Blogging Guidelines and Schedule of Deadlines
Practicum in Rural Community Advocacy
Professor L. Pruitt
Spring 2013

Substance of Blog Posts

The blog posts you write for graded course credit should go beyond many of my blog posts on Legal Ruralism. Specifically, your posts should do more than merely link to a news story and comment very briefly on it. Aim to be more substantive than that in your posts. Aim to write, comment, analyze and link to a range of sources, as opposed to just quoting from a single source.

I discourage your posting an item that you have just drafted, without reflection or revision. I am a firm believer that there is no such thing as good writing, only good re-writing. While such revising is more critical for your final papers for seminars (including this one, if one is required), I expect you also to read critically, edit and revise your blog posts.

As a related matter, keep in mind that the longer your post is, the more likely you will need to attend to organization and revision at the macro level. Consider, for example, how much substance you want to put in your intro and conclusion. Also consider the best order for presenting the ideas in your post and how to transition between ideas and paragraphs.

As a general rule, blog posts should not exceed 1,200 words, and 600-800 words is typically a good length for a post. If you feel you have a lot to say on a topic, consider writing two posts on the topic and label them “Part I” and “Part II.” Please note, however, that I do not lower your grade because a post is longer than 1,200 words.

It is important to me that you link to prior posts on the same topic as your post. You can easily find such posts by reading/browsing back through a couple of months or, typically more easily, clicking on a “label” that relates to your post and browsing back through potentially closely related posts in that way.

Here are some models for more substantive posts (some by students and alums of the Law and Rural Livelihoods course):

“Persistent poverty and the 2008 Rural vote” (There are several items in this series; here is a link to just one of them).


“Does rurality help explain Arkansas’s lurch to the right?”

“Will Obama remember the nation’s rural fifth? NPR reports”


Here are some past student (and alumni) posts that are very good.

“Sarah Palin, the rural choice”


“A green revolution in the heartland”


“Lars and the Real Girl” and the “real rural”


**Grading Rubric and other expectations**

The grading rubric for your blog posts is another good resource to guide you regarding my expectations. I am looking for improvement in your writing for the blog over the course of the semester.

As a rule of thumb, **do not quote more than three sentences from any single article or other source**. You may paraphrase beyond that three-sentence limit. This is not an arbitrary limit—at least not entirely. It is the amount of text that the *New York Times* permits to be directly quoted without sending a cease-and-desist letter to the blogger!

Please do not include photos or other illustrations or items for which the copyright is held by someone other than you unless you have permission to use the photo, illustration or other item.

Always select several appropriate labels (categories), e.g., rural poverty, California, rural myth, rural development, for your post. Try to **avoid adding new labels to the blog**; if you think a new label is needed, please ask me.

**Formatting & Style**

In your headlines/titles, please capitalize only the first word and any subsequent proper nouns or adjectives. This should be consistent with the style you see on my blog posts. Past students’ posts sometimes deviate from this rule, however, and so they may not represent good models in this regard.
Please use a serif type (preferably the default font for posts) and please aim to make the type face of your blog post the same size as that used in my posts. These will be automatic if you draft your post in Blogger. If you cut and paste into Blogger, you can use the icon that shows a T, with a little x over it (in upper right hand side of Blogger tool bar) to remove formatting and set the material to the default format.

Please do not indent the paragraphs in your blog. Please do indent from both sides any direct quotes using the quote function (signified by quotation marks) in the tool bar. Using this function means that you do not need to use quotation marks because the indentation signifies a quote.

Please italicize names of publications, e.g., *New York Times, The Economist*.

Aim to write relatively short paragraphs; three sentences each is a good rule of thumb. Long paragraphs look especially long in the blog format, and they are less inviting to the reader. While my general rule for paragraphs in papers you write for a seminar course is 3-6 sentences, I am comfortable with you using single-sentence paragraphs in blog posts—as long as you do so judiciously, as for rhetorical effect. I find, for example, that single sentence concluding paragraphs are often effective.

Attend to internal spacing in your blog. You should have no more than a single space between paragraphs in your post. Please use the delete key or backspace key to eliminate additional spaces. If additional spaces appear after you have hit the “publish post” key, please go back into Blogger and eliminate these.

**Revising**

If I point out grammatical errors in your blog, or ways in which your blog post is inconsistent with the style guidelines when I grade your post, please correct your blog post. At the same time, if you see ways to improve your post based on my comments (and many of you often will), please do so.

**Comments**

You are required to make a minimum of three comments on others’ posts during each grading/submission period. Please submit these when you submit your blog for me to grade.

**Submitting your posts for credit and grading**

Please submit your post to me in hard copy on or before the due date for the relevant grading period. Please also submit hard copies of your comments on others’ posts. **Please staple together all pages—the post plus comments—before submitting.** If you re-submit a post after making corrections, please staple the pages together and staple them to a copy of the earlier post.
When you submit to me hard copies of your posts, please submit them in a fashion that indicates what links you have embedded. You might do this by putting the link’s url in brackets following the text in which it is embedded in the post.

**Schedule of Deadlines for Blog Posts**

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<th>Blog Post 1 Deadline:</th>
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<td>Scott Alto</td>
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<td>Sarah Campbell</td>
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<td>Azer Sumbas</td>
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