Communications 110, Media Writing, is a writing smorgasbord. Students write news stories, public relations advances, radio briefs, TV stories. They tweet events. They write script coverage. They blog.

Last semester, I made blogging a bigger part of the course. Instead of creating a generic blog and writing media-related posts on it, students created blogs on subjects that interested them. Students in previous classes had suggested doing this, saying that writing such blogs would be fun and instructive and might help them secure internships.

The results were encouraging. A cinema major created this movie review blog, and a student whose dream is to work on "Saturday Night Live" devoted a blog to that show. Students interested in music reviewing and promotion focused on those areas, and a student interested in event planning made that her topic. Not only did students learn a lot about blogging by doing this assignment but they also learned a lot about possible careers.

Following you will see an overview of the project, with its “deliverables” spelled out. Now, when I introduce blogging, I will be able to provide students this roadmap for the project instead of parceling out the project assignment by assignment. I think this overview should help students better understand the project; it also should help them keep up with it.

Writing the project assignment also made me spend time evaluating it. I have decided I need to spend more time on blog promotion, so I have now built that into the schedule.

What's nice about having a semester-length project is that other course objectives also can be incorporated into it. For example, I teach students about pitch writing by having them write an email to me pitching a topic for their blog. You can read that assignment and its rubric after the overall project assignment and its rubric.
The Assignment I Distribute to Students

COM 110 – Media Writing
Blog Project

Purpose
A major purpose of media writing is to give you experience writing in various media forms. This particular project will give you experience blogging. To get a media job, you must have experience writing for online audiences. Blogging is a great way to get that experience. Students have used blogs begun in media writing classes to help them get internships and jobs. The blog you create for this class might even become the way you make a living.

Objectives
- To become familiar with and to interact with a wide variety of blogs
- To choose a blog topic that meshes with your interests and goals
- To successfully pitch a blog topic
- To create, name and maintain a blog
- To write several blog posts
- To learn how to use hyperlinks
- To use headlines, tags/labels and keywords to make your blog posts search-engine friendly
- To learn ways to generate publicity for your blog
- To use revision to create a professional product

Deliverables
Describe three blogs, focusing on their content, author(s), audience and purpose.
**Due:** Sept. xxx

Your blog proposal, written as an email pitch letter to me.
**Due:** Sept. xxx

Copies of three comment posts you have made on blogs, along with a brief explanation of each comment’s purpose, audience and effect (if any).
**Due:** Sept. xxx
Creation of your blog through a free site such as WordPress or Blogger.  
**Due:** Sept. xxx

Introductory blog post, establishing the purpose of your blog.  
**Due:** Oct. xx

Weekly blog posts, with the first one written by Oct. xx and the last required post written by Nov. xx. Post due by 11:59 p.m. Saturday for each week. One post must have hyperlinks; one post must have bullets; one post must have subheads.  
**Due:** Weekly, ending Nov. xx

Blog share day  
**Oct. xx**

Writing/rewriting of headlines, labels/tags  
**Due:** Nov. xx

Three promotional steps taken for blog  
**Due:** Nov. xx

Final revision/editing of blog posts  
**Due:** Dec. xx

**Grading**  
The blog project will be worth 20 percent of your grade. The email pitch assignment will be counted separately as a writing assignment. The rubric below shows how I will evaluate the blog project. I grade on a 10-point scale, with 90-100 being an A, 80-90 a B, etc.
# Blog Project Rubric

Name: __________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>Professional (10)</th>
<th>Skilled (9-8)</th>
<th>Developing (7-6)</th>
<th>Novice (5-0)</th>
<th>Your Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme (Counts double)</strong></td>
<td>Blog is based on approved theme. Posts, headlines and links build upon the theme, creating a blog with a subject that is easily recognizable and that provides lots of content to readers.</td>
<td>Blog is based on approved theme. Most posts, headlines and links build upon the theme.</td>
<td>Blog is based on approved theme, but the theme is not fully developed.</td>
<td>Blog does not follow the approved theme or addresses it in a perfunctory manner.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Adherence to requirements (Counts double)</strong></td>
<td>All project deadlines and requirements were met. Blog contains the appropriate number and type of posts. Blogger optimized search strategies and also promoted the blog.</td>
<td>All of the project requirements were done, but deadlines weren't met on all requirements.</td>
<td>Blogger did most but not all of the project requirements. Deadlines may have been missed.</td>
<td>Blogger did few of the project requirements and also missed deadlines.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accuracy</strong></td>
<td>All facts seem verifiable. All names are spelled correctly.</td>
<td>All major facts are verifiable and all names are spelled correctly. A couple of factual errors.</td>
<td>All names are spelled correctly, but there are several factual errors.</td>
<td>Little attempt appears to have been made to fact check material, even when problems have been pointed out. Names are incorrect.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Headlines</td>
<td>Headlines for blog posts are appropriate and catchy. There are no spelling errors. They are search-engine friendly.</td>
<td>Headlines for blog posts are appropriate but could be better written. May be too vague and/or not search-engine friendly.</td>
<td>Spelling or grammatical errors found in headlines. Headlines don't match content and aren't search-engine friendly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual posts</td>
<td>Exceeded the required number and type of posts. Format of posts is reader friendly as is the writing style. (short paragraphs, varied sentence length, conversational tone). Content is substantive, not superficial.</td>
<td>Met the required number and type of posts. Format of posts is reader friendly as is writing style. Content is substantive, not superficial.</td>
<td>Did not write the required number and type of posts. Content is superficial and formatting and writing style aren't reader friendly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactivity</td>
<td>Blogger has publicized the blog on other websites and through social media. Blogger responds to comments left on blog and also encourages them and other forms of interaction with readers. Blogger has been consistent in posting and has tagged posts to help people find them.</td>
<td>Blogger has publicized the blog but could do more in this area and in the area of encouraging reader interaction.</td>
<td>Little has been done to publicize the blog. Blogger seems to be writing in a vacuum with little attempt made to make the blog reader friendly. Little consistency in blog schedule and few, if any, tags on blog posts.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AP Style</strong></td>
<td>Almost flawless execution of AP style.</td>
<td>Blogger made a good attempt to follow AP style, but there were a few errors.</td>
<td>Blogger appears to be trying to follow AP style, but made several style errors.</td>
<td>Blogger made little attempt to follow AP style.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Spelling and Grammar</strong></td>
<td>No spelling errors are apparent, but there are a couple of grammatical errors.</td>
<td>A few errors are found, but most of the copy is clean.</td>
<td>Several spelling and grammar errors throughout.</td>
<td>The blog is riddled with spelling and grammatical errors.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Total Score (out of 100):**
Part 2
Pitch Email Assignment

Connection to Course Goals
An objective of this course is to give you practice writing in forms you will use when working. Writing pitch emails is something you will likely do, especially if you work as a publicist or as a freelancer.

Publicists write pitch emails to people in the media trying to get them to cover an organization, product, brand or person. Writers and photographers send pitch emails to editors and others in the media trying to get them to buy their work or assign work to them.

In this assignment, you will write an email to me pitching a blog topic for yourself. You will focus the pitch on how you would benefit from writing on your proposed topic, as this is what I will use to decide whether to accept your pitch.

Here’s What I am Looking for in the Email
1. A logical subject header explaining the purpose of the email. (What words would I use to search my email account if I were trying to find your message?)

2. A salutation and an interesting opening paragraph that makes me want to read the rest of the email.

3. Conversational writing. Please write in short paragraphs and speak to me directly. (I am your audience.)

4. Pitch must not have spelling and grammatical errors, and it should not be longer than 500 words.

5. The pitch should include background information on the topic, including helpful hyperlinks. Also, you must explain why it would be good for you to write a blog on the topic. What benefits would you derive from writing on this subject?

6. The last paragraph should be a closing paragraph, similar to a close you would put on a letter.

7. End with a complimentary close with your name. (Sincerely, xxxx xxxx)

Follow the rubric when writing. It will help you remember to include the required information.
Due Date
Sept. xx

Grading
The pitch email will count as a writing assignment. The following rubric shows how I will grade the assignment. I grade on a 10-point scale, with 90-100 an A, 80-90 a B, etc.
# Pitch Email Rubric

**Name:** ______________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>Professional (10)</th>
<th>Skilled (9-8)</th>
<th>Developing (7-6)</th>
<th>Novice (5-0)</th>
<th>Your Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deadline</td>
<td>Handed in on due date.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subject Head</td>
<td>Subject head is logical and appropriate for email. Tone works. Header would help recipient find message in email.</td>
<td>Subject head is logical and appropriate for email, but has problems with tone.</td>
<td>Subject head is not as related to email content as it could be. Recipient's search needs may not be met.</td>
<td>Subject head has little connection to email content or is missing. Would not help recipient locate email.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>Pitch has salutation, opening and close. It is written in short paragraphs with space between the paragraphs.</td>
<td>Pitch has salutation, opening and close but paragraphs are too long. No space between paragraphs.</td>
<td>Pitch is missing the salutation, opening or close.</td>
<td>Pitch is missing two main parts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Pitch is well organized. Paragraphs logically progress. Organization within paragraphs and within sentences makes sense.</td>
<td>Overall organization is good, but assignment contains sentence-level organization problems.</td>
<td>Overall organization is OK, but assignment contains sentence-level organization problems and</td>
<td>Organization problems on all levels. Sentences poorly organized within paragraphs, transitions between</td>
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<td>(Counts double)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Content (Counts double)</td>
<td>Pitch contains all the content asked for in the assignment. Pitch explains blog topic, provides hyperlinks and gives persuasive reasons why the writer would benefit from writing the blog.</td>
<td>Pitch contains all the required information, but the pitch could have been more persuasive.</td>
<td>Pitch lacks some of the information required by the assignment and is not that persuasive.</td>
<td>Pitch does not contain most of the required information and does not make a good case for the chosen blog topic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>All facts are correct. No names are misspelled.</td>
<td>No names are misspelled but the pitch contains a minor factual error.</td>
<td>No primary names are misspelled but the pitch contains a couple of errors.</td>
<td>A primary name is misspelled or several facts are not correct.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone/Style</td>
<td>Style and tone are appropriate for a pitch email. Tone is conversational, but not too casual.</td>
<td>Minor problems with style and/or tone. A word or two might not be appropriate.</td>
<td>Tone/style is appropriate in some parts, but is not appropriate in other parts of the pitch.</td>
<td>Tone and style are inappropriate for a pitch email. Tone is either too formal (sounds like a term paper) or too casual (sounds like a tweet to a friend). Little attention is paid to word choice or to sentence structure.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar and Spelling</td>
<td>No spelling or grammatical errors.</td>
<td>No spelling errors. A couple of grammatical errors.</td>
<td>Several errors in spelling and in grammar.</td>
<td>Many errors in spelling and in grammar.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total score** (out of 100):