

# Using Blogger

for class notes

# The Discussion tool in OAKS

- ★ Great for maintaining a record of opinions expressed in the course, and it works in F2F as well as DE courses.

From Course-Instructor evaluations for CPLT 200 online during Extended Summer 2015: *You were able to focus on everything that was being said, and I was not worried about constantly having to copy down everything important that the professor was saying like I commonly have to do in a traditional lecture setting.*

- ★ Unfortunately, access to the course page in OAKS expires with the end of the semester.

# The problem with note-taking

- ★ Students are generally not very good note-takers (I must admit this fact surprised me) since note-taking is not necessarily taught as such.
- ★ They either take too few or too many/too detailed notes.
- ★ Taking notes in a F2F class can result in low discussion participation rates because the students are worried that they are going to miss something important the instructor says - the comment on the preceding slide reflects that.
- ★ There are resources designed to help students become better note-takers but they may be underutilized.

# Why Blogger?

- ★ I wanted to provide students with a record of “what we went over in class”, “what happened in class” that was easy, clear, concise, survived the end of the semester **and** was free.
- ★ Blogger is really easy to use and for most students does not require a separate set of login details.
- ★ Being able to make the blog private allows students to post without the added pressure of outside censorship - the blog becomes a safe zone - while at the same time giving them an opportunity to hone their writing skills and netiquette knowledge.

# Why Blogger for class notes?

- ★ It shifts the responsibility for providing lecture notes away from the instructor and toward the student.
- ★ It makes the students personally accountable to one another as well as to me.
- ★ It creates a record of all class notes in the same place so that students can use it not only as an aid to memory but also as a study guide for the midterm and final exams.
- ★ [The Russian Folktales blog](#)

# The process:

- ★ I made it clear that we will be using Blogger for class notes on the first day of class by including the information in the syllabus. I factored the activity in the grading for the course (LTRS 110) so that students knew it was going to **count**.
- ★ I created instructions and explanations for using Blogger, made them available during the first week of classes and invited students to become authors of the blog.
- ★ I used the class roll to assign note-takers for each class session.
- ★ Each student was responsible for posting the class notes from one class session by 8 PM on the day following the class and commenting on at least three other students' posts throughout the semester.
- ★ As soon as notes were posted to the blog, I would link them to the relevant content area in OAKS.

# Why I loved it:

- ★ Students' feedback on using Blogger was very positive.
- ★ It turned out really well (oh so pretty!), and I now have a detailed record of the entire semester from the students' perspective.
- ★ Both the students and I feel very comfortable using blogging in our work; I plan on applying that knowledge to other courses I teach.

# Strategy for success:

- ★ Clarity is paramount: I wrote instructions for **everything**, even when I thought it wasn't necessary.
- ★ Repetitiveness and redundancy are essential: I used email as well as the News feature in OAKS for reminders.
- ★ Monitoring is key: students were contacted by email with reminders before the deadline and/or when they were late posting to the blog.
- ★ I lavished praise on those who submitted on time and complied with all requirements.
- ★ I tried not to respond to each student's individual comments; rather, I tried to post one reply for every three or four students' comments so that I could summarize their points or suggest another avenue for exploration.



# Looking to the future:

- ★ Create a template for the class notes post so that the blog has a uniform and polished appearance;
- ★ make the blog public so that students get feedback from readers outside their immediate academic circle;
- ★ create student pages and ask students to contribute reflection papers/paper abstracts so that the blog gradually becomes (part of) their digital portfolio.

# Additional resources:

- ★ <http://traintheteacher.me/2012/05/28/setting-up-individual-student-blogs-using-blogger-part-1/>
- ★ <http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/teaching-with-blogs-30108.html>
- ★ <http://teacherchallenge.edublogs.org/blogging-with-students/>
- ★ <http://teachinghistory.org/teaching-materials/teaching-guides/22261>
- ★ <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Johnson-Blogs/> (this one is about using blogs in a writing course)
- ★ <http://www.teachertrainingvideos.com/blogs-wikis/introduction-to-blogger-2014.html>