

Blogging Theory
Communication Theory
Danielle Stern, Christopher Newport University

I. LOC #2: Employ communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts

- Explain communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts
- Synthesize communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts
- Apply communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts

II. Assignment Rationale: Communication Theory, as well as its area-specific equivalents such as Interpersonal Theory, Rhetorical Theory, and Media Theory, has the potential to intimidate or isolate students as they jump down the rabbit hole of complex, sometimes archaic and seemingly irrelevant concepts for our current times. This collaborative assignment encourages students to have conversations with and through communication theories. Although blogging might seem like an outdated concept in an era of Instagram and readily available discussion boards, the accessible interface and customizability of blogs provides opportunities for personalization and connection in online class environments. Instructors should consider the polymediated (Calka, 2015) context of online learning, in that students might use online spaces to make comments and pose questions about communication theory, but also continue their engagement with concepts offline by applying them to their everyday lives.

III. Length of Assignment: This is a semester/quarter-long assignment that can be adapted to summer and winter terms.

IV. Materials Needed: Instructors should select a blogging platform that they are familiar and comfortable with customizing and using for regular posting. Wordpress or Blogger are free, accessible options. For instructors whose institutions use Google Apps, Google Sites is also an option. Course management sites such as Canvas or Blackboard should have their respective blogging options, as well. Whichever platform instructors choose, provide detailed instructions with a link to the platform's FAQ for students.

V. Instructions:

Students will maintain a centralized blog on a platform specified by the instructor to summarize and synthesize theory readings and discussion. Students will be assigned one of four roles that rotate weekly (or perhaps daily in condensed summer or winter terms). These roles are modified from Sample (2012).

1. *First Readers:* These students are responsible for posting initial questions and insights about the week's material to the class blog the day prior to the class meeting. Since this is a theory class, you should strongly consider contextualizing your posts around the role of theory in everyday culture.

2. *Respondents*: Students in this group build upon, disagree with, or clarify the first readers' posts by the beginning of our class meeting day. You may consider relating your responses to other theories we've examined.
3. *Searchers*: Students in this group find and share at least one relevant online resource. In addition to linking to the resource, the searchers provide a short evaluation of the resource, highlighting what makes it worthwhile, unusual, or, if appropriate, problematic in relation to theory. This role should be fulfilled by the beginning of our class meeting day.
4. The fourth group has the week off in terms of blog maintenance.

VI. Rubric or Scoring Guide:

Individual blog posts will be assessed per the following 4-point scale and converted at the end of the term toward the X% of the total course grade. This rubric is modified from Sample (2010).

4 *Exceptional*

The post is focused and coherently integrates examples with explanations or analysis. The post demonstrates awareness of its own limitations or implications, and it considers multiple perspectives when appropriate. The entry reflects in-depth engagement with the topic and theory.

3 *Satisfactory*

The post is reasonably focused, and explanations or analysis are mostly based on examples or other evidence. Fewer connections are made between ideas, and though new insights are offered, they are not fully developed. The post reflects moderate engagement with the topic and theory.

2 *Underdeveloped*

The post is mostly description or summary, without consideration of alternative perspectives, and few connections are made between ideas. The post reflects passing engagement with the topic and theory.

1 *Limited*

The post is unfocused, or simply rehashes previous comments, and displays no evidence of student engagement with the topic and theory.

0 *No Credit*

The post is missing or consists of one or two disconnected sentences.

VII. Notes:

If instructors choose a blogging platform with customizable options such as user profile avatars, it helps if students use their preferred name and include a profile picture that looks like them so that students and the instructor can become familiar with each other.

VIII. References:

Calka, M. (2015). Polymediation: The relationship between self and media. In A. Herbig, A. F. Herrmann, & A. W. Tyma (Eds.), *Beyond new media: Discourse and critique in a polymediated age* (pp. 15-30). Lanham, MD: Lexington.

Sample, M. (2010). A rubric for evaluating student blogs. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from: <https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/a-rubric-for-evaluating-student-blogs/27196>

Sample, M. (2012). A better blogging assignment. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from: <https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/a-better-blogging-assignment/41127>