Duke Research Blog Outline & Drafts:

The Duke Research Blog is managed by [Karl Bates](#), who is the Director of the News & Communications office at Duke. That office sends out the press releases that accompany high profile Duke academic articles so they are covered by the media. For the purpose of our class, he will be visiting on June 13th to discuss the editorial and publication process at the Blog. When you turn in your final drafts to me (June 19th), they will also go to Karl, who will help you shape them for publication. At that point, you'll have finished this piece for the class, so your communication with Karl will be your thing, not tied to the class. However, it'd be strange to not work with him, because you already put in all that effort.

Here are some recent examples of students covering research studies/projects (and even colloquiua here at Duke, where we have invited speakers come discuss research):
https://researchblog.duke.edu/2019/04/30/teenage-marijuana-use-lowers-i-q/
https://researchblog.duke.edu/2019/04/25/dont-drink-the-tap/
https://researchblog.duke.edu/2019/04/16/the-adolescent-brain/

You can read more at the blog if you'd like. They have undergraduate bloggers doing work-study, so you can definitely find more examples from your peers.

On actual guidelines:

The Duke Research Blog doesn't have a specific template to follow, as you may have noted from those example articles. There are a few things specific to the blog that we have not discussed:

- Every post has to have 2 or 3 relevant images. You have to make sure that the copyright license allows for you to use the image. For the blog, they have to be in the public domain (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_copyright_license). In the examples linked above, one of the bloggers used WikiCommons, another took his own picture at Motorco, and the other used the image associated with the DIBS blog posts on the symposium. Here is a guide on how to find [public domain images](#).
- You also will need to have your own headshot and write your position in school. If you don't have a headshot, we can set up a time to take one of you. Let me know.

Also, like I've said before, most Science Communication pieces are between 500-1000 words. For the purpose of this assignment, I would like you to write more than 500 words. More specifically, I'd like to not see a case where you're at 510 words but mostly because there are a lot of filler words in the document. If you look at the Duke blog examples, they are usually longer than 500 words, too. (That doesn't mean being really wordy either, though.)

On writing guidelines:

- Link to the article that you are covering. This is a must for all SciComm. When news writers don't do this, it looks weird, because it doesn't facilitate anyone interested in learning more to actually do so.
- I wrote about this on [our assignment page](#), we generated our own [SciComm principles sheet](#) on Day 1, you've all answered questions about SciComm on the first three quizzes, and you've read multiple SciComm papers since the first week – in addition to having

had feedback on your opening paragraph and soon multiple paragraph SciComm assignment – so hopefully you have some idea of how this type of writing works. I will nonetheless include comments below.
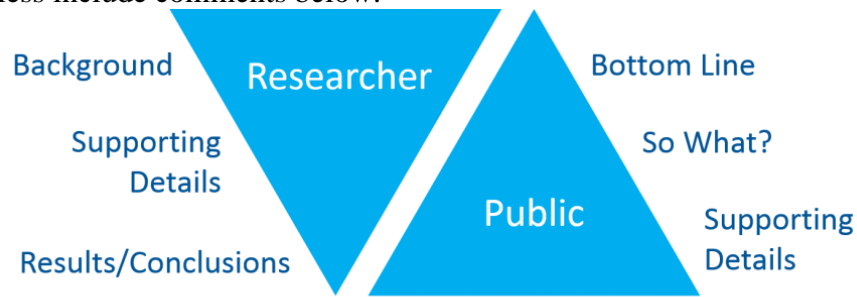
Adapted from Nancy Baron's *Escape from the Ivory Tower* AAAS | Center for Public Engagement with Science & Technology

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- If you're going to use numbers, make them numbers that people can easily visualize instead of saying e.g., 65,000 Americans (what's that equivalent to? A stadium full of people?).
- Avoid jargon that someone not familiar with psychology wouldn't know. If you *have* to use jargon, define it before you use it.
- Use simpler language to make the article feel accessible, but that doesn't mean talking down to your readers, either (remember Ed Yong? He refers to Kadinsky paintings and the uncanny valley).
    - Simpler language doesn't mean informal
- Be concise.
- General writing tip: read your paper out loud to find places where you might stumble. These are usually the places where the flow needs work.
- Headlines and lead sentences are usually your only chance with readers, so you have to first catch their attention.
- Qualifying the research in any limitations or showing some awareness of the long-term validity and what's next.
- Make the story compelling:
    - Narrative arcs (e.g., Lombrozo, 2014 on neuroscience evidence; Brenda Yang's discussion on embracing failure as students of all stripes)
    - Outrageous methodology (e.g., Hanger study coverage)
    - Compelling characters (e.g., Ringo the monkey from Yong (2019))
    - Extraordinary effort (e.g., if you read any news coverage of the recent photo on the black hole picture that was taken in April)
    - Paradigm shifts (e.g., on Quiz 2, y'all answered a question on a study covering social neuroscience studies – it set up a paradigm shift to talk about how synchrony and social components were important).
    - *Make the story personal; use analogies and metaphors; use humor and/or drama; provide statistics; hook your readers with something surprising or counterintuitive; and be definitive.* Ask:
        - Is the message clear?
        - Is there too much / any jargon?
        - Is the story framed to be relevant? Does it answer the 'So What' or 'Why Should We Care' questions?
        - Do you support your message with a story, metaphor, statistic, or something else to make it memorable?

Different assignment components:

Completion-based & already finished (15 points):
- Tweet Summary (3 points)
    - Goal: Get you acquainted with summarizing the main point in a limited number of characters (140-280)
- Headline/Leads (4 points)
    - Goal: Get you thinking about how to capture readers' attention, since these are usually your only shot
- Opening Paragraph (4 points)
    - Goal: Get you thinking about how to set up the thematic beginning to your coverage of an article; what will you circle back to?
- Multiple Paragraphs (~250 words; 4 points)
    - Goal: Get you thinking about the goals of each paragraph (reverse outline), taking feedback into account on your writing (peer & mine from opening paragraph), and considering how much needs to be accomplished by the time you're about halfway into a SciComm piece.

As long as there was a good faith effort on those assignments, following directions (e.g., doing a reverse outline and taking feedback into account), people get full credit.

Outline (15 points):
- Goal: Get you thinking about how the structure and flow will work in your own paper; also planning out what you will write so that you have done some of the work in advance
- What I am expecting on the outline:
    - The two images that you think should be included in the blog post, with a caption that indicates their copyright and describes their relevance to the piece
    - Headline
    - An explicit goal stated for each paragraph, an approximate word count for that paragraph, and what you plan to discuss in that paragraph
        - Goals need to be more explicit than 'this was just a transition to the research experiment.'
        - Goal: I wanted to hook readers by commenting on how marijuana is an important topic in the American political conversation but that we don't really know what marijuana is doing. Total word count: ~50
            - I will provide a relevant statistic about marijuana as it relates to the American public. (Note that if you do look at that sample article, that writer should have broken down that 63% more – what does that mean? Kind of hard to visualize)
            - I will remind readers that the topic of my post is about the unknown long-term health effects of marijuana.
    - Identify all the jargon that you will need to either simplify or explain
    - Identify the So What and main point of the paper that you are covering (either explicitly as a bullet point in the outline or before getting into the outline)
    - Following the SciComm guidelines for writing that we have listed above
- Points will be allocated as follows:

- o General directions: images/link (2 points)
- o Identifying jargon that you will have to simplify or explain (2 points)
- o Identifying the So What and main points correctly (4 points)
- o Following the SciComm principles in headline and thinking about how you're framing your piece (e.g., Paradigm shift? Thematic components?; 4 points)
- o Following the structural guidelines to planning out your piece (3 points)

Draft (25 points):
- Goal: Get you writing a draft in advance so you have the chance to improve it before turning it in for the final grade
- Accurate representation of the study in question, including the So What, main point, methods details, etc. (6 points)
- The extent to which you followed your outline and changed things based on feedback. In other words: don't just write an outline that you're going to throw out when you actually write the piece; otherwise, why have an outline? You can change some things, but I would like you to still use the outline you wrote. Also, don't just ignore feedback that you receive – the point in breaking down the assignments is to improve (6 points)
- Incorporating the jargon that you identified into the piece & having all components of the Duke Research blog post (appropriate word count, images, headshot/bio, link) (3 points)
- Following the SciComm principles that we have discussed (10 points)

Final Draft (45 points):
- Has all the components of the Duke Research blog post (appropriate word count, images, headshot/bio, link) (5 points)
- Used feedback on the draft and/or own input to improve (10 points)
- Now, basically judging this as we have judged all other SciComm papers, using our principles and assuming this is the *final* piece I'd be reading online (30 points).
  - o Accurate representation of the research?
  - o Some kind of statement on limitations or long-term validity?
  - o So What? Why Should I Care?
  - o Attention-grabbing headline?
  - o Concise language without jargon?
  - o See all the science communication tips that we have discussed.