things about blogs you may disagree with:

- They’re not another medium to have students write academic prose.
- The main reason to use a blog is that conversation is paramount.
- If you don’t incentivize comments, you won’t get conversation.

things blogs are good for:

1. Decentering the classroom
2. Bringing course material into the world
3. Bring the world into the classroom
4. Writing without grading
5. Sparking conversation

ways to achieve these goals:

1. Off-topic posts are fine. Letting students post random things that reminded them of something said in class or that they thought we would enjoy only enhances the sense of us all — students and professor — being a learning community, off on a wacky road trip together. Everyone gets a turn at the wheel.

2. Slang and cursing are permitted. All participants should write in the way that is most natural for them. If that means saying, “wow, what shitty weather,” so be it. However: Ad hominem/ad uxorom comments are completely off limits, full stop.

3. Comments are worth as much as posts. At the end of term, I count all comments and posts, and assign grades accordingly. Weighing them equally encourages students to converse with each other and takes the pressure off students who don’t think they have anything original to say. It’s often easier to respond than to create.

4. The professorial voice must not dominate. I model desired behavior at the beginning of term (including the use of slang, making off-topic posts, and commenting), but once they get into it, I hush. I do, however, read faithfully, and I refer to blog conversations in class.