Website Guidelines

For this course, you will create a personalized, individual website where you will post all of your blogs and final project. Think of your website as a professional portfolio that showcases the research and writing that you will be doing throughout the semester. You will be updating and posting your assignments to the website when they are due, and at the end of the semester you will be graded on the finalized version of your website (10% of your final grade). The overall assessment of your finalized website will include consideration of its cohesive, appealing, professional appearance, organization, and design. Always communicate if you have questions or need advice about how to approach any component of your website. See rubrics in course website for blogs and finalized website.

Choosing A Platform
By the Thursday of Week 3, when the first blog assignment is due, you will need to have your website set up with a clear template/design and homepage that includes a brief bio and introduction to your website. You may choose to host your website through any platform of your preference. If you already have a personal website or a website created for a different class, please do not use this for the Surviving Apocalypse assignments. You will need to create a separate website for this class, though you may certainly use the same platform. Several user-friendly platforms are commonly used in classrooms. No one platform is better suited to a specific discipline. Mostly the choice depends on your comfort level and personal preference when trying out each platform. I recommend Weebly, a free web-hosting platform that does not require any coding, provides multiple templates or design themes, and generally functions through drag-and-drop components. This is the platform that I use for the course website. It's a good option for students, especially beginner students who have little to no experience with creating websites, and with a basic free account you should be given enough space for creating the main pages/sections required for this class. Here are links to the Weebly Beginners Guide and Weebly Tutorials. Other user-friendly platforms include Google's Blogger, WordPress, and Wix.

Helpful WSU Resources for Creating Websites and Digital Media Projects
WSU STAC: http://guides.libraries.wright.edu/stac
WSU New Media Incubator (Inc): https://liberal-arts.wright.edu/about/new-media-incubator

Creating your Homepage and Website Sections
Once you've chosen your platform, you will need to create a homepage for your website and set up two additional pages for the assignments. You will need to create a Blog page and a Final Project page under two different tabs, separate from your homepage. Content for these sections will be created as you complete the assignments. Ideally, you should be able to set up the Blog page with a blog template. The Final Project page should not be set up as a blog but with a standard page template. In our first week's class I will give a brief Weebly demo to illustrate the basic set-up of your website. You can also click on the "Student Websites" tab in the course website where you will find student examples created for previous classes.

On your homepage include a brief bio and introduction of the website. You may write about yourself in whatever way that suits your personality, though your intro/bio should include three main components: who you are, why you've created this website, and what your interests are as they relate to the website. Keep in mind that at the end of the semester you will later revise/expand upon this to include a reflection on the overall content of your website—its aims, interests, approaches—as well as any thoughts on writing and reading about apocalypse in general or how your work connects to major themes and topics explored in this class.

As for design components, most platforms provide templates and themes and you may choose a template design that reflects your personality/personal tastes. Viewers should get a sense of who you are (or at least a sense of your media presence and style) through visual aspects such as design/layout, images, and color choices, though don't overload your site by making it too "busy" or chaotic. You can also go back and change the design if you prefer something else. Overall, the main thing that I want to see in your initial website set-up—**due Thurs, Jan 28**—is that you are using a clear, coherent template or design theme, that you've created your homepage, and the first blog on Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* is posted on the Blog page.

Privacy and Sharing Your URL
Remember, this is going to be a public website so you will want to make sure that it remains professional and focused on the academic objectives; you are not required to share personal details of your life, only to the extent that is comfortable/safe for you. I also encourage you to make sure you set up your website with whatever privacy settings that are made available by the platform. For example, you should enable the privacy tool so that your personal contact details are not openly visible or attainable and visitors can only contact you through leaving comments or a message on the "Contact" page (if you have one). In your bio, you might leave out details that identify where you live or family names/pictures. In other words, you can be personal but in a way that protects your privacy. If there are extenuating legal/personal safety circumstances where your online identity needs to remain protected or anonymous, then there is no need for you to use your "real" name; you are more than welcome to use a pseudonym or just your first name and no identifying pictures (and any student has the option to do this).

Once you've created your homepage, you'll need to submit a link to your website (and don't forget to publish your site—now or anytime you make updates). You can include the website link in the Pilot dropbox when you submit a copy of the first blog or email the link to me (preferred). Once I have everyone's URL, I'll provide links for these on our class website so we can all easily access each other's work. Links will be listed by first name only and I encourage everyone to visit each other's websites and leave comments if possible. Exploring other students' approaches to the assignments will help foster a more engaged classroom community. If you do leave comments, please ensure these are positive and provide constructive feedback, and in all instances, you should respect the privacy of your peers—refrain from revealing personal details or retweeting/reposting links to other students' websites without their permission.

Blog Guidelines

You must write a minimum of 6 blog posts (50 points each), one for each novel, reflecting on any major themes or aspects of the readings that interest you. Keep in mind that blogs are a form of public writing, so you will want to ensure your writing is as clear and free of errors/typos as possible; in other words, blogs must meet the general evaluation criteria for academic writing (see syllabus). These guidelines provide you with my general expectations of what is required in your blog; following these guidelines will help you see your writing develop over the course of the term. Blogging can take multiple forms and work in multiple contexts, and so this section of the guidelines describes strategies for using blogs as a writing tool in the context of a classroom assignment or project.

Why Blogging?[1]

You may already be used to writing and communicating in the digital landscape whether it be through Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, email, or a personal website. Blogging is a mode of online communication that can help improve your writing skills and build your confidence as a writer. By blogging, you can take ownership of your writing, become a better observer of others' writing, and develop a more immediate and powerful understanding of audience. Blogs encourage experimenting and risk-taking, seriousness and play, and they foster an increased awareness of private and public writing. Blogging blends both the freeing aspect of short pieces that can be written in a relatively low-stakes environment with the sense of claiming one's own voice and learning how to articulate ideas to a larger public. You will be able to see your own writing as something "real" with a practical application.

Creating a blog can be a bridge between the familiar digital world and what is being asked of you in academic essays and other university-based assignments. Blogging can be a gateway or learning experience for students who will likely use digital technologies and media in their future endeavors and/or professions regardless of their discipline. Also, for the specific format of this class, an online course, blogging is a more dynamic form of engaging with the material and each other as opposed to using a static discussion board.

Students may use blogging for various reasons and modes of writing:
- responding to readings, maintaining a writer's notebook or journal
- posting personal, reflective, exploratory, or open entries
- sharing student-generated research or links to class-related articles
- exploring visual rhetoric and digital media/writing
- practicing writing by:
  - developing voice and considering tone
  - working on titles, conciseness
  - brainstorming, drafting, facilitating peer review
- creating a showcase for final projects
- crafting an on-line image or presence

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[1] This section to top of p. 8 is adapted from Morris, "Using Blogs in the Classroom."

Content/Style

- Although you have plenty of leeway in determining *what you say*, it's still important to keep in mind my expectations for *what you're aiming to accomplish.* First and foremost, I want you to use the blog to reflect on course readings. There are multiple ways in which you might do this:
    - exploring specific themes and/or cross-cultural contexts in the readings;
    - analyzing a text's stylistic choices, genre, structure;
    - making connections between the readings and your lived experiences;
    - or, posing questions for further reflection/exploration.
- Your blogs might take more than one of these approaches or any approach not included above. Mainly, these are **NOT** book reviews or summaries and should go beyond merely discussing whether you loved or hated the reading. Blogs should be analytical, reflective and/or probing in ways that prompt further ideas/responses to the texts. Blogs that only provide summaries or opinions limited to what you liked/disliked or were confused about, will only receive partial credit; you will be allowed to revise blogs for an improved grade.
- Remember your audience; assume that they too have read the texts. Your blog is intended to invite and encourage comments and participation from readers. Your blog should be interesting to read and attempt to show different ways of looking at or understanding aspects of the readings through your personal lens and/or insights. Write in a clear, engaging manner that develops **YOUR** voice—not necessarily an academic voice.

Basic Blog Requirement Checklist

- **Title:** For each blog post, provide an <u>engaging title</u> to attract readers!
- **Format:** Type your blog post in a Word document, upload this to Pilot by the dropbox deadline, then, copy and paste into the appropriate location on your website.
- **Length:** Each blog post should be <u>at least 300-500 words</u>; anything below the minimum length will not be graded.
- **Links:** Good blogging etiquette includes linking to relevant sources or other bloggers, news articles, etc. wherever you discuss these in your post.
- **Images:** Each blog post should be <u>readable</u> and <u>visually appealing </u>(think about font and make sure you use the same font for all posts). You must include <u>at least one picture</u> in each blog post: either photos you take, hand-drawings, an original meme, or relevant images found online (be sure to credit the source if it is not from an open access website).

Timing: Successful blogs remain consistent in theme and style and are frequently updated with new posts. For this class, you are expected to make posts every other Thursday responding to each of the readings (see class calendar in syllabus). Your blog should be posted on your website with the Word copy submitted to pilot by 11:59 pm.