



Comm303-A01 SYLLABUS: General Information

[sklein1](#) - 05:51pm May 7, 2007 EST
Steve Klein

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
COMMUNICATION 303-A01 / SUMMER SESSION A 2007
WRITING ACROSS MEDIA
INSTRUCTOR: Steve Klein, Coordinator of the Electronic Journalism Program
LOCATION: 333 Innovation Hall

THE ESSENTIALS:

This class meets Monday through Thursday (with the exception of Memorial Day Monday May 28) over a total of 5 weeks and 17 sessions beginning Monday May 21 and concluding Tuesday June 19 from noon to 2:15 p.m. in 333 Innovation Hall. You will take two test/exams on Wednesday June 6 (class No. 10) and Tuesday June 21 (class No. 17).

KEY DATES:

Last day to add: May 25
Last day to drop with no tuition liability: May 25
Last day to drop: June 1
For more information, go to: [Summer at Mason](#).

HOW TO CONTACT MR. KLEIN:

GMU office: 219-B Thompson Hall (although I will do **office hour in 427 Innovation Hall**)
Office phone: 703-993-2199 (worst way to contact me)
GMU e-mail: sklein1@gmu.edu (best way to contact me)
Web page: <http://mason.gmu.edu/~sklein1/> (best way to find out about me)
Office hours: 11 a.m. to class time Monday through Thursday or by appointment

COURSE PREREQUISITES:

- **ENG 302. Students who have not taken this course cannot take COMM 303 without approval of the instructor.**
- Prerequisites exist in order to give you the best opportunity to succeed.
- All coursework must be double-spaced and typed on a computer.
- Familiarity with the Internet and the ability to use Townhall.
- A healthy awareness of the media and the world around you.

OVERVIEW:

Comm303, Writing Across Media, is the prerequisite course for any of the other Media Writing courses offered by the Communication Department (Comm 351, 352, 353, 361, 370, 371, 399, 450, 454, 455 and 475) that use [Associated Press Style](#). The course focuses on basic media writing skills and practice and is an introduction to various media: print (newspapers and magazines), broadcast (television and radio), online, public relations and advertising.

The goal of this course is to help students recognize and learn [Associated Press Style](#); to be accurate and ethical; to respect and work under deadlines; and to recognize, report and assemble news into readable form. Most careers in communication require writing on deadlines in a collaborative environment. This course allows students to develop such skills.

GOALS OF THIS CLASS:

- Writing clearly, simply and accurately on deadline.
- Using basic grammar and punctuation rules to help create proper sentence structure.
- To learn, practice and understand basic editing skills, interviewing techniques, quoting and paraphrasing.
- To identify the differences and similarities of writing across a variety of media.
- **To understand the difference between Associated Press style and APA and MLA style.**

CLASS EXPECTATIONS:

- You are expected to be on time. Quizzes will begin promptly at noon, so if you're late, you miss time -- or the entire quiz.
- Do not eat or drink around the keyboards.
- Turn off your cellphones during class (except with the express prior consent of the instructor).
- Students who do e-mail or IM during class or surf unrelated (to class) websites will be asked to leave the class (sorry, but this has become a serious problem in computer labs and will not be tolerated; it's rude and distracting).
- Students will write in class and out of class, sometimes utilizing e-mail to file an exercise on deadline.
- You will read, view and discuss how news is presented on a daily basis -- not just in class -- throughout the semester.
- Don't miss class. There are only 17 of them! Class participation in a variety of formats counts 20 percent of your final grade. This class will be as good as YOU make it!
- In-class exercises and tests cannot be made up (so don't miss class!); there just isn't enough time in a 5-week session.
- Out-of-class exercises must be turned in on time (on deadline) without exception; you will be penalized for missing deadlines.
- Guest speakers may occasionally contribute to the class's understanding and study throughout the semester.

- ALL assignments must be typed and double-spaced with standard margins. Hand-written or single-spaced writing assignments will NOT be accepted.
- ALL e-mail correspondence related to this class must have a specific SUBJECT line and begin with Comm303-A01. Otherwise, my SPAM filter may eat your note.
- Keep your e-mail INBOX cleaned out so that my e-mail to you doesn't bounce.
- Rather than a cover sheet, type the following (single spaced) in **the upper left-hand corner** of the assignment:

YOUR NAME

COMM303-A01 / Date

A title (or slug) for the assignment

REQUIRED TEXT (please bring to every class):

- Goldstein, Norm. "The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual," (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.), any edition, but the latest edition is best.
- Stovall, James Glen. "Writing for the Mass Media," (Pearson), sixth edition, 2006.

RECOMMENDED TEXT:

- "The Associated Press Guide to Punctuation," Rene J. Cappon (Perseus Publishing), 2003.
- Dictionary and thesaurus (I suggest Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, which is available in paperback). I also recommend <http://www.dictionary.com>.

SUPPLIES (please bring the following to every class):

- **A jump drive to save your work.**

GRADING:

The final grade for this course will be based on the quality of your work and the points that you accumulate for that work. At the end of the semester, your work will be receive these weights:

- Class participation: 20 percent (10 percent ONE THING, 5 percent presentation, 5 percent in-class participation).
- Homework/in-class assignments: 10 percent
- AP and news quizzes (5): 10 percent

Story No. 1: 15 percent

Story No. 2: 15 percent

Exam No. 1: 15 percent

Exam No. 2: 15 percent

TOTAL: 100 percent

Class participation:

- Mason allows instructors to take class attendance into consideration toward your final grade. IF you miss a class (not a good idea for a number of reasons!), you **must** explain the absense in an e-mail to me **before the next class**. I consider that communication part of your class participation. If you missed work, you inform your employer. If you miss

class, inform me.

-- ALL e-mails should include Comm303-AO1/Writing Across Media and the topic of your note in the SUBJECT line.

-- **THE ONE THING** exercise (10 percent of your final grade) will be explained during the first class. You are responsible for a minimum of 15 entries (the exceptions being the exam days) in the specifically labeled daily TOT discussion folder. You must complete this by the start of the next class. Late entries or misplaced entries will not be accepted. Additional participation and civil discussion with your classmates (and me) is encouraged and will be rewarded.

-- You are each responsible for a short presentation (teams depend on class enrollment) to be assigned during the first or second class (yet another reason not to miss class). This **should NOT be a regurgitation of textbook material** but an intelligent discussion of the material, based on the text AND utilizing real-life examples.

-- Part of your class participation grade (5 percent) is subjective, based on my impression of your active participation and contribution to the class. Remember: We all learn from each other! Don't sit in class like a bump on a log. This class will be as enjoyable as YOU make it!

Story No. 1:

You will cover a speech or meeting (of your choice but cleared in advance by me) and write a 700-word story based on your reporting (focus sentence is due in advance and counts as a homework assignment).

The story must include properly attributed quotes from a minimum of three sources and attribution tags that provide sufficient context.

Due date is Thursday June 7 (end of third week -- which means you only have two weekends preceding the deadline!), so you need to begin thinking about this assignment during the first week of class. If handed in early (by Thursday May 31, which is the end of the second week), I will provide you with feedback (by Monday June 4) for a rewrite (due Thursday June 7).

Story No. 2:

You will write a 700-word feature story (focus sentence is due in advance and counts as a homework assignment).

You may choose instead to prepare a 2-minute audio or video tape, but you must clear that option in advance with me.

Also, you may create a 350-word PR story in a style similar to prnewswire.com (again, see me in advance).

Due date is Thursday June 14 (end of the fourth week). If handed in early (by Monday June 11), I will provide you with feedback (as quickly as possible but no later than Thursday June 14) for a rewrite, which would be due Monday June 18.

NOTE: These are HARD deadlines -- in other words, no exceptions. I have already built in flexibility for you if you plan and do your work early.

PROJECT OPTION:

You may provide a single project (if cleared by me): If you provide a written story AND either a audio (radio) tape or video (TV) tape.

I will also consider an online website presentation if you do webpage/site design.
Due date is Monday June 11.

GRADING CRITERIA:

GMU utilizes an 10-point +/- grading scale.

The Department of Communication has adopted the following scale for core and basic courses, which will be used to assign final grades in COMM 303:

- A+: 98 to 100 (outstanding work of publishable quality).
- A: 93 to 97.
- A-: 90 to 92.
- B+: 87 to 89.
- B: 83 to 86 (publishable with editing and minor changes).
- B-: 80 to 82.
- C+: 77 to 79.
- C: 73 to 76 (meets standards).
- C-: 70-72 (does not meet standards but shows effort).
- D: 60 to 69 (uneditable because of fundamental writing and style problems).
- F: 59 or less (unacceptable; lack of basic skills or work not submitted).

ALL ABOUT ACADEMIC ETHICS and CHEATING:

Honesty is a given for those who engage in journalism. When you violate the trust of your readers or audience, you lose your most important commodity: your credibility. George Mason University's "[Honor System and Code](#)" is also outlined on pages 30-31 of the 2006-07 University Catalog as part of the "Academic Policies" section ([pages 29-46](#)). With regard to this course, acts of dishonesty include, but are not necessarily limited to, cheating on examinations, plagiarizing material from other sources, making up material or sources of information, and/or submitting work for this course originally completed for other courses without instructors permission. The penalty for academic dishonesty is failure of the course -- and you will be reported to the Honor Committee.

Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions or factual information from another person without giving that person credit. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in an academic or journalistic setting.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR:

In all discussions and assignments, this course emphasizes the importance of avoiding identifications and descriptions that serve to perpetuate stereotypes about gender, age, dialect, disability, national origin, race, religious affiliation and sexual preference. It is expected that discussions will be open and honest, but abusive language or behavior will not be tolerated.

No food will be allowed in the classroom, nor will smoking be tolerated.

Common courtesy should always prevail.

Your regular attendance in this class will have a great impact on your final grade. Your in-class participation is critical (in other words, you want me to know your name as early in the semester as possible!). I will create a seating chart since there's a learning curve (for me) to remember your names.

The only acceptable excuse for [missing class](#) is illness, serious family emergency, or a major religious holiday.

For an excused absence, you must bring a note from a doctor (or medical professional) or parent (in the case of a family emergency).

Any application for an excused absence must be submitted in writing with a copy for my records.

Missing class without an approved written excuse will mean a failing grade for any in-class work and participation for that class.

If the number of missed classes add up, you will discover that you are failing that portion of the class. Equally important, it will strongly affect your final grade in other ways: missing important information that impacts your ability to successfully complete assignments.

If you are sick or can't attend class for whatever reason (and I have heard them all by now), I expect an e-mail explaining the absence (just as you would do for an employer). I consider this part of your class participation. This policy remains in force from the first class to the last.

Classes will start on time; it is rude to your fellow students and instructor to be late and costs them class time if I need to repeat material for your benefit.

Be aware of traffic and parking patterns in and around campus, especially the first week of the semester.

It is [the policy](#) of George Mason University and this instructor to make every reasonable effort to allow members of our diverse university community to observe their religious holidays without academic penalty. However, it your responsibility to provide me with advance written notice of the dates of any major religious holidays on which you will be absent (the earlier notice the better please).

I have office hours and encourage you to use them -- as well as making mutually convenient appointments as necessary.

Students who proactively visit with their professors before a situation becomes a problem tend to avoid problems and do better in class.

Conversations about grades or individual problems are best dealt with privately in my office during office hours.

This university and this instructor are committed to providing an equitable learning environment for every student. I will readily adjust for those students with special needs. If you have special needs in the classroom, please provide a letter from [Disability](#)

[Support Services](#) confirming and describing your special needs at the start of the semester. You may have Disability Support Services contact me directly. This information will be kept in confidence.

Finally, you will find that I'm extremely responsive to e-mail. However, it is important that you **include Comm303-A01/Writing Across Media and an applicable topic in the SUBJECT line** or your note may go unanswered (or end up in my SPAM folder).

Comm303-A01 SYLLABUS: Your weekly schedule

[sklein1](#) - 05:53pm May 7, 2007 EST
Steve Klein

NOTE: This schedule is subject to change based on the nature of journalism and class progress.

Changes in the schedule will be communicated in class and by e-mail (so keep your GMU mailboxes cleaned out!!!).

This is the schedule of the topics and related activities that I have scheduled for each of our 17 classes. Some topics may continue into the next class as our progress together and events dictate.

However, I'm going to make a real effort to stick as closely to this schedule as possible given the shortness of the Summer A session.

Homework is due the next class unless otherwise indicated. Late assignments, unless excused in advance, will not be accepted without penalty -- generally one full grade per day late. If you miss a class, you are responsible for submitting the work on time. In-class work cannot be made up. There just isn't time to be making exceptions.

It is **strongly advised** that you have a "class buddy" you can contact in person, by telephone or by e-mail.

I always recommend to my classes that getting together for study groups equates with success. That takes some extra planning and effort on your part, especially during the summer. This class cannot be completed successfully without working outside of the classroom. You will make new friends in this class who will be with you in other classes, and, if you're fortunate, for years afterward.

During the first four weeks **at the beginning of some classes**, you will take a brief **Associated Press and current events quiz**. Why the beginning of class? Because it is not fair to me or your classmates to straggle into class. Therefore, you need to regularly read a local paper (I suggest the Washington Post or Washington Times) in print or

online. You also can listen to a National Public Radio (NPR) newscast daily (try WAMU, 88.5 FM, or WETA, 90.9 FM on the half hour from 5-10 a.m. or 4-6 p.m.) and/or WTOP FM (103.5) any time of the day (also, the new WPOP, the Washington Post station, at 107.7).

WEEK #1

Monday May 21:

- Introduction to the course and each other (complete INFO CARDS).
- **HANDOUT:** Your mini-AP Style guide.
- **HANDOUT:** Strategies for Writing Speech Stories.
- **HANDOUT:** How to Succeed in Comm303/Writing Across Media.
- **Syllabus review.**
- **The AP Guide to Punctuation:** Introduction ... the ampersand.
- Using [Townhall](#) and **THE ONE THING** (10 percent of your final grade): You are responsible for a minimum of 15 entries (the exceptions being the exam days) in the specifically labeled daily TOT discussion folder. Please make your entry into the correct folder if you expect to receive credit. You must complete your entry by the start of the next class. Late entries or misplaced entries will not be accepted. Timing of entries matters! It shows me how seriously you take class participation -- especially if you're quiet in class.
- **HOMEWORK for Wednesday:** AP Style review from the newspaper (see pre-class welcome note assignment).

Tuesday May 22:

- Our first **THE ONE THING** discussion.
- **Review of the syllabus (continued as necessary)**
- **Deadlines:** An important word about **deadlines**, attending class and being on time.
- NOTE: You will be penalized one full grade for every day an assignment is late.**
- **WORKING EXERCISE:** We will walk over to SUBII together and sit in on a special Voices for Virginia's Children program beginning at 12:30 p.m. sharp (see [agenda](#), go to 12:30 p.m. speaker). It is critical that you NOT miss this event; you will write a number of graded exercises based on your reporting of this event!).

Wednesday May 23:

- **Current events quiz No. 1 at noon sharp!**
- NOTE: I give ALL quizzes and tests at the beginning of the class, so you don't want to be late.**
- **THE ONE THING** discussion.
- **The AP Guide to Punctuation:** The most common mistake students make: comma faults; the BIG difference between the dash and the hyphen.
- **HANDOUT:** Five Ws and an H
- **HANDOUT:** Strategies for Deciding What Is News

- **HANDOUT:** Making News: A Six-Step Process
- **HANDOUT:** Impact, Elements, Words
- **Major topic discussion:** Introduction to AP Style (**so don't forget your AP Stylebook and mini-Style Guide!**)
- **Introduction to AP Style:** Each student is responsible for pointing out at least one difference between AP and MLA/APA style from the AP Stylebook and the newspaper (see "Pre-class Welcome" homework/note in Townhall).
- **Chapter 1:** Sit Down and Write (Wednesday May 23): Steve Klein
- **Mini-lecture on accuracy** and its relationship to **credibility** in journalism.
- NOTE: You will be penalized one full grade for factual errors!**
- **Mini-lecture:** What is good media writing? How is a news story or feature different from a term paper? How is reporting different from researching? Some techniques for good writing (**see appropriate Townhall folder**).
- **Handout:** Story review and news writing checklist.

-- **Creation of presentation (and study?) groups from the text:**

- Chapter 1:** Sit Down and Write (Wednesday May 23): Steve Klein
- Chapter 2:** Basic Tools of Writing (Thursday May 24): Steve Klein
- Chapter 3:** Style and the Stylebook (Tuesday May 29): Steve Klein
- Chapter 4:** Writing in the Media Environment (Monday June 11):

1. _____

Chapter 5: Writing for Print (Thursday May 31):

2. _____

Chapter 9: Writing for Public Relations (Tuesday May 29)

3. _____

Chapter 6: Writing for the Web (Tuesday June 12):

4. _____

Chapter 7: Writing for Broadcast (Monday June 4):

5. _____

Chapter 8: Writing Advertising Copy (Thursday June 14)

6. _____

Chapter 10: The Writer and the Law (Monday June 18)

7. _____

Thursday May 24:

- **THE ONE THING** discussion.
- **The AP Guide to Punctuation:** The apostrophe.
- Chapter 2:** Basic Tools of Writing (Thursday May 24): Steve Klein

- **HANDOUT:** Characteristics of Ledes
- **HANDOUT:** Strategies for Ledes
- **HANDOUT:** Building Blocks for Stories
- **HANDOUT:** Strategies for Writing Well
- **HANDOUT:** Quotes Work Hard for Your Audience
- **HANDOUT:** Setting Up Quotes
- **HANDOUT:** Use Said for Attribution
- **HANDOUT:** Open-Ended and Closed-Ended Questions
- **HANDOUT:** Strategies for Effective Interviewing
- **GUEST SPEAKER: Alan Goldenbach**, Washington Post reporter and writer, on reporting.
- **Weekly wrap-up.**

The weekend: This is a four-day weekend. Don't let it all go to waste! This is the first of **only four weekends** for the summer session. You need to make a plan for how you will use your three-day weekends so that you do not save your two stories and in-class presentations until the last minute.

WEEK #2

Monday May 28: MEMORIAL DAY – NO CLASS!!!

Tuesday May 29:

- **THE ONE THING** discussion.
- **The AP Guide to Punctuation:** Capitalization.
- **Mini-lecture:** Gathering the News and five Ws (and one H) ... The Five Rules of Journalism ... Basics of Good Journalism ... Mistakes you don't want to make and repeat; the importance of rereading, revising, rewriting and proofreading.
- **Mini-lecture:** The fine line between bias and prejudice ... Can journalists truly be objective? ... Subjectivity and fairness.
- **Chapter 3:** Style and the Stylebook: Steve Klein
- **EXAM CLASS PREP #1 on Chapter 9:** Writing for Public Relations

-- **In-class writing assignment:** Grammar quiz.

Wednesday May 30:

- **THE ONE THING** discussion.
- **GUEST SPEAKER: Professor Carl Botan** on writing for Public Relations.
- **AP Style/current events quiz No. 2.**
- **The AP Guide to Punctuation:** The semicolon and the colon.
- **AP Style:** Abbreviations.
- **In-class exercise:** Wordiness exercises.

Thursday May 31:

- **THE ONE THING** discussion.
- **The AP Guide to Punctuation:** Quotation marks.
- **AP Style:** Capitalization.
- **Mini-lecture:** Journalism ethics and in-class exercise.
- **Mini-lecture:** How to Write a News Story in 15 Steps ... How to Write a Strong Lead ... How to Structure a News Story.
- **EXAM CLASS PREP #2 on Chapter 5:** Writing for print

Story No. 1:

You will cover a speech or meeting (of your choice but cleared in advance by me) and write a 700-word story based on your reporting (focus sentence is due in advance).

It must include properly attributed quotes from a minimum of three sources.

Due date is Thursday June 7 (end of third week -- which means you only have just one more weekend preceding the deadline!). If handed in TODAY, I will provide you with feedback (by Monday June 4) for a rewrite (due Thursday June 7).

PROJECT OPTION:

You may provide a single project (if cleared by me): If you provide a written story AND either a audio (radio) tape or video (TV) tape.

I will also consider an online website presentation if you do webpage/site.

Due date is Monday June 11.

WEEK #3

Monday June 4:

- **THE ONE THING** discussion.
- **The AP Guide to Punctuation:** The exclamation point, the question mark.
- **AP Style:** Numbers.
- **Mini-lecture:** How to Write Profiles ... How to Write Feature Stories.
- **EXAM CLASS PREP #3 on Chapter 7:** Writing for Broadcast

Tuesday June 5:

- **Current events quiz No. 3.**
- **THE ONE THING** discussion.
- **The AP Guide to Punctuation:** Brackets, the ellipsis and parentheses.
- **GUEST SPEAKER:** Professor LeeAnn Dance, former CNN producer

Wednesday June 6:

- **THE ONE THING** discussion.
- **The AP Guide to Punctuation:** The period.
- **Mid-Term Exam**

Thursday June 7:

- **THE ONE THING** discussion.
- **The AP Guide to Punctuation:** the slash.
- **Mini-lecture:** News culture vs. news values.
- **GUEST SPEAKER: Don Stumpo**, News4 producer.

WEEK #4

Monday June 11:

- **THE ONE THING** discussion.
 - **The AP Guide to Punctuation:** Catch-up and review.
 - EXAM CLASS PREP #4 on Chapter 6:** Writing for the Web
-

Paper No. 2:

You will write a 700-word feature story (focus sentence is due in advance).

You may choose instead to prepare a 2-minute audio or video tape, but you must clear that option in advance with me.

Also, you may create a 350-word PR story in a style similar to prnewswire.com (again, see me in advance).

Due date is Thursday June 14 (end of the fourth week). If handed in today, I will provide you with feedback (as quickly as possible but no later than Thursday June 14) for a rewrite, which would be due Monday June 18.

NOTE: These are HARD deadlines -- in other words, no exceptions. I have already built in flexibility for you if you plan and do your work early.

Tuesday June 12:

- **AP/Current events quiz No. 4.**
- **THE ONE THING** discussion.
- **Mini-lecture:** Writing with clarity and brevity ... Language sensitivity.
- **GUEST SPEAKER: Rodger Smith, WGMU**
- **Video:** "JFK: Breaking the News."
- **In-class exercise:** TBA

Wednesday June 13:

- **THE ONE THING** discussion.
- **Video:** "The 24-Hour News Cycle."

Thursday June 14:

- **THE ONE THING** discussion.
 - **EXAM CLASS PREP #5 on Chapter 8:** Writing Advertising Copy
-

WEEK #5

Monday June 18:

- **THE ONE THING** discussion.
 - **EXAM CLASS PREP #6 on Chapter 10:**The Writer and the Law
-

Tuesday June 19:

- **Final Exam**
- **Course evaluations.**
- **THE LAST THING** discussion.

George Mason University Course Policies

[sklein1](#) - 06:31pm Jan 9, 2007 EST
Steve Klein

ALL ABOUT ACADEMIC ETHICS and CHEATING:

Honesty is a given for those who engage in journalism. When you violate the trust of your readers or audience, you lose your most important commodity: your credibility. George Mason University's "[Honor System and Code](#)" is also outlined in the 2006-07 University Catalog as part of the "[Academic Policies](#)" section.

With regard to this course, acts of dishonesty include, but are not necessarily limited to, cheating on examinations, plagiarizing material from other sources, making up material or sources of information, and/or submitting work for this course originally completed for other courses without instructors permission. The penalty for academic dishonesty is failure of the course -- and you will be reported to the Honor Committee.

Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions or factual information from another person without giving that person credit. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in an academic or journalistic setting.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR:

In all discussions and assignments, this course emphasizes the importance of avoiding identifications and descriptions that serve to perpetuate stereotypes about gender, age, dialect, disability, national origin, race, religious affiliation and sexual preference. It is expected that discussions will be open and honest, but abusive language or behavior will not be tolerated.

No food will be allowed in the classroom, nor will smoking be tolerated.

Common courtesy should always prevail.

Your regular attendance in this class will have a great impact on your final grade. Your in-class participation is critical (in other words, you want me to know your name as early in the semester as possible!). I will create a seating chart since there's a learning curve (for me) to remember your names.

The only acceptable excuse for [missing class](#) is illness, serious family emergency, or a major religious holiday.

For an excused absence, you must bring a note from a doctor (or medical professional) or parent (in the case of a family emergency).

Any application for an excused absence must be submitted in writing with a copy for my records.

Missing class without an approved written excuse will mean a failing grade for any in-class work and participation for that class.

If the number of missed classes add up, you will discover that you are failing that portion of the class. Equally important, it will strongly affect your final grade in other ways: missing important information that impacts your ability to successfully complete assignments.

If you are sick or can't attend class for whatever reason (and I have heard them all by now), I expect an e-mail explaining the absence (just as you would do for an employer). I consider this part of your class participation. This policy remains in force from the first class to the last.

Classes will start on time; it is rude to your fellow students and instructor to be late and costs them classtime if I need to repeat material for your benefit.

Be aware of traffic and parking patterns in and around campus, especially the first week of the semester.

It is [the policy](#) of George Mason University and this instructor to make every reasonable effort to allow members of our diverse university community to observe their religious holidays without academic penalty. However, it your responsibility to provide me with advance written notice of the dates of any major religious holidays on which you will be absent (the earlier notice the better please).

I have office hours and encourage you to use them -- as well as making mutually convenient appointments as necessary.

Students who proactively visit with their professors before a situation becomes a problem tend to avoid problems and do better in class.

Conversations about grades or individual problems are best dealt with in my office during office hours.

This university and this instructor are committed to providing an equitable learning environment for every student. I will readily adjust for those students with special needs. If you have special needs in the classroom, please provide a letter from [Disability Support Services](#) confirming and describing your special needs at the start of the semester. You may have Disability Support Services contact me directly. This information will be kept in confidence.

Finally, you will find that I'm extremely responsive to e-mail. However, it is important that you **include Comm303-A01 and an applicable title or headline in the SUBJECT line** or your note may go unanswered (or end up in my SPAM folder).