

USING BLOGGING IN THE TEACHING OF PSYCHOLOGY

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Course Objectives



- “How to use psych thinking in every day life”
- “To give them a completely different perspective on the things they think they know best”
- “How to use psychological concepts to understand and improve their daily lives.”
- “Help them understand that important ‘real life’ issues can be studied scientifically - they don’t have to rely on what someone just thinks or feels.”
- “How to use psychology in every day life and how our behaviors/attitudes are shaped by factors that we may not be aware of or appreciate”

Course Objectives



everyday life

daily lives

real life

Two Blogging Types



- personal blog
- course blog

Personal Blog Requirements



- 300-500 words per week
- *briefly* describe event/story/link
- analyze it through psychological lens
- identify at least one specific concept/theory from psychology in doing so

Personal Blog



- instructions are to set up blog to be private (only viewable by me and TAs)
- can write one post per week; can write multiple, shorter posts
- do *not* have to focus on the topic we're covering that week
 - (though they're told that broader coverage of topics from course will lead to better/more useful blogs)

Personal Blog Grading



- counts for 20% of final grade

- criteria:
 - how well students demonstrate comprehension of concepts discussed
 - how wide a range of concepts addressed
 - ability to analyze theories and concepts by answering the questions on this handout (or relevant others)
 - evidence of effort and creativity in analyzing life events and putting together blog more generally

Student Evaluations



- “I surprisingly really liked the blogs”
- “The blog assignment helped me realize how applicable social psychology is to everyday life”
- “I personally liked the blog posts, as they were an outlet for me to express the applications to my daily life that I was already making!”
- “Doing the blog posts was annoying but definitely helped to solidify concepts”
- “The blogging task really enabled me to reflect on the concepts learned in class and figure out how to apply them to new situations”
- “I understand the value of the blogs but I was not a fan of them”

Instructor Impressions



- helped accomplish critical goal of course
- gave students in large course opportunity for voice they otherwise wouldn't have had
- giving feedback mid-semester was *much* easier
- reading the blogs was *much* more enjoyable (especially the creative ones)

Potential Tweaks



- word count?
- require a certain number of posts to transcend personal story telling and include link/photo/news story/video?
- require students to write one post that they do somehow share?

Course Blog



- I write short post 3 or 4 times a week
- news story, link to a study release
- students can comment
- students can also write new posts (but those are moderated by me before appearing)

Course Blog Objectives



- facilitate student/instructor interaction in big course
- facilitate student/student interaction in big course
- venue for presenting current developments beyond textbook
- get students thinking about course material outside of the classroom

Course Blog Issues



- totally voluntary
- platform did not notify students of new posts (the way, say, a Facebook group would)
- worked very well, however, for summer on-line course, in which posting was required

Course Blog Future?



- unclear for traditional courses
- will definitely continue using it in on-line courses
- future integration with ebooks?

Conclusions



- blogging has potential for helping advance toward central goals of teaching psychology
- can work as personal assignments, but also as a forum for class interaction (with right set-up)
- happy to share developments in these continued teaching adventures or blog-assignment-specific materials: sam.sommers@tufts.edu