

AVT395.003

Writing for Artists

Syllabus

Course Description:

This course is designed to build competency in those kinds of writing most essential to the working life of an artist. It is not an English course, but rather a set of readings and written exercises intended to strengthen the student's ability to build arguments about art and to incorporate those arguments into the specific kinds of documents most integral to an arts profession. This will be accomplished through a combination of the following:

- 1) Students and instructor will analyze readings drawn from a variety of sources.
- 2) Students will generate and discuss original written responses to a variety of "targets" presented in class (see below).
- 3) Instructor will present selected lesson plans intended to fortify the mechanics of student writing. These concentrated sessions will explore grammar, syntax, vocabulary, punctuation, and proper use of idioms.
- 4) Students will maintain a process journal, complete two major projects, numerous in-class writing assignments and three formal essays.

Course Objectives:

Students who complete this course should be better able to:

- 1) Write coherent, focused, and evocative artists statements, profiles and synopses.
- 2) Read with comprehension what is written about their own work and the work of others.
- 3) Discuss and apply the relationship between text and new media.

Materials of a Potentially Objectionable Nature and Classroom Civility:

This is an advanced undergraduate course and we may be viewing or reading materials that some students find distressing or objectionable. These materials are presented as part of the educational process and not for any sensationalist value they may have. If these concerns apply to you, please see the instructor at the beginning of the term and we will explore our alternatives. Similarly, classroom discussions may enter controversial areas about which students and/or the instructor feel strongly. In these instances and all others, it is expected that students and the instructor should express their disagreement with the highest level of mutual respect and academic decorum.

Course Requirements and Grading:

You are expected to check the website (<http://beauty.gmu.edu/AVT395/>) weekly. You are expected to come to and participate in class. Personal comfort or language issues are no excuse for failure to participate. The instructor will make every reasonable effort to facilitate the participation of all students. There will be three short essays and two larger projects assigned. Additionally, there will be a number of in-class exercises that will be collected for grade or credit. Specific guidelines for these assignments will be given in class and posted on-line.

Writing-Intensive Course:

This course fulfills the writing intensive requirement of the AVT major. It does so through the mid-term and final projects described above which should together total in excess of 3500 words. The instructor will provide written and/or verbal feedback on any draft(s) turned in reasonably prior to the due date of the assignment (i.e., *not* the night before). Your final work product should reflect this commentary.

Finalizing and Submitting Assignments:

All assignments (except those completed during class) must be word processor-generated. Please refer to the website for guidelines on acceptable formats for your work. **Work will not be accepted by e-mail unless special arrangements are made in advance.** When e-mail submission is approved, digital work must be in MS Word format (i.e., .doc, or .docx not .wpd).

Final Grade:

Process Journal 10%

Essays and In-class Assignments: 50%

Midterm Project: 20%

Final Project: 20%

Schedule:

The instructor reserves the right to modify schedule at his discretion. All readings will be announced with ample time for processing and will be available in the Johnson Center Library reserve system and/or on-line and/or handed out in class.

| date | topic | agenda | assignment due |
|--------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 8.28 | Writing as package and frame | Course Introduction | |
| 8.30 | | Reading 01 | |
| 9.04 | | | |
| 9.06 | Definition and Metaphor | Reading 02 | Essay 01 |
| 9.11 | | | |
| 9.13 | The Language of Art | | |
| 9.18 | | | |
| 9.20 | | Reading 03 | |
| | Finding Your Voice | | |
| 9.25 | | | |
| 9.27 | | | Essay 02 |
| 10.02 | Artist Profiles and Statements | Reading 04 | |
| 10.04 | | | |
| 10.09 | | No School | |
| 10.11 | | | |
| 10.16 | | | Artist Profile |
| 10.18 | | | |
| 10.23 | | Reading 05 | |
| 10.25 | | | |
| 10.30 | | | |
| 11.01 | | | |
| 11.06 | | Reading 06 | |
| 11.08 | | | |
| 11.13 | | Reading 07 | |
| 11.15 | | New media and the text | |
| 11.20 | | | Essay 03 |
| 11.22 | | No School - Thanksgiving | |
| 11.27 | | Final project presentations | |
| 11.29 | | Final project presentations | |
| 12.04 | | Final project presentations | Artist Statement |
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Assignments:

The primary objective of this class is the generation of usable *Artist Profiles* and *Artist Statements*. In the real world "statement" and "profile" are often used to refer to very similar types of writing. For the sake of this class, an *artist profile* is a piece of writing primarily about the artist, while the *artist statement* will be understood to be primarily about one or more specific works of art.

Targeted responses are intentionally open-ended writing exercises in which the student is presented with a "target" and asked to generate a piece of writing that reflects their "response" to the target stimulus. In most cases the target will be a video clip, writing sample, or work of art presented in class and the written response will be generated immediately after or during the presentation of the target. The student is encouraged to pursue his or her responses frankly, extensively, and creatively.

A *process journal* enforces upon the student a discipline of writing, thereby closing the distance between the student and the creative material, which in this case is written language. To that end, process journals are collected/submitted weekly. What is entered in these journals can be almost anything about anything, the exception being that it must be prose, not poetry, and must reflect a clearly apparent attempt to write well and make some degree of sense. I.e., neither submission of dummy text or nonsense sentences is considered acceptable completion of this assignment. Your journal can be a mixture of self-analysis, personal micro-biography, summaries of lecture notes for this or any class, critical analysis, reaction to current events, etc. What is important is that you attempt to express clear ideas in equally clear language. Grading of process journals is macroscopic, i.e., a high tolerance for mechanical errors will be observed as long as the sense of the student's writing is not destroyed. Process journal entries are to be no less than 1250 words and are to be turned in as hard copy or email by the close of the business day each and every Monday.

University and AVT Department Policies

In accordance with George Mason University policy, turn off all beepers, cellular telephones and other wireless communication devices at the start of class. The instructor of the class will keep his/her cell phone active to assure receipt of any Mason Alerts in a timely fashion; or in the event that the instructor does not have a cell phone, he/she will designate one student to keep a cell phone active to receive such alerts.

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, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, veteran's status, or physical ability.

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).

Open Studio Hours

SOA teaching studios are open to students for extended periods of time mornings, evenings and weekends whenever classes are not in progress. Policies, procedures and schedules for studio use are established by the SOA studio faculty and are posted in the studios.

ArtsBus

The dates for Fall 2012 ArtsBus trips are September 22nd, October 20th and November 17th.

If you need ArtsBus credit for this semester as part of your class assignment or AVT degree requirement, 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. If you plan/need to go on multiple ArtsBus trips this 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 do not need Artsbus credit BUT may need to go on the Artsbus for a class assignment. You can sign up for AVT 300 or buy a ticket for the bus at the Center of the Arts.

Visual Voices Professional Lecture Series Fall 2012

Visual Voices is a year-long series of lectures by artists, art historians and others about contemporary art and art practice. Visual Voices lectures are held on Thursday evenings from 7:20- 9:00 p.m. in Harris Theater.

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| August 30 | | (Syllabus Review) |
| September 13 | Sue Spaid | "Trends in Contemporary Art" |
| September 27 | Hasan Elahi | "Hiding in Plain Sight" |
| October 11 | Elaine King | "The Artists & Art in An Era of Interconnected Globalization" |
| October 25 | Richard Franklin | "You Have Everything You Need" |

Important Deadlines

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|--|------------------------|
| Last Day to Add | Tuesday, September 4th |
| Last Day to Drop (No Tuition Penalty) | Tuesday, September 4th |
| Selective Withdrawal Period | October 1-October 26 |
| BFA application deadline for SOA students | Friday, October 5th |
| Incomplete work from Fall 2011 due to instructor | Friday, October 26th |

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 SOA office (or 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) , LATE ADD fee will apply. 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 School of Art (AVT majors), that is the CVPA Office of Academic Affairs, Performing Arts Building A407.

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 Disabilities Resource Center (SUB I room 234, 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 the DRC.

Official Communications via GMU E-Mail

Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their Mason e-mail account, and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.

Attendance Policies

Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register. In-class participation is important not only to the individual student, but also to the class as a whole. Because class participation may be a factor in grading, instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of nonparticipation. Students who miss an exam with an acceptable excuse may be penalized according to the individual instructor's grading policy, as stated in the course syllabus.

Honor Code

Students in this class are bound by the Honor Code, as stated in the George Mason University Catalog. The honor code requires that the work you do as an individual be the product of your own individual synthesis or integration of ideas. (This does not prohibit collaborative work when it is approved by your instructor.) As a faculty member, I have an obligation to refer the names of students who may have violated the Honor Code to the Student Honor Council, which treats such cases very seriously.

No grade is important enough to justify cheating, 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 GMU Counseling Center staff.

Using someone else's words or ideas without giving them credit is *plagiarism*, a very serious Honor Code offense. It is very important to understand how to prevent committing plagiarism when using material from a source. If you wish to quote verbatim, you must use the exact words and punctuation just as the passage appears in the original and must use quotation marks and page numbers in your citation. If you want to paraphrase or summarize ideas from a source, you must put the ideas into your own words, and you must cite the source, using the APA or MLA format. (For assistance with documentation, I recommend Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference*.) The exception to this rule is information termed *general knowledge*—information that is widely known and stated in a number of sources. Determining what is general knowledge can be complicated, so the wise course is, "When in doubt, cite."

Be especially careful when using the Internet for research. Not all Internet sources are equally reliable; some are just plain wrong. Also, since you can download text, it becomes very easy to inadvertently plagiarize. If you use an Internet source, you must cite the exact URL in your paper and include with it the last date that you successfully accessed the site.

Writing Center

Students who are in need of intensive help with grammar, structure or mechanics in their writing should make use of the services of the Writing Center, located in Robinson A116 (703-993-1200). The services of the Writing Center are available by appointment, online and, occasionally, on a walk-in basis.