Tools/blogging.html>

Netvibes (web content aggregator) – <http://www.netvibes.com>