

# WRITING FOR ARTISTS

(GRAPHIC DESIGN EMPHASIS)

AVT 395:003 MW 9:00:10:15

a.m., AB 1005

3 credits, Spring 2015

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2017 Art & Design Building  
Office Hours: By appointment  
MW 10:30-11:30 a.m. and  
MW 1:30-2:30 p.m.

*The need for designers to be able to communicate not only visually, but also verbally, has only grown over the years, to the extent that no professional designer today can afford not to develop the necessary skills.*

- Richard Grefé, AIGA executive director

*A basic structural design underlies every type of writing.*

-Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*

*Becoming a writer is about becoming conscious.*

-Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*

*Writing can teach us the dignity of speaking the truth, and it spreads out from the page into all of our lives, and it should.*

-Natalie Goldberg, *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Writing for Artists is the *writing-intensive course* for students in the School of Art. In Writing for Artists, you learn to apply the lessons learned in ENGH 302 to the specific writing challenges you will face in your professional life. This section was specifically created to tailor the content of the course to the needs of designers.

Designers use writing in multiple ways: as a tool for finding and retaining business, as a key aspect of design work itself, as a tool for communicating with clients, and as a way of letting the public and members of the design profession know about your work, your commitments, and your perspective on design. During your work in this course, you will have the opportunity to explore several modes of writing with helpful feedback from your instructor and your peers. Our time this semester will be broken into three major components: (1) design criticism, (2) business

writing, and (3) design as a force in culture, with one written project and blog entries associated with each.

## WHAT HAPPENS IN A WRITING INTENSIVE COURSE?

A writing intensive course has four primary characteristics: 1) whatever the specific content of the course, the instructor spends significant class time teaching students about writing and gives feedback on the quality of student writing (not just on the content); 2) course assignments include at least two writing assignments and total at least 3500 words of graded writing; 3) at least one of the writing assignments must require the student to rewrite the paper based on the instructor's comments; and 4) grades on writing assignments must make up a substantial portion of the student's grade for the course.

**Comment [1]:** Syllabus contains WI statement.

**Comment [2]:** Syllabus describes that the instructor will provide feedback on writing.

**Comment [3]:** Students are required to write at least 2 assignments and at least 3,500 words.

Our course takes writing as its primary subject (within the context of design), and as such it will meet and exceed these requirements. You will write regularly throughout the term, and all assignments of 500 words or more will be completed through a draft/feedback/revision process. All written work is expected to get substantively and noticeably better with each draft.

## COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students who actively participate in this course will:

- Improve written communications skills
- Continue development of critical thinking and design thinking skills
- Strengthen critical reading and editing skills
- Build needed skills for accomplishing day-to-day writing tasks in the business of design—proposals, briefs, analysis and critiques.
- Explore writing as a vehicle for critical dialogue on design artifacts, practice and theory.
- Think more deeply about the ethical obligations of a designer to himself/herself, to fellow design professionals, to clients and suppliers, and to the broader society.

## COURSE TEXTS

### REQUIRED TEXTS

The following two required texts are available in the George Mason University Bookstore:

- Andrea Marks, *Writing for Visual Thinkers: A Guide for Artists and Designers*. Second Edition. New Riders/Peachpit/ Pearson Education 2011.
- Michael Bierut, *Seventy-nine Short Essays on Design*. Princeton Architectural Press, 2007.

According to the George Mason University Bookstore, these books will cost a total of \$31.50 to \$70.00, depending on whether you rent or buy them, and whether they are new or used. If you are a member of Amazon Student (with free two-day shipping), you can get the texts for a slightly less expensive up-front cost (but remember, the Mason Bookstore will buy back your texts, so your overall outlay will likely be less). If buying from an online retailer, be sure you will receive the book in time to prepare for the classes in which the books will be used (see the

schedule of assignments at the end of this syllabus). If you don't mind reading on a screen, Amazon.com also has an e-book version of each text for \$15.39 each (\$30.78 total)—and as a bonus, you get instant delivery and can keep them forever.

Assignments from these texts are listed in the schedule of assignments later in this syllabus. I will also require readings and examples of work that are not in these texts, as well as web links and media assignments; these resources will be linked or otherwise made available to you for download on our AVT 395:003 Blackboard site. PDF files distributed in this way may be password protected—I will provide you with the password in class, and it is also provided in a PDF file at the top of the Course Content page on our Blackboard site.

Any moving-image materials assigned for viewing *outside* of class either will be screened at an announced time and location, made available on reserve in the Media Services area of the Johnson Center Library or provided to you via Blackboard as a link to a download or a streaming site. Where viewing assignments stream on such sites as Netflix, HuluPlus, Amazon Video, or other sites, I will identify these sites for you for your convenience in viewing them.

From time to time, I may substitute or supplement the assignments on the schedule with other materials (articles, websites, etc.). If and when I do so, you will receive instructions for accessing the material by e-mail and on Blackboard.

## RECOMMENDED SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS

### BOOKS ON WRITING

Books on writing abound. If you have a good book on writing that has helped you, keep it and use it often. If you haven't found any favorites, I highly recommend these. They are available in the Mason library and from online booksellers. They will help you improve your writing, and (in several cases) make you a better person as well.

Natalie Goldberg, *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*. Expanded edition, Shambhala, 2005. Goldberg inspires writers to find an authentic voice and to view all writing—even the most mundane business task—as an opportunity for self-transformation.

Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers, *A Pocket Style Manual*. Sixth Edition. Bedford/St. Martins, 2011. MLA, APA, Chicago, AP—you name it, this little guide can help you with proper citations and the important distinguishing characteristics of these major style guides. Despite its compact size, the book covers most of the situations that the average writer will want help with.

Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. Anchor, 1994. Although written for aspiring creative writers, the advice in this guide can help anyone become more confident and resourceful when faced with a writing task.

Patricia T. O'Connor, *The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Riverhead Trade, 2010. If you don't know your participles from your prepositions, this book will help you out. Very user-friendly.

**Comment [4]:** Syllabus indicates writing resources that are available to students.

William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*. Illustrated by Maira Kalman. Penguin, 2005. This is an elegant little handbook that has gone through many editions. I recommend this edition in particular because of the delightful, clever and helpful illustrations by the wondrous Maira Kalman.

Lynne Truss, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*. Gotham, 2006. A book on punctuation that will simultaneously make you laugh and set you straight on the mysteries of commas, semi-colons and their friends. Very readable and helpful.

William Zinsser, *On Writing Well*. 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition. Harper Perennial 2006. A companion to Strunk and White, this book addresses the mundane daily writing tasks we all face and gives helpful advice for making them better.

#### **DESIGN WRITING AND DESIGN THEORY RESOURCES**

This is an exciting time for design writing. In the last two decades, graphic design has emerged as a field worthy of critical thought and historical exploration, and design criticism has become a staple of the web. While not every design practitioner need be a scholar, a life-long examination of design through reading and writing can enrich a designer's work. In addition, clear written and spoken communication wins clients, leads to promotions, and enhances a designer's profile in the broader professional community. Read the following to learn from the best.

Robert Bringhurst, *The Elements of Typographic Style*. Hartley & Marks, 1992  
*Fresh Dialogs*. Volumes 1–6. AIGA and Princeton Architectural Press.

Jessica Helfand, *Screen: Essays on Graphic Design, New Media and Visual Culture*. Princeton Architectural Press, 2001

Steve Heller and Elinor Pettit, *Design Dialogues*. Allworth, 1998.

Steve Heller and Véronique Vienne, *Citizen Designer: Perspectives on Design Responsibility*. Allworth Press, 2003.

D.K. Holland, *Design Issues*. Allworth Press and Communication Arts, 2001.

Ellen Lupton and Abbott Miller, *Design, Writing, Research*. Phaidon, 1996.

Rick Poynor, *No More Rules: Graphic Design and Post Modernism*. Yale University Press, 2003

#### **WRITING-RELATED DESIGN BUSINESS PRACTICES**

Writing is an integral part of a successful design business. Look at the following books for help integrating clear and persuasive writing into common tasks—proposals, bids, job costing, client communication, and many others.

Ruth Cash-Smith and Barbara Janoff, *The Graphic Designer's Guide to Better Business Writing*. Allworth Press, 2007. ISBN 978-1581154726.

*Graphic Artist's Guild Handbook of Pricing and Ethical Guidelines*. 14<sup>th</sup> Edition. Graphic Artist's Guild, 2013. ISBN 978-0932102164.

Peter L. Phillips, *Creating the Perfect Design Brief*. Allworth Press and Design Management Institute, 2004.

Ellen Shapiro, *The Graphic Designer's Guide to Clients*. Allworth Press and Graphic Artist's Guild, 2003.

Theo Stephen Williams, *The Graphic Designer's Guide to Pricing, Estimating and Budgeting*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Allworth Press, 2010. ISBN 978-1581157130.

### IMPORTANT DESIGN PERIODICALS

There are many design periodicals, but only a few that make the list of “indispensable.” Find them in the Fenwick Library reading room; they may have websites and digital newsstand versions, but there’s nothing like thumbing their pages (especially if you are a print-oriented designer).

*Print* and *Communication Arts* magazines. Both provide the latest in design and design writing—*Print* does theory and history a bit better, *CA* is more business- and advertising-oriented. *Emigré*, 1984–2005, documented the graphic design profession as it was revolutionized (more than once) by technology.

*Eye* and *Baseline* are the best of the British graphic design magazines. Both are available in Mason’s periodical room. *Eye* is similar to *Print* but has a more international outlook, and both UK magazines take more of an interest in vernacular design than their American counterparts. *Baseline*’s focus is typography.

### A SELECTION OF EXCELLENT DESIGN WEBSITES AND BLOGS

The web is awash in design blogs. Here are 15 of the best. You may know many of them already. If you don’t, take a look.

Business Tips for Graphic Designers	<a href="http://graphicdesignblender.com">http://graphicdesignblender.com</a>
Communication Arts	<a href="http://www.commart.com">http://www.commart.com</a>
Cool Hunting	<a href="http://coolhunting.com">http://coolhunting.com</a>
Creative Bloq	<a href="http://www.creativebloq.com">http://www.creativebloq.com</a>
David Airey, Graphic Designer	<a href="http://www.davidairey.com">http://www.davidairey.com</a>
Designing Magazines	<a href="http://www.designingmagazines.com">http://www.designingmagazines.com</a>
Designmodo	<a href="http://designmodo.com">http://designmodo.com</a>
Design Observer	<a href="http://www.designobserver.com/">http://www.designobserver.com/</a>
Eye Magazine	<a href="http://eyemagazine.com">http://eyemagazine.com</a>
FastCompany: Design	<a href="http://www.fastcodesign.com">http://www.fastcodesign.com</a>
The LogoSmith	<a href="http://imjustcreative.com/blog">http://imjustcreative.com/blog</a>
Paste Magazine: Design	<a href="http://www.pastemagazine.com/design">http://www.pastemagazine.com/design</a>
Print Magazine	<a href="http://www.printmag.com">http://www.printmag.com</a>
Voice: AIGA Journal of Design	<a href="http://www.aiga.org/content.cfm/voice">http://www.aiga.org/content.cfm/voice</a>
You The Designer	<a href="http://www.youthedesigner.com">http://www.youthedesigner.com</a>

### A FEW WORDS ABOUT REVISION

Revision is the most important part of the writing process. More words are rewritten than are ever written in the first place. Revision not only allows you to hone the communicative point of your writing, but it allows you to get clearer for yourself about what that point is. Writing is a thinking process, not just a mechanical intermediary between brain and paper. As the novelist John Updike once wrote, “Writing and rewriting are a constant search for what one is saying.”

**Comment [5]:** Syllabus indicates writing resources that are available to students.

When you receive comments on your drafts, it won't be enough to "fix" what isn't working or what is specifically pointed out; you will need to bring thought and attention to each step in the revision process. I recall many times during my professional career as a consultant and writer-for-hire when a client would say something vague, like, "This part just doesn't flow." As irritating as I often found such comments, and as uninformative as they were about what I needed to fix, I learned to be grateful. The client was, in fact, always right—if not about the problem's cause, then at least about its location. Often the lack of "flow" was caused by a different problem entirely than that the words sounded clunky. Perhaps I was trying to slide past an uncomfortable fact or a hole in my research, or perhaps I hadn't really worked through the logic of the paragraph or page.

To help you build a strong revision practice during this course, you will have more than just me to help you. Each student will be assigned a "critical friend," with whom you will be sharing your assignments throughout the term. A critical friend is a peer who will offer you two much-needed writing aids: support and feedback. Why support? Because writing is hard. It's hard for everyone. Writing is hard because thinking is hard, because creativity takes work, and because telling what you know takes grit and persistence. And why feedback? Because you have to get outside your own head, your own perspective, to see whether what you write communicates what you intend. Sometimes your critical friend will have very specific suggestions for you, and that will be nice. (You aren't required to take them word for word, but you are required to consider them.) Sometimes your critical friend will be like my client—he or she won't know what's wrong, but will know something isn't quite right, and that will give you an important clue to where you need to work harder. Your critical friend doesn't have to be a better writer than you are—all she or he needs to do is to give your writing serious attention and take pains to give you useful and helpful feedback. Full instructions for your critical friend work are included on Blackboard.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### ATTENDANCE

**REQUIRED: DON'T MISS CLASS, DON'T BE LATE, DON'T LEAVE EARLY.**

Much of the learning in this course takes place in the classroom and cannot be gleaned merely from reading texts or completing assignments. ***Therefore, more than THREE absences over the course of the term will lower your final grade by one letter grade; significantly more than three absences will result in more severe penalties and may cause you to fail the course. Each late arrival or early departure will count as ½ absence.*** Late arrival means arriving after I have called your name during the taking of roll (or after the attendance sheet has finished circulating once). Early departure means leaving before the scheduled end time of the class.

*In case of absence, you are responsible for finding out what happened in class by consulting a classmate.* If we have in-class assignments or presentations when you are late or absent, this work cannot be made up.

Please understand: there are no “excused” absences. I permit three absences that will not count against you, so be sure that you preserve them for use during illness, unavoidable personal issues, or other situations that require you not to be present. If a serious issue arises that may affect your presence or participation for a longer period of time (serious personal illness, family illness, etc.), consult with me immediately and we will determine what you should do.

**SPECIAL NOTE: WEATHER-RELATED DISRUPTIONS**

Winter brings with it the possibility of university closures and other weather-related changes. In the event of inclement weather, we will follow the university’s guidelines for whether our class will meet. **Regardless of what the university decides on a day of wintry weather, please use your best judgment about the particular weather conditions where you live.**

To help keep us on schedule and to minimize the effect on our learning process, I may provide alternate assignments, post lectures, create discussion boards, or offer some alternative learning experience to keep us moving. When a class cancellation occurs, please check Blackboard for my instructions. I will post an announcement to our Blackboard site and email the information to you.

**PREPARED PARTICIPATION**

Consistent class participation is expected of all students. I expect you to read and/or view carefully all assignments and come to class prepared to discuss the day’s materials. On any day I may give quizzes on the day’s assignments or build in-class assignments on the assigned work. I will also expect courteous behavior in discussions; that is, respectful exchanges (even in heated disagreements) and enough self-awareness to keep yourself from monopolizing the discussion.

Your participation will be considered “adequate” (C-level) if you are paying attention, adding a comment now and then, and following my instructions for in-class activities. “Good” (B-level) participation includes all of the C-level expectations plus active interaction with teacher and students on a regular basis about the works we read or the projects we’ve done. “Excellent” (A-level) participation includes all of the B-level expectations plus out-of-class enrichment activities, such as bringing to class the URL for a website that is relevant to the class discussion. D-level participation grades result from frequent disruptive behavior, texting or using social media during class, discourtesy, inattention or sleeping in class, or lack of involvement in group work. F-level participation grades result from excessive absence and/or egregious D-level behaviors.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

Students will demonstrate their mastery of the course learning objectives by completing the assignments listed below. Detailed instructions for each project will be posted on Blackboard and explained thoroughly in class. All work will be turned in electronically via Blackboard, except your blog posts and the edits of your critical friend (which will be turned in as physical copy with your final draft).

**Comment [6]:** Syllabus describes all major writing assignments and describes specific strategies and conventions necessary for student success for these assignments.

## 1. BLOG (SEMESTER-LONG ACTIVITY)

Students are required to make at least one weekly contribution to the class blog, which can be found at [writingfordesigners.com](http://writingfordesigners.com). Posts must average 150 words each to be counted, though students are also free to use the blog to share design-related links or images. Blog entries must be design-related, coherent, and follow standard English usage, grammar and spelling.

**Comment [7]:** Students are required to write at least 2 assignments.

Additionally, students are responsible for reading all entries and must weekly make substantive comment on at least two blog entries they did not write. Where appropriate and useful, students must illustrate their entries with images and/or links. Assuming all blog entries meet the minimum standards outlined in this syllabus (and students read and comment on the entries of others regularly), they will be graded based on quantity.

You will receive half your grade for the blog assignment at mid-term, and half at the end of the term. Achieving 5 acceptable entries+10 substantive comments by mid-term will result in a grade of “A” for the first half of the blog assignment; similarly, completing 5 more acceptable entries +10 more substantive comments by the last day of class will result in a grade of “A” for the second half of the blog assignment. The grade will be prorated downward based on the number of missing entries at each due date.

Blog entries should follow conventions of Internet writing—they should be brief, timely, and entertaining. Ideally, the blog serves as a place for Mason design students to discuss their concerns, hopes and observations about the world of design today. In that spirit, I don’t want to dictate specifics or every topic, but will suggest a few required themes you should touch on. I reserve the right to impose more specific subject requirements if it seems necessary.

In general, topics can include:

- Thoughts on being a design student today
- Critiques or comments on contemporary print or web site design
- Reactions to design writing or criticism found on another site (or in our reading)
- Extensions or re-evaluations of work done for class projects (in this, or another design class).

A blog, even one with many writers, should not revisit the same ideas in different posts published too closely to one another. If someone writes something you disagree with or wish to expand upon, the comment feature rather than a new entry is appropriate.

Finally, all posts and comments should be polite, respectful, and free of personal attack, insult or profanity. Students may respond to comments in entries and the ensuing dialogs—and go back and edit or expand earlier entries if expansions are clearly marked as “updates” and edits would not change a reader’s perception of the following comments.

This blog is public, and people outside of Mason will be able to comment, so students should take the same care with personal information as they would on any site.

## 2. PROJECT #1 —DESIGN CRITIQUE

(See assignment sheet posted on Blackboard for complete instructions and schedule)

Short-form design critiques are a staple of design media, from websites and blogs to print magazines and books. For this assignment, you will choose an example of design, ideally something uncomplicated and manageable like an ad, a poster, menu, object, or book cover, and write a 500-word critique of the design. Your choice must be approved by me but is pretty much unrestricted, with three caveats: 1) you cannot choose a book cover if you haven't read the book (having seen the movie does not count); 2) you cannot choose a website (although if you choose an ad, you can have viewed it on the web); and 3) if you choose an object, poster, menu, or other physical item, it must be something you have experienced in its physical form (not just seen on the web).

Use your own language and your own judgment to argue that your chosen design example is good or bad, successful or unsuccessful. Remember, however, that a persuasive argument can't be entirely subjective; it relies on evidence that will appeal to and convince others. In building the argument in your critique, consider such issues as appropriateness for its purpose, usability, aesthetic appeal, ability to stand out in the marketplace, emotional impact, or whatever characteristics are most appropriate to the example you have chosen. Your audience is the design-savvy public, so assume a high level of interest in design but try to avoid using esoteric design jargon.

You will write three drafts of your design critique: a first draft that will receive preliminary feedback from your critical friend and brief feedback from me; a second draft that will receive more extensive feedback from me; and a final version that will receive summative comments and a grade. You must also turn in your critical friend's comments on your first draft for your final draft to be considered complete.

Once you have received your grade and my comments on your final design critique, you will have one more opportunity to make additional revisions if you want to try to earn a higher grade. The optional revision will only be graded if you turned in your final draft on time. The deadline for submitting a revised design critique is March 23.

## 3. PROJECT #2 —DESIGN BUSINESS PROPOSAL

(See assignment sheet posted on Blackboard for complete instructions and schedule)

The written business proposal, along with letters, contracts, e-mails, presentations and critiques are facts of life for visual communicators. You've met with a client. They've shown you a small printed piece to be redesigned—a small brochure, a poster, their stationery system, or similar. (You should find a real piece upon which to base your discussion.) Why have they come to you? Maybe it's an annual piece that has to be updated for the new year; maybe they've moved, the old address and phone number are out of date and they've decided to make some other changes while they're at it; maybe their sales staff has complained that the old piece isn't very effective. You are one of several designers they are interviewing, but only one will win the business. You can boost the odds that it will be you with an effective design business proposal (also known in the business as a *design brief*).

**Comment [8]:** Syllabus describes that the instructor will provide feedback on writing, and indicates required draft deadline and revision deadline.

A typical proposal will have the following components:

- A short introductory letter
- A formal proposal of approximately 1500 words. The proposal includes, at a minimum:
  - A statement of the client's current situation
  - A detailed statement of your planned work
  - Pricing
  - Proposed schedule
  - Terms and conditions
  - If outside services are used, such as printing, specialty printing (such as for T-shirts or giveaways), web hosting, or other services that you are expediting but not providing, you should append a copy of the jobber's original price quote (or pricing schedule). If you are using printing services, your quote should be from a local offset printer, not Kinko's, campus services, or other "quick printer."
- Your résumé and your brief (200-word maximum) bio

You will write three drafts of your design proposal: a first draft that will receive preliminary feedback from your critical friend and brief feedback from me; a second draft that will receive more extensive feedback from me; and a final version that will receive summative comments and a grade. Your final version of the proposal should showcase your design skills: it should look professional and should be 100% error free. You will turn it in via Blackboard, as a single PDF file. You must also turn in your critical friend's comments on your first draft for your final draft to be considered complete.

Once you have received your grade and my comments on your final design proposal, you will have the opportunity to make an additional revision if you want to try to earn a higher grade. The optional revision will only be graded if you turned in your final draft on time. The deadline for submitting revised design proposal is April 27.

#### **4. PROJECT #3 — WRITING ABOUT DESIGN AS A FORCE IN THE WORLD (LONG-FORM WRITING)**

*(See assignment sheet posted on Blackboard for complete instructions and schedule)*

Among the most important subjects for your consideration as an emerging designer are questions about design as a force in today's world: in other words, questions about what design is, what it should be, and what its competing obligations are to the client and to society. In this project, you are going to take on one such question and consider it at some length. For your final assignment, you will choose a topic that will allow you to consider an important issue in the field of design about which you are curious.

I must approve your topic, based on a one-paragraph description that you will turn in on 3/23. Then you will write an essay of no less than 1500 and no more than 2000 words (approximately 6-8 pages) on your approved topic. You will write three drafts: a first draft that will receive preliminary feedback from your critical friend and brief feedback from me; a second draft that will receive more extensive feedback from me; and a final version that will receive a grade. You must also turn in your critical friend's comments on your first draft for your final draft to be considered complete.

Your essay should reflect your own opinion on the subject but should also show your critical thinking skills at work: the essay should deploy careful research (including documentation of sources) as well as vivid and relevant examples to support your generalizations. You may structure your essay as a thesis-driven argument, or you may choose another structure that better suits your topic. Just be sure to have a specific audience in mind (perhaps your fellow designers, as in the blog); be clear and concrete, even when writing about difficult and complex subjects; write in a natural voice, not in an artificially academic tone; and support your generalizations with examples, stories, personal experiences, or data.

## WORKING WITH YOUR CRITICAL FRIEND

Each student will be assigned an editing partner, called a “critical friend.” Your critical friend will serve as your first-draft reader and content editor throughout the semester — in other words, he or she will read your first draft of each of the three major projects and will respond with feedback about whether you are expressing yourself clearly, whether you are defending your ideas adequately, and whether you are being appropriately concise. Your critical friend is not required to be your copy editor, although he or she may sometimes be able to point out individual errors or patterns of problems (e.g., “I think you need to check your spelling of the author’s name in your quotations,” or “I’m noticing a lot of long and hard-to-follow sentences—you might think about breaking them up.”) But don’t rely on your critical friend to copy edit for you. Read your work out loud to try to catch your own editing errors, or go to the Writing Center if you know you need special help with grammar, usage or mechanics.

Present your comments to your critical friend as markups and notes on a physical copy of the draft (to be exchanged in class as noted on the schedule).

***Deadline policy for working with your critical friend:*** Work will be due to your critical friend on its due date in the schedule appended to this syllabus. The critical friend’s response is due back to the author by the next class meeting day (also noted in the syllabus). Missing class does not excuse a failure to get work to (or back to) your partner by the deadline. You will work with your partner outside of class, so be sure to exchange e-mail and/or phone numbers.

*Note: Up to 10% of your grade on each of Projects 1, 2 and 3 will be determined by your response as a critical friend to your student partner’s work. By “quality,” I mean the evidence of time, thoughtfulness, and considerate neatness in the way your response is presented. Timeliness of your return of the draft will also be a factor. It is important to stick to the schedule, because the next phase of work depends on timely comments.*

## TURNING IN YOUR WORK

On each of the three projects, due dates for every draft and stage in the process are specified in the individual project’s assignment sheet and in the schedule appended to the end of this syllabus.

- Your first draft should be printed, brought to class, and exchanged with your critical friend. It should also be posted for my review on Blackboard.

- The response from your critical friend will be returned to you in printed copy at the next class. **KEEP THIS COPY**—you must turn it in with your final draft. Be sure that your name and your critical friend’s name appears on the commented version.
- Your second draft should be brought to class in printed copy AND posted to Blackboard.
- Your final draft should be brought to class in printed copy AND posted to Blackboard. Attach to the printed copy that you turn in to me the printed copy of your critical friend’s edits on your first draft.
- On Projects 1 and 2, you will have the option to rewrite the final draft (after I have returned it to you with a grade and my comments) to try to improve your grade. Rewrites are not just corrections of errors; they are a substantive rethinking of the project in light of the feedback I give you on your final draft. The deadline for submitting a revised design critique is March 23; for submitting the revised design proposal, April 27. **No exceptions.**

**Assignment Lateness Penalties**

Any final version of an assignment that is turned in after the *announced due date and time* will be **marked down one letter grade as a lateness penalty, with an additional one letter grade deducted for each subsequent class period until the assignment is turned in.** Work that is more than two weeks late will not be graded, but it is to your advantage to turn it in anyway: a paper or project that is accepted but ungraded counts into your term grade as an F, while a paper or project not received at all counts into your term grade as a zero. Late submission of your first or second drafts or of your edits to your critical friend will result in a 5-point penalty against your final grade for each instance of lateness.

*Please note that, regardless of grades earned in individual activities, the design critique, the design proposal, and the final paper must be turned in by the final class meeting in order for a student to pass this course.*

**Weighting of Assignments**

Grades for the course will be determined as follows:

- Blog: first five entries                    5%
- Blog: second five entries                5%
- Attendance & Participation            10%
- Project #1: Critique                        15%
- Project #2: Proposal                        30%
- Project #3: Final Paper                    35%

In calculating your final grade, I will apply the following values:

A+: 98 and above	B+: 88-89	C+: 78-79	D: 60-69
A: 95-97	B: 85-87	C: 75-77	F: 59 and below
A-: 90-94	B-: 80-84	C-: 70-74	

*Note: Scores are rounded one decimal place to the nearest whole number. Thus 93.5=94; 88.467=88.*

**Comment [9]:** Syllabus describes grading criteria for all major writing assignments.

Note that excessive absence or failure to turn in any of the three major assignments may result in failure of the course regardless of these weightings. For further explanation, please see the sections above on “Attendance” and “Assignment Lateness Penalties.”

## ADDITIONAL EXPECTATIONS

**Communication:** You will be expected to check your George Mason University e-mail and the Blackboard site for this course frequently during the term. Updates to the syllabus and other vital course information will be sent to you at your George Mason University e-mail address and via the Blackboard site. You will be responsible for having read whatever I send you via these means. Please note that because of university policies, I can only communicate with you via your Mason e-mail address.

**Absolute Ban on Electronic Communication During Class Time:** You will NOT be permitted to use the Internet, text messaging, instant messaging, Facebook, e-mail or even mental telepathy during class time, unless I have given the class general permission to use online resources during an editing session. Our Zen motto will be, “Be here now.” I should not see cell phones, smart phones, tablets or computers at all once class has begun, unless I have approved the technology s use or have asked you to use it as part of an in-class activity. Please do not make me embarrass you into compliance. One violation will result in shame; more than one violation will affect your grade—after the first warning, I will treat a violation as if you were not present in class that day. If you have a genuine academic reason to use a computer during class for note-taking or accessibility, please discuss this with me at the beginning of the semester.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS AND PROJECTS

Project grades will be determined using the following criteria:

- Concept: Originality, creativity and effectiveness of the argument. (40%)
- Technical quality of writing, evidence of research, and careful and thoughtful writing and editing. (40%)
- Spelling, grammar, general care in manuscript preparation and presentation. (20%)

As noted earlier, students may redo the critique and/or the design proposal for a higher grade if the piece was originally turned in on time. Revisions must be a substantial reconsideration of the original—not merely a correction of errors. The deadline for submitting a revised design critique is March 23; for submitting the revised design proposal, April 27.

Every formal written piece will be rewritten multiple times before it is given a final grade, and you will be editing the work of your partner. Therefore, there will be multiple deadlines associated with each project. It is critical that you exchange work with your partner and bring it in to class by deadline because others are depending on you.

**In final writing assignments, I will look for the following:**

- A clear understanding of the assignment, evidence of engagement with the topic, and an attempt to find personal solutions
- Individual initiative and an effort to carry assignments as far as possible

**Comment [10]:** Syllabus describes grading criteria for all major writing assignments.

- Authenticity of the writing, the thought and care demonstrated, the completeness and quality of presentation, and intellectual development via the materials studied in class and connections to materials studied in other classes or learned via personal practice

***In the revision process for your projects, I will look for the following:***

- The degree to which the project demonstrates growth of understanding through the process of developing the project
- Individual initiative and an effort to carry the project as far as possible
- Clear presentation of your process in class and your openness in responding to *constructive* criticism from me and from your fellow class members
- A concern for craft and for mastering technical challenges of the assignment.

## GRADING CRITERIA

Grades reflect how well you accomplish the objectives of the course. Possible grades for this class are A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D, F. The following are my overall standards for what makes a paper or other assignment an “A” (B, C, D, F). For some assignments, I may issue a rubric that further specifies these criteria.

### **Score of A: Superior**

Meets most or all of the following criteria:

- Finds an interesting approach to the assigned topic and looks at it from multiple angles
- Goes beyond what was covered in class and shows serious thought
- Uses examples and details to make points clearly and vividly
- Is written with concern for style and for a personal voice
- Follows the important rules of writing and has no distracting errors in mechanics

### **Score of B: Strong**

Meets most or all of the following criteria:

- Clearly addresses the topic as assigned and explores it thoroughly
- Shows a mastery of what was covered in class and may pull in some facts from beyond class
- Is effectively organized; easy to follow and understand; is well developed, with supporting detail.
- Has no more than a few mechanical errors, and nothing too serious

### **Score of C: Competent**

Meets most or all of the following criteria:

- Adequately addresses the topic and covers the major points required
- Sticks with ideas covered in class and does so accurately
- Can be followed, but with a fair amount of work from the reader
- Shows competent writing, but may have many small flaws and/or a few major flaws in syntax and grammar.

### **Score of D: Weak**

Shows any of the following problems:

- Doesn't cover all of the topic as assigned
- Doesn't show an adequate understanding of what was covered in class

**Comment [11]:** Syllabus describes grading criteria for all major writing assignments.

- Serious problems in organization/logic; offers generalizations without supporting detail or details without organizing generalizations
- Patterns of flaws in language, syntax or mechanics.

**Score of F: Inadequate**

Shows any of the following problems:

- Doesn't address the topic as assigned
- Doesn't show an understanding of what was covered in class
- Illogical. Wanders off-topic. Difficult to follow.
- Is severely flawed mechanically
- Is submitted more than two weeks after the assigned due date.

**AVT 395:003**  
**Topic and Assignment Schedule**  
 Spring 2015

This schedule is subject to change. Updates will be announced in class and/or by e-mail and will be made available on Blackboard.

Date	Topic/Activity	Readings and assignments due on this date
<b>Week 1</b>  1/21	1/21: Introductions, review of syllabus and course learning objectives	1/21: none
<b>Week 2</b>  1/26-1/28	1/26: Blog introduced, blog software demonstrated  Critical friend suggestions collected in class  Project #1 introduced  1/28: Journalistic structure  Discussion and analysis: <i>79 Essays article</i>  Blog passwords entered—blog available for student entries  Critical friends list posted, with time in class for exchanging contact information.	1/26: thoroughly read the syllabus, the description of the blog project, and the description of project #1 (all on Blackboard, and sent via e-mail)           1/28: Read handout on journalistic structure (lede/nut/graph form), posted on Blackboard.  Read <i>79 Essays</i> , “Warning: May Contain Non Design Content,” p 11—13  <b><i>Choice of subject for Project #1 due; post paragraph to Blackboard by 8 a.m. You will briefly present your chosen object or item in class on this date as well; please bring with you the piece you will be critiquing, if possible, or a photograph of it (if it is not portable), or a link to it (if it is virtual).</i></b>
<b>Week 3</b>  2/2-2/4	2/2: Visual strategies for generating ideas	2/2: Read <i>Writing for Visual Thinkers</i> : v to ix, pp. 1–7  <b><i>First draft of Project #1 due on Blackboard by 8 a.m., with printed copy brought to class for your critical friend.</i></b>

**AVT 395:003**  
**Topic and Assignment Schedule**  
 Spring 2015

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Date	Topic/Activity	Readings and assignments due on this date
	2/4: Discussion and analysis of 79 Essays reading  Discuss challenges of editing  Discuss blog posts	2/4: Read <i>79 Essays</i> , “The Book Cover that changed my Life,” pp. 96-97.  <b><i>Edited first draft of Project #1 returned to you in class by your critical friend; instructor’s brief comments available on Blackboard</i></b>  <b><i>First blog post due by 8 a.m. on writinngfordesigners.com</i></b>
<b>Week 4</b>  2/9-2/11	2/9: More visual strategies for generating and organizing ideas  Orwell essay: the challenge of authenticity and truthfulness  2/11: Introduction to Project #2 - Design Proposal (and design proposal examples)  Writing as research and writing as confidence builder	2/9: Read WVT 8-17  Read Orwell, “The Politics of the English Language” (posted on Blackboard)  <b><i>Second draft of Project #1 due by 8 a.m. on Blackboard</i></b>  2/11: Read WVT: 22-37  Carefully read the description of project 2 and the posted proposal examples (on Blackboard)  <b><i>Wanted:</i></b> volunteers to have their résumés edited in class; e-mail me a PDF by Sunday 2/15 at 6 p.m.
<b>Week 5</b>  2/16-2/18	2/16: resume clinic  Discussion and analysis, <i>79 Essays</i> article  Instructor comments on Project 1, draft #2 by this date	2/16: Read WVT: 104-105  Read <i>79 Essays</i> , “Mr Vignelli’s Map,” p 136—138  <b><i>One-paragraph description of your topic for Project #2, Design Proposal, to be posted on Blackboard by 8 a.m. and presented in class</i></b>

**Comment [12]:** Syllabus indicates multiple class sessions that address different writing strategies.

**AVT 395:003**  
**Topic and Assignment Schedule**  
 Spring 2015

This schedule is subject to change. Updates will be announced in class and/or by e-mail and will be made available on Blackboard.

Date	Topic/Activity	Readings and assignments due on this date
	2/18: Resume clinic (continued) and the art of writing the short bio	2/18: read materials in the 2/18 folder on Blackboard
Week 6 2/23-2/25	2/23: Writing great cover letters  Blog analysis clinic	2/23: WVT: 102 and handout posted on Blackboard  <b>Final Version of Project #1 due by 8 a.m. on Blackboard; in class, hand in critical friend's comments on first draft</b>
	2/25: The components of a great proposal, in depth	2/25: WVT: 109-110 and examples posted on Blackboard
Week 7 3/2-3/4	3/2: Practical writing challenges: how to avoid small errors that undermine your credibility	3/2: Handout posted on Blackboard  <b>First Draft of Project #2, Design Proposal, due on Blackboard by 8 a.m.; printed copy brought to class for your critical friend</b>
	3/4: Discussion and analysis, 79 Essays article  Discussion of editing challenges  Proposal clinic	3/4: 79 Essays, "Why Designers Can't Think," p 14-17  <b>First half of blogs + comments due by midnight today</b>  <b>Edited first draft of Project #2 returned in class to your critical friend; instructor's brief comments available on Blackboard</b>
Week 8 3/9-3/11	<b>SPRING BREAK—NO CLASSES</b>	

**Comment [13]:** Syllabus indicates required draft deadline and revision deadline, and indicates sufficient time for thoughtful faculty feedback and for student revision.

**AVT 395:003**  
**Topic and Assignment Schedule**  
 Spring 2015

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Date	Topic/Activity	Readings and assignments due on this date
<b>Week 9</b> 3/16-3/18	3/16: Introduction of Project 3, Design as a Force in the World (Long-Form Writing)	3/16: Carefully read the description of Project 3, Design as a Force in the World (Long-Form Writing)
	3/18: Getting to the first draft of a long-form work	3/18: Read handouts on Blackboard: Anne Lamott and others  <b><i>Second draft of Project #2, Design Proposal, due by 8 a.m. on Blackboard.</i></b>
<b>Week 10</b> 3/23-3/25	3/23: Proposal clinic	3/23: Read handouts on Blackboard  <b><i>One-paragraph proposal for Project 3, Design as a Force in the World (Long-Form Writing) due by 8 a.m. on Blackboard and presented in class.</i></b>  <b><i>OPTIONAL rewrite of Project #1 must be submitted by 8 a.m. today via Blackboard to be considered for a new grade.</i></b>
	3/25: Beginnings and endings clinic  Discussion and analysis, <i>79 Essays</i> article  Instructor returns Project 2, draft #2 by this date	3/25: Read <i>79 Essays</i> , p 167—169 “Authenticity: A User’s Guide”
<b>Week 11</b> 3/30-4/1	3/30: Punctuation clinic	3/30: handout on Blackboard

**AVT 395:003**  
**Topic and Assignment Schedule**  
 Spring 2015

This schedule is subject to change. Updates will be announced in class and/or by e-mail and will be made available on Blackboard.

Date	Topic/Activity	Readings and assignments due on this date
	4/1: How to Persuade in a Long-Form Essay  Discussion and analysis, <i>79 Essays</i> article	4/1: Read <i>79 Essays</i> , pp. 170—172 “Designing Under the Influence”  Link/handout on Blackboard  <b><i>Final Version of Project #2, Design Proposal, due by 8 a.m. on Blackboard; in class, hand in critical friend’s comments on first draft</i></b>
<b>Week 12</b>  4/6-4/8	4/6: Blog clinic  4/8: Workshop/clinic on long-form writing	4/6: (re) read blog entries on writingfordesigners.com for the last week  4/8: link/handout on Blackboard  <b><i>First Draft of Project 3, Design as a Force in the World (Long-Form Writing), due in class in printed form to your critical friend.</i></b>
<b>Week 13</b>  4/13-4/15	4/13: Workshop/clinic on long-form writing (continued)  4/15: Citations clinic	4/13: link/handout on Blackboard  <b><i>Edits on first draft of Project 3, Design as a Force in the World (Long-Form Writing), due back to your critical friend; instructor’s brief comments available on Blackboard</i></b>  4/15: link/handout on Blackboard
<b>Week 14</b>  4/20-4/22	4/20: Blog clinic  Discussion and analysis, <i>79 Essays</i> article	4/20: <i>79 Essays</i> , pp. 197—199 “I am a Plagiarist “  <b><i>Second Draft of Project 3, Design as a Force in the World (Long-Form Writing), posted to Blackboard by 8 a.m.</i></b>

**AVT 395:003**  
**Topic and Assignment Schedule**  
 Spring 2015

This schedule is subject to change. Updates will be announced in class and/or by e-mail and will be made available on Blackboard.

Date	Topic/Activity	Readings and assignments due on this date
	4/22: Beginnings and endings clinic (revisited)	4/22: Link/handout on Blackboard  <i>OPTIONAL rewrite of Project #2 must be submitted by 8 a.m. today via Blackboard to be considered for a new grade.</i>
<b>Week 15</b> 4/27-4/29	4/27: Long-form workshop/clinic (revisited)  Instructor comments on Draft 2, Project 3, returned by today	4/27: Link/handout on Blackboard  <i>Second half of blogs + comments due by midnight today</i>
	4/29: Long-form workshop/clinic (revisited)	4/29: Link/handout on Blackboard
<b>Week 16</b> 5/4	5/4: Wrap up.	5/4: none  <i>Final Version of Project 3, Design as a Force in the World (Long-Form Writing) due by 8 a.m. on Blackboard; in class, hand in critical friend's comments on first draft.</i>  <i>Please note: no work will be accepted for a grade after 8 a.m. today. NO EXCEPTIONS.</i>

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## School of Art Enrichment Opportunities

### ArtsBus

The dates for Spring 2015 ArtsBus trips are February 21, March 21, and April 18.

The ArtsBus is an all-day trip to New York City's art districts via chartered buses. School of Art faculty members accompany the trip and offer 2-hour guided tours of various museums and galleries when you arrive. If you choose to join one of the tours, you will have several hours of free time on your own afterwards (typically starting at about 1 p.m.) to have lunch, to visit additional art venues or to explore the city.

- AVT 300 is a 0-credit course open to students in any major; the course has no tuition charge but does have a course fee. The course fee covers the cost of your seat on the bus, plus the administrative costs of running the ArtsBus program. The fee is less than the cost of a ticket purchased at the general box office rate.
- Each SOA major must have up to five AVT 300/ArtsBus credits before graduation. For credit to appear on your transcript you must enroll in AVT 300. This also applies to anyone who intends to travel to New York independently, or do the DC Alternate Assignment. Alternate trips must be approved by the instructor of the course that is requiring an ArtsBus trip.
- If you plan/need to go on multiple ArtsBus trips during a semester and need them towards your total requirement, you must enroll in multiple sections of AVT 300. Please go to the ArtsBus website: <http://artsbus.gmu.edu> "Student Information" for additional, very important information regarding ArtsBus policy.
- Non-AVT majors taking art classes do not need ArtsBus credit for graduation **BUT** may need to go on the ArtsBus for a class assignment. You can either sign up for AVT 300 or buy a ticket for the bus trip at the Center for the Arts.

Please go to the ArtsBus website: <http://artsbus.gmu.edu> "Student Information" for additional, very important information regarding ArtsBus policy.

### Visual Voices Lecture Series

Visual Voices is a yearlong series of lectures by artists, art historians and others about contemporary art and art practice. Visual Voices lectures are held on Thursday evenings from 7:30- 9:00 p.m. in Harris Theater. The Spring 2015 schedule includes four lectures:

January 22, 2015	SOA Graduate Students, "Loading Content"
January 29, 2015	Ray Nichols and Jill Cypher, "A colored letter at the bottom of a ditch"
February 12, 2015	Klaus Ottmann, "Art and Contemplation"
February 26, 2015	Jame Anderson, "I make things"
March 5, 2015	Steve Badanes and Linda Beaumont, "Jersey Devils"

### Publishing Work Completed for This Class in *TheGeorgeMasonReview*

*The George Mason Review*, Mason's journal of undergraduate student scholarship, publishes excellent undergraduate scholarship and creative research from across the disciplines. Every year *The George Mason Review* recognizes outstanding student work with a total of \$900 in awards. For more information, talk to me or visit the GMR website at <http://gmreview.gmu.edu/>

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## Academic Policies

*As a courtesy to others in the class, and in accordance with George Mason University policy, please turn off all cellular telephones and other wireless communication devices at the start of class. The instructor of the class will keep her cell phone active to assure receipt of any Mason Alerts in a timely fashion.*

## Commitment to Diversity

This class will be conducted as an *intentionally* inclusive community that celebrates diversity and welcomes the participation in the life of the university of faculty, staff and students who reflect the diversity of our plural society. All may feel free to speak and to be heard without fear that the content of the opinions they express will bias the evaluation of their academic performance or hinder their opportunities for participation in class activities. In turn, all are expected to be respectful of each other without regard to race, class, linguistic background, religion, political beliefs, gender identity and expression, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, veteran's status, or physical ability.

## Resource for University Policies

The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university affairs. Other policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

## Important Deadlines

Last Day to Add/Last Day to Drop with no tuition penalty	January 27
Last Day to Drop	February 20
Selective Withdrawal Period	February 23-March 27
Incomplete work from Fall 2013 due to instructor	March 27

Once the add-and-drop deadlines have passed, instructors do not have the authority to approve requests from students to add or drop/withdraw late. Requests for late adds (up until the last day of classes) must be made by the student in the School of Art office (or in the office of the department offering the course), and generally are only approved in the case of a documented university error (such as a problem with financial aid being processed). Requests for non-selective withdrawals and retroactive adds (adds after the last day of classes) must be approved by the academic dean of the college in which the student's major is located. For AVT/School of Art majors, that is the CVPA Office of Academic Affairs, College Hall C211.

### **Official Communications via Mason E-Mail**

To comply with university, Virginia and federal student privacy requirements, I am only permitted to exchange e-mail communications with you via your MasonLive e-mail account. You are responsible for the content of all university communication sent to your MasonLive e-mail account, so be sure to activate and check it regularly.

### **Statement on Ethics in Teaching and Practicing Art and Design**

As professionals responsible for the education of undergraduate and graduate art and design students, the faculty of the School of Art adheres to the ethical standards and practices incorporated in the professional Code of Ethics of our national accreditation organization, The National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD).

### **Academic Integrity**

Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously, and violations are handled as grave matters.

What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind), please ask for guidance and clarification.

No grade is important enough to justify Honor Code violations, for which there are serious consequences that will follow you for the rest of your life. If you feel unusual pressure about your grade in this or any other course, please talk to me or to a member of the Mason Counseling and Psychological Services staff.

### **Students with Disabilities and Learning Differences**

If you have a diagnosed disability or learning difference and you need academic accommodations, please inform me at the beginning of the semester and contact the Office of Disability Services (703-993-2474). You must provide me with a faculty contact sheet from that office outlining the accommodations needed for your disability or learning difference. All academic accommodations must be arranged in advance through ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

### **The Collaborative Learning Hub (CLUB)**

Located in Johnson Center 311 (703-993-3141), the lab offers in-person one-on-one support for Adobe Creative Suite, Microsoft Office, Blackboard, and a variety of other software. Dual-monitor PCs make the lab ideal for collaborating on group projects. Macs are also available, as well as a digital recording space, collaborative tables, and a SMART Board. Free workshops are

also available (Adobe and Microsoft) through Training and Certification; visit [ittraining.gmu.edu](http://ittraining.gmu.edu) to see the schedule of workshops and to sign up.

### **Other Useful Campus Resources**

- ™ *For help with writing:* The Writing Center, A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200 or <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>
  - ™ *For help with research:* University Libraries “Ask a Librarian” service; send a text message to 703-291-1468 or go to <http://library.gmu.edu/ask>
  - ™ *For help with academic problems or with personal problems affecting academic performance:* Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS); (703) 993-2380 or <http://caps.gmu.edu>
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