

## The Bio-Blog Research Project\*

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**Introduction:** As part of your research project this semester, you will be keeping a weekly blog (short for web-log) on Blogger. We will be setting your blog up during class. You will use your blog to share with the class your research into the origins and socio-economic and environmental impact of one meal for one person. Please remember your blog is open to the public. Anyone with access to an internet connection can see it and respond.

**Evaluation:** Your blog activity will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Did you fully set up the blog? (Required.)
- Did you add all your classmates as friends? (Required.)
- Did you post a *complete response* to the question of the week every week? Late posts will not be counted for credit. (Required.)
- Did you respond to your classmates' blogs (*minimum* 4 responses to 4 people) each week? (Required.)
- Did you illustrate with photos or graphics for added rhetorical impact? (Suggested.)
- Did you expand your blog to include other environmental awareness issues that concern you? (Suggested.)
- Did you make "friends" and interact with other green blogs other than with members of this class? (Suggested.)

**Before you begin:** Beginning the first week of class, keep a journal of *everything* you eat and drink for three days (a complete 72 hours).

**Blog 1:** What kinds of foods do you usually eat? Describe what you ate at each meal, and in between, for the last three days. Be sure to include all drinks (including coffee, tea, and water) and estimate the size of the portions. If you do not remember what you ate at a particular meal, indicate so and try to remember what you were doing at the time instead and write about that.

**Blog 2:** Describe your favorite meal in detail. Describe how it would look, taste (be specific and compare to other foods), smell, who would make it, and where you would be eating it. Since we are fantasizing, cost is not a problem but you must make a meal of "real foods" and it must be made of items you have actually eaten before.

**Blog 3:** Locate the recipes for all dishes in your meal. List the cost (or cost range) for each item needed both as packaged and as used. For example, if part of my favorite meal is a hamburger made at home, I would need to hit the grocery store to see the cost of a ½ pound of ground beef (I prefer round steak), list the price of a bottle of mayonnaise and mustard, a head of lettuce, and a package of salt and pepper. I would then estimate the price of a tablespoon of mayonnaise and a tablespoon of mustard (taking the percentage of a whole bottle of each), and the approximate cost of three leaves of lettuce, a pinch of salt and pepper, and etc.

**Blog 4:** Who makes this stuff? List all packaging your products come in (plastic bags, paper containers, Styrofoam cups, etc.). Note the makers of the packaging if indicated. What type of recycling is it (look for the recycling triangle, if any). Also list the producers of each product on your recipe list (if there are many brands, pick the one you prefer or the one your establishment uses). You may have to ask questions of the butcher or restaurant. Who supplies their meat? Where is it raised? You may want to hit corporate websites as well.

**Blog 5-7:** Where do these ingredients come from? How did they get here? For every single product on your list, track down their origins and means of production and distribution. The more specific you can be about *your* producers (as opposed to "in general" X comes from Y), the better. Write the information up as a narrative including *where* you found your information (properly cited in MLA format) and what you learned/what you think about what you have learned. Each week (for three weeks) post what you have learned that week. Remember, however, that each week's blog will be evaluated independently.

**Blog 8:** Research the commentary on your favorite meal. What have other researchers/writers said about your favorite meal, its origins, or its ingredients? What environmental, health, or labor issues are of concern with your meal?

**Blog 9:** Make an argument either for or against your favorite meal as being healthy, environmentally safe, and good for the world's economy. What could be changed to improve its health factor, environmental status, and economic impact?

**Blog 10:** What was the most interesting thing you learned about the relationship between you, your foods, your body, and the global community?

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\* This assignment series is adapted from Sidney I. Dobrin's *Saving Place: An Ecocomposition Reader*. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2005.