

Academics Blogging @ Sussex

Pilot Project - Course Outline

Overview

Academics at leading universities all around the UK and the world are successfully blogging within a wide range of disciplines, and increasing the profile and reputation of their institutions, their subjects and their selves. At the same time, they are learning to learn more deeply through this reflexive, dialogic, progressive process.

Emerging and established researchers and teachers are finding it to be an effective, transformative way to learn, think, connect and be heard within an extended global and local community of practice.

Websites like <http://www.blogscholar.com> give us a clear indication of where things are now and where they are going. Trailblazers like University of Sussex's own Dr Esther MacCallum-Stewart show just one way to approach the opportunity, with many others choosing a more conservative, but nonetheless authentic and successful, approach.

The University of Sussex's Staff Development Unit have funded 10 places for a pilot project. In the Autumn 2007 term. This decision followed a three-month research and feedback process with 18 staff from a range of Schools and a survey of current practice in the field. It is hoped this course will be the first of many available to staff and, perhaps, students at the University, in line with emerging trends and best practice.

Essentially, and measurably, the bespoke pilot course is being developed to directly enhance:

- Research
- Teaching
- Professional development (skills, knowledge, contacts, profile, reputation)
- Personal development ("human becoming", self-education, motivation, reflection)
- Online and offline profile and reputation of the University of Sussex as a leading educational institution among various stakeholders.

Setting the scene

- What is a blog? What can it achieve for you, and not do?
- Who's blogging and why?
- What is the potential for a blog in your area of practice?
- What's appropriate and not? What can we learn from the example of others?
- How does blogging differ between disciplines. What is the established and potential modes and style of blogging within my own area.
- What myths are being circulated about academics blogging?
- How do we integrate the personal/professional self and remain safe and authentic?

Getting down to basics

- How to blog – create and maintain a professional academic blog from beginning to end.
- Registering a unique domain, free hosting and other technical stuff.
- How to organize your work/posts with pages, categories, tags, search, drafts and other methods.
- Watching your blog's statistics. Who's visiting your site.

Refining our approach

- Developing your authentic, credible 'voice'.
- When to stay private, when to go public.
- Password protecting work in progress for discretionary review by trusted colleagues.
- Going public. How and when to start sharing your blog with others.

Learning Outcomes

- Instantly and easily publish your own or a group's academic / creative work (in progress or completed) online, without having to wait for it to be updated by webmasters.
- Share thoughts and work with an extended learning community for feedback and discussion.
- Collect thoughts, notes, longer pieces / items and reflect on your own learning with private or public posts.
- Communicate with students when and as appropriate.
- Support the development of staff voice and collegiality
- Develop greater confidence in expressing yourself
- Be heard!
- Enhance your own, your subject and your institution's public profile for media comment, public speaking and linking to / citation by other leading academic bloggers. Gain currency in the online world for what you are focusing on.

Teaching Methods

The course will involve group discussion, projection and analysis of example blogs, individual learning trajectory and guidance, some homework, online help for technical aspects, review sessions and an ongoing community of practice to draw from and continue the learning journey in safe, appropriate, fulfilling and expansive ways.

Course Structure

There will be three x two-hour weekly sessions on Wednesdays 3-5pm with a two week practice / reflection break in between. 10 & 17 October and 7 November. Arts C169.

The six-hours of tuition plus tailored research and some online supervision have been funded by the University's staff development budget as a pilot project, so there is no charge for Sussex staff (academic or non-academic, full-time or part-time).

Note: By using free blogging software and hosting at wordpress.com, there will be no additional cost for production or maintenance of these websites, and no obvious requirement for university technical or other staff to be allocated as a resource for these blogs.

Contact

Feedback, bookings, questions to Libby Davy on 07968 687 107 or libby@barkingowl.com

Or log on to authenticblogging.com and join the blogosphere. New resources every week.

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