The Beat Blog Assignment

Six blog posts are required between now and the end of the semester. Your final post must be dated no later than Friday, Dec. 11.

Expectations/Requirements

1. Each post will be timely. That is, each post will be tied to something relatively new. If your linked material is new (with a date on it, and less than two weeks old), that is timely. If your linked material is old or undated, then your post content needs to be about something new that relates to your linked material. In other words, a blog is not a research paper. You are not simply trolling for links.

2. Each post will be interesting. I will read these posts as if I were in your intended audience. Have something to say! If it's boring, you lose points. If you use passive verbs and tired generalities, your grade goes down. Rambling, redundant writing does not appeal to any audience. Get to the point. Edit your writing down to the fewest words possible that still convey what you want to say. And for heaven’s sake -- have something to say!

3. Stay on topic. Stick to the beat you have selected. Off-topic posts will lost all content points (see below).

4. Quality and relevance of links. Each post must have at least one functioning link to an outside Web page that is regularly updated. This requirement is aimed at getting you to search the Web regularly for new and interesting content. Link to a variety of sources. Linking to the same two or three sites all the time will cost you points. Your blog post must comment on the linked content. The link must be relevant to what you have written in your post.
   a. Links are more valuable (higher quality) when they are more specific. A link to the home page of The New York Times is not very valuable because: (a) anyone can find that page without your help; and (b) the contents of that page will change in less than 24 hours.
   b. Links are more valuable when the linked content is provided by someone with expertise. The content of personal Web pages has very little value.
   c. Links are more valuable when your link text tells the user what to expect. The words "click here" or "this link" do not tell the user anything about the linked content.

5. Mechanics. You will lose points for errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and AP style. You are learning that journalists today work without a safety net. They post to the Web without any editorial oversight beforehand. Your blog should show that you are up to this challenge.

Your written language in this course must be of professional journalistic quality. Bloggers who are not journalists can follow different standards -- but you cannot. A future employer might read your blog. Make sure that's not a bad thing.

6. Enhancements. Your blog should include all the following enhancements:
   a. At least three images or screen grabs in the six required posts.
   b. A complete, professional About page.
   c. A blogroll with links to at least five other blogs or regularly updated Web sites relevant to your beat.
   d. A widget that displays a feed of Delicious bookmarks that I save for the course.

Grading

This beat blog assignment is one of your major assignments for the course. Each post is worth 10 points. The lowest grade among your six blog posts will be dropped. Posts will be scored as follows:

- 4 points / Content (is it interesting? Relevant to your blog’s focus? Accurate and journalistic? Timely, current?)
- 3 points / Quality and relevance of the link(s) you included in the post (don’t post excessive numbers of links)
- 3 points / Mechanics (grammar, spelling, punctuation and AP style)
In addition to the 50 points possible from among the six posts, there will be 10 points for the enhancements. (See #6 above.) This adds up to 60 total possible points for the beat blog assignment.

**Extra Credit**

You may do up to two additional posts for extra credit. The points from one extra credit post may be added to your quiz and test scores. The points from the second extra credit post can be added to your major assignments scores.