

Science communication Plant Biology Blog project

NOTE: This is the general outline of how Sara K. has collaborated with her colleague, Dr. Tia-Lynn Ashman, to include writing a plant blog as part of Dr. Ashman's Plant Biology Course. The course is primarily composed of upperclassmen Biology majors at Pitt, and this assignment is the terminal assignment for the course. It involved Sara and Nikki coming into class a few times in the semester to talk about blog writing, and then working with students as they developed their ideas and wrote drafts of the blog. This outline was created in collaboration between Drs. Tia-Lynn Ashman, Sara Kuebbing, and [Nicole Forrester](#) (now a free-lance science journalist and Associate Editor at Highlands Magazine)

Overview: Students develop scientific communication skills by writing contributions to Science Blogs. Students will reflect on the role of plants in their everyday lives, and review and digest primary scientific literature. In doing so they will convey their appreciation for plants and share botanical knowledge with the broader public.

Two blogs and their target audiences are available:

EvoBites: <https://evobites.com/> (N. Forrester editor)

Plant Love Stories Blog: <https://www.plantlovestories.com/> (S. Kuebbing editor)

The most effective blogs from students will be selected as contributions to be posted on the website (with their permission and attribution, and with light editing by respective editors if needed).

Schedule (*note: these days are spread out throughout the semester, final blogs are due at the end of the semester*)

Day 1. Introduce the project, the blogs and the editors. In small groups, evaluate blogs we assigned them to read (select a few PLS or EvoBite blogs about plants to highlight) to identify key components and important facets of a successful blog. Review literature on how to write an effective blog. Nikki give a minilecture on blog writing.)

Homework assignment for day 2: Choose blog target: EvoBites or Plant Love Stories & ideas for blog

Day 2. Bring ideas for blog posts. Filled in outlines of contents under headings. Work in groups to peer review ideas. Think about images and what literature or other media information source could be linked to the blog and discussed to deepen the botanical content. If PLS then what primary or secondary literature would you link to; if EB then how to inject personal connection (interview author, personal story)

Assignment for day 3 bring draft blog posts and literature.

Day 3. Working session. Bring written blog posts plus primary articles with related content. Discuss with instructor's avenues for including links to this literature and how to integrate into their work. (divide up class between 3 instructors for one-one review).

Assignment for day 4 bring completed blog posts.

Day 4. Peer review of completed blog posts. In class written reviews and peer share. Will need to create evaluation rubric for students to use.