Writing Exercise 1
Due Monday, 1 February 2016
Graded

Recall that in this course you will have (at least) one “experimental” blog for in-class exercises and practice, and (at least) one “real” blog about a topic of your choice. This exercise concerns your “real” blog.

The description of this FS course states that you will learn to develop a “professional-quality blog.” In a document of about 350–400 words (roughly one or one and a half typeset pages),

• describe your proposed idea for a blog topic

• using the criteria listed on the second page of this handout, discuss possible pitfalls (both general ones and ones specific to your chosen topic) that could detract from the professionalism of your blog

• describe specific things you can do to make your blog more professional and more appealing to readers

For instance, if your proposed blog topic is about your hobby of building model airplanes, you might want to avoid the pitfall of simply creating a sequence of entries containing a photograph of each thing you’ve built and a brief description of the process—this would be repetitive, visually dull (every entry would look the same), and not much better than a photo gallery. Instead, you might want to include entries that review and evaluate sources of construction materials, critical reports on model-builder’s conventions that you have attended, occasional postings on special techniques, and so on.

If you disagree with some of the criteria I’ve listed, or if you have additional criteria you believe to be important, please address this issue in your paper as well.

Upload a copy of your paper, in PDF format, to the Drop Box in the course’s Sakai page (I will demonstrate this in class).

Be sure your paper has your name and the Honor Code pledge at the top of the first page. Provide the date and assignment number (this is the first writing assignment).
Here are some qualities that will (at least in my opinion) make your blog more professional:

- The grammar, spelling, and writing style should be excellent. While strict academic formality is not necessary (and, in fact, may detract from the blog’s appeal), some formality is needed to lend credibility and authority to your blog posts.

- Always acknowledge the sources of any ideas that are not your own. Plagiarism is rampant on the Web, but that does not give you the right to represent other people’s ideas as your own.

- The majority of the ideas expressed in your blog should be your own, not simply a repetition of others’ thoughts and opinions. Naturally you will often build on what others have said, but the key word here is “build”—don’t make your blog simply an aggregation of things borrowed from other sources.

- Facts should always be distinguished from opinions, and opinions should be supported by credible evidence. While footnotes and MLA-style citations are not needed, you should provide some way for the reader to independently verify any facts or evidence that you provide.

- Professional blog entries should be planned. Spontaneity has its place on platforms such as Twitter, but professional blog entries should be written under the assumption that they will have a longer lifetime and a greater significance than a typical text message or Facebook posting. Devote some time to thinking about your blog entry in the context of the rest of the entries; devote significant time to re-writing, editing, and polishing the entry before publishing it.

- The appearance of the blog should be clean and appealing. This requires paying attention to issues such as consistency, spacing, font choices, colors, and other aesthetic considerations.

**Grading Criteria**

I will assign two letter grades—one for “mechanics” (spelling, grammar, style, etc.) and one for content (how well did you address the three items listed in the assignment?). I will use a weighted average of these two grades, where content will contribute about 75% and mechanics 25%.