

Guidelines and ethical standards for OCS blogging

Note: These guidelines apply to official OCS program blogs, the OCS website, and OCS affiliate blogs/sites (personal blogs/sites that OCS lists as being sources of news & information about the program)

August 2008

Carleton College Blogging Guidelines

Blogging is a public activity. What an individual writes reflects upon him or herself, the off-campus studies program, and Carleton College. While OCS encourages candid reflections on students' experiences, we also expect them to:

- keep in mind the cultural norms and standards of the people and places written about, taking care not to post photographs of people (especially children) without their expressed consent;
- remember that whatever is published on-line can be accessed by anyone, including host families, professors, employers, parents, friends, sources, subjects, and so on;
- for the sake of everyone's safety, refrain from publishing specific itineraries online in any form, including program fact sheets and details of individual travel plans;
- adhere to the following code of ethics, as published by CyberJournalist.com:

<http://www.cyberjournalist.net/news/000215.php>.

A BLOGGERS' CODE OF ETHICS

Be Honest and Fair

Bloggers should be honest and fair in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

Bloggers should:

- Never plagiarize.
- Identify and link to sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources' reliability.
- Make certain that Weblog entries, quotations, headlines, photos and all other content do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.
- Never distort the content of photos without disclosing what has been changed. Image enhancement is only acceptable for for technical clarity. Label montages and photo illustrations.
- Never publish information they know is inaccurate -- and if publishing questionable information, make it clear it's in doubt.
- Distinguish between advocacy, commentary and factual information. Even advocacy writing and commentary should not misrepresent fact or context.

- Distinguish factual information and commentary from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.

Minimize Harm

Ethical bloggers treat sources and subjects as human beings deserving of respect.

Bloggers should:

- Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by Weblog content. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
- Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of information is not a license for arrogance.
- Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.
- Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.

Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects, victims of sex crimes and criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.

Be Accountable

Bloggers should:

- Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
- Explain each Weblog's mission and invite dialogue with the public over its content and the bloggers' conduct.
- Disclose conflicts of interest, affiliations, activities and personal agendas.
- Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence content. When exceptions are made, disclose them fully to readers.
- Be wary of sources offering information for favors. When accepting such information, disclose the favors.
- Expose unethical practices of other bloggers.
- Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others.

I agree to abide by the Carleton OCS blogging guidelines and the bloggers code of ethics when posting material regarding the OCS program (including text, images, video, etc.) to the OCS website, the program blog or my personal affiliate blog/site.

Printed name

Signature

Date