

Visual COMMUNICATION

MPC 601 | SUMMER 2013 | COURSE SYLLABUS

Instructor: [REDACTED]

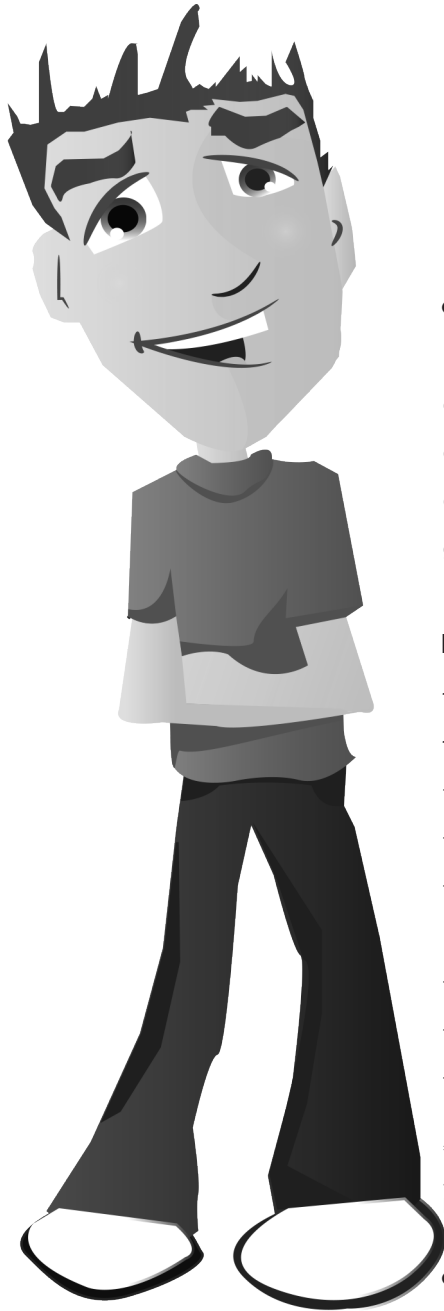
Classroom: [REDACTED]

Schedule: M/W 5:30PM - 8:25PM

Office Hours: M/W 12PM - 2PM (OR BY APPOINTMENT)

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: 801.832.2827



COURSE DESCRIPTION

Designed as a survey course, this class will cover several theoretical perspectives on visual communication. Students can expect to learn broad and diverse approaches to visual perception, reception, and persuasion. Learning will be drawn from readings, viewings, and applications of visual rhetoric, comics, graphic design, film, and photography.

REQUIRED TEXTS*

- Envisioning Information*, by Edward Tufte. ISBN—9780961392116
- Picture This*, by Molly Bang. ISBN—9781587170300
- Understanding Comics*, by Scott McCloud. ISBN—9780060976255
- Metaphors We Live By*, by Lakoff and Johnson. ISBN—9780226468013
- Infographics: The Power of Visual Storytelling*, by Lankow, Ritchie, and Crooks. ISBN—9781118314043
- Universal Principles of Design*, by Lidwell, Holden, and Bulter. ISBN—9781592535873
- Laptop
- Notebook and paper

*Other course readings will come from Carolyn Handa's *Visual Rhetoric in a Digital World*, Robert Jacobson's *Information Design*, Edward Corbett's *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, Luc Pauwel's *Visual Cultures of Science*, and other peer-reviewed journal publications.

COSTS

Beyond the cost of textbooks, students will be required to turn in physical copies of visual projects, which will incur printing and/or paper costs. Students can expect to spend between \$5 and \$30 total on course projects.

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DAILY MATERIALS

Each day we will review course readings and we will do many activities that require the use of the internet. As such, students are expected to bring the assigned readings to class (if on Canvas, it needs to be printed or accessible online) and to bring their laptops. Students should also always have a pen and paper on hand.

ASSIGNMENTS

Over the course of the eight-week semester, students will complete the following assignments:

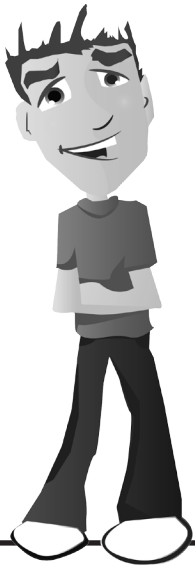
- Five weekly reading position papers
- Three visual projects (a metaphor log and poster, a children's book, and an information graphic)
- One visual analysis paper

Expectations are high for the quality of each assignment. As Master's students, I expect creativity and critical thinking to be evident in approaches to writing, design, and communication in general. As is the case with any accelerated course, there is a lot of material to cover in a short amount of time. When possible, students are encouraged to get ahead in the readings and assignments.

GRADING

Your grade for the semester is calculated strictly on a point-based, percentage system. There are 100 points total for the course—25 points for the weekly position papers (5 points each), 45 points for the visual projects (15 points each), and 30 points for your final paper. It is my policy that every student starts at a '0' and then earns his/her grade by accumulating points during the semester.

A = 93% 100 – 93	B+ = 87% 89 – 87	C+ = 77% 79 – 77	D+ = 67% 69 – 67	F = <60% 59 – 0
A- = 90% 92 – 90	B = 83% 86 – 83	C = 73% 76 – 73	D = 63% 66 – 63	
	B- = 80% 82 – 80	C- = 70% 72 – 70	D- = 60% 62 – 60	



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LATE WORK

All assignments are due on the due date; late assignments will be docked 10% per day. Extensions (in rare, serious circumstances and for school-excused absences) must be approved PRIOR to the due date.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class period. If you arrive late to class, it is your responsibility to come talk to me after class to be sure that you were not marked absent. Because of the brevity of this course (we only meet 13 times), you are allowed to miss only one class period without penalty during the semester. For the second day missed, you will lose 3 points from your overall grade and for the third day, you will lose 5 points. If you miss four days, your final grade will be dropped 15 points (one and a half full letter grades). If you miss 5 or more courses (which equals roughly 40% of the class), you will fail the course. Participation will be measured by your attentiveness and participation during discussions and workshops. Reading, sleeping, listening to music, playing video games, etc. during class will result in a reduction of your overall grade.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING A GRADE

Questions Concerning a Grade: If you have any questions concerning a grade on any assignment, I will be happy to talk with you about it. Typically, it is best to wait 24 hours after receiving the grade so that you can mull it over; however, you must wait no longer than 7 days after receiving the grade to talk with me. After 7 days, the grade will be considered final.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Cheating will not be tolerated. As a college student, you are expected to know and understand plagiarism and ethics guidelines concerning copyrights and the borrowing and citing of information. If you have questions about whether or not



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you are plagiarizing, please come talk with me before you turn in an assignment. Depending on the seriousness of an incident, cheating will result in a reduction of a grade, failure of an assignment, failure of the course, or even expulsion from

██████████.

The ██████████ of Undergraduate Academic Catalog (2012) states:

“██████████ operates on the assumption that all academic work is the honest product of each student’s own endeavors. The faculty and staff at ██████████ expect such integrity from the students, and violations are cause for disciplinary action, including suspension, probation, loss of credit, or expulsion from the college.

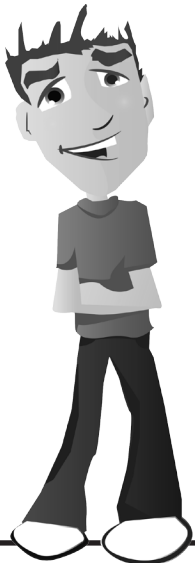
“Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and furnishing false or misleading information to any faculty or staff member.

Cheating on written assignments includes plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration with others or submitting the same material for more than one class without authorization of the instructor.

“Plagiarism includes borrowing information or ideas, whether directly quoted or paraphrased, from any source beyond one’s first-hand experience and not acknowledging the source. The student must give credit for the material by identifying the source, using one of the generally accepted citation methods.”

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

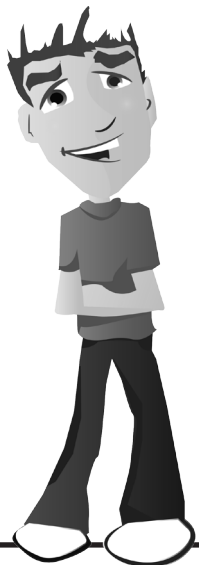
██████████ complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1972 and the Disabilities Act and Amendments of 2009 (ADA AA) and does not discriminate against persons with disabilities. The college provides equal access in higher education to academically qualified students with physical, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. The Disability Services Program works with departments throughout the



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college to ensure that programs and facilities are accessible to all members of the college community. The college must provide reasonable accommodations to students who, by nature of the disability, are limited in accessing academic opportunities. In order to be eligible to receive services through the program, students need to complete the following steps:

- Disclose the nature of the disability to the program coordinator in the START Center.
- Provide current documentation from a qualified source verifying the impact of the disability. Appropriate documentation is necessary to verify eligibility and support requires for accommodations, academic modifications and/or other aids. Information is kept confidential according to federal guidelines.
- Once eligibility is established, students meet with the program coordinator to determine individualized accommodations. Students must provide reasonable notice to allow time for arrangement of accommodations.





COURSE SCHEDULE

MAY 6

Welcome & introductions; syllabus; assignment descriptions; defining visual communication.

Homework

- Read "Vision," by John Medina (Canvas)
- Read "The Design," by Walter Isaacson (Canvas)
- Read "Design," by Daniel Pink (Canvas)
- Read "Why Information Design Matters," by Robert Jacobson (Canvas)

MAY 8

Watch *Objectified*, discuss: what role does visual communication play in our lives? Discuss readings; discuss design, affordances, wayfinding, information design. Introduce Children's Book assignment.

Homework

- Read *How Pictures Work*, by Molly Bang (entire book)
- Write Position Paper #1
- Begin working on Children's Book assignment

MAY 13

Turn in Position Paper #1. Discuss position papers. Molly Bang's 10 principles. Emotion through shapes, angles, and colors.

Homework

- Read *Understanding Comics*, by Scott McCloud (Chapters 1 – 4)
- Continue working on Children's Book assignment

MAY 15

Sequential art, vocabulary of comics, blood in the gutter, time frames.

Homework

- Read *Understanding Comics*, by Scott McCloud (Chapters 5 – 9)
- Write Position Paper #2
- Continue working on Children's Book assignment

MAY 20

Turn in Position Paper #2. Discuss position papers. McCloud, chapters 5 – 9.

Homework

- Read *Metaphors We Live By*, by Lakoff and Johnson (pages 3 – 60)
- Read "Figures of Speech," by Edward Corbett (on Canvas)
- Read "Representing Macbeth," by Hanno Ehses (On Canvas)
- Finish Children's Book assignment



COURSE SCHEDULE

MAY 22

Turn in Children's Book assignment. Children's Book showcase. Metaphors, figures of speech, and visual communication. Introduction to Metaphor Log and Poster assignment.

Homework

- Read "The Photographic Message," by Roland Barthes (On Canvas)
- Read "Gestalt Switch in Molecular Image Perception," by Joachim Schummer (On Canvas)
- Read "The Accursed Part of Scientific Iconography," by Francesco Panese (On Canvas)
- Read "Delivering the Message," by John Trimbur (On Canvas)
- Compile Metaphor Log
- Begin working on Metaphor Poster assignment
- Write Position Paper #3

MAY 27

Memorial Day. No class.

MAY 29

Position Paper #3 due. Discuss position papers #3. Image/text juxtaposition, visualizations in science, and typography.

Homework

- Read *Universal Principles of Design*, by Lidwell, Holden, and Butler (#s 20, 22, 24, 26, 32, 34, 44, 48, 56, 84, 86, 88, 96, 100, 126, 128, 132, 136, 158, 172, 184, 198, 202, 208, 224, 228, 234)
- Finish Metaphor Log and Poster assignment.

JUNE 3

Turn in Metaphor Log and Poster assignment. Showcase posters, discuss metaphors. *Universal Principles of Design*. Grammars/rules of design (ethics). Introduction to Infographic assignment.

Homework

- Read *Infographics*, by Lankow, Ritchie, and Crooks (Chapters 1 – 4, 8, & 9)
- Begin working on Infographic assignment



COURSE SCHEDULE

JUNE 5

Infographics. Research, collection, representation. Introduction to Visual Analysis final paper assignment.

Homework

- Read *Envisioning Information*, by Edward Tufte (chapters 1 – 3)
- Write Position Paper #4
- Continue working on Infographic assignment

JUNE 10

Gone at convention. No class.

Homework

- Read *Envisioning Information*, by Edward Tufte (chapters 4 – 6)
- Continue working on Infographic assignment

JUNE 12

Gone at convention. No class.

Homework

- Finish Infographic assignment
- Begin writing Visual Analysis paper
- Read "Human-Centered Design," by Mike Cooley (Canvas)
- Read "Structural Ambiguity," by Jim Gasperini
- Write Position Paper #5

JUNE 17

Turn in Position Papers #s 4 & 5. Turn in Infographic assignment. Discuss position papers. Universal principles, ambiguity, and imagination.

Homework

- Write Visual Analysis paper

JUNE 19

Coming full circle. The spectrum of visual communication. Visualizing visual communication.

Homework

- Turn in Visual Analysis papers by 6:00AM on June 20**
- Have a fantastic summer



COURSE SCHEDULE

DUE DATES AT A GLANCE

May 13

Position Paper #1

May 20

Position Paper #2

May 22

Children's Book

May 29

Position Paper #3

June 3

Metaphor Log

Poster

June 17

Position Paper #4

Position Paper #5

Infographic

June 19

Visual Analysis paper (due by 6:00AM on Thursday, June 20)



POSITION PAPERS

Short Essays | Assignment Description

Due: May 13, May 20, May 29, June 17

Deliverables: Two hardcopy essays in class

Value: 25 points (5 points each), 25% of overall grade

Description and Rationale—When learning about a topic as broad as visual communication, it is good to review and survey many perspectives, then reflect and analyze those readings in relation to the world around you. As such, you will be reading many different perspectives on visual communication and you will write short essays in which you make logical and persuasive arguments by synthesizing the assigned reading.

Assignment—For this assignment, you will synthesize the assigned readings (usually over a one-week period) by pulling out important nuggets (arguments, quotes, examples, controversies, etc.) and making your own argument. You will write a short (300 – 500 word) essay that effectively makes an argument about an aspect of visual communication in the world **beyond** what is in the readings, but uses the readings for support. You are expected to cite sources in APA or MLA format. **You are NOT to simply write a summary** or reflection of readings; doing so will reduce your score to a 3 out of 5.

POSITION PAPER STARTING POINTS

Position Paper #1: Use the four articles by Medina, Pink, Isaacson, and Jacobson and the book by Molly Bang. As you construct an argument, think about the following questions: Why does visual communication matter? Have you had a bad experience with poor visual communication? What aspects of visual communication do you find helpful, confusing, or emotionally-charged?

Position Paper #2: Use Scott McCloud's book *Understanding Comics* and his concepts about sequential art, magnification through simplification, closure, time, icons, and so forth. As you construct an argument, think about the following questions: How does ambiguity (and closure) enhance viewer experience? How is the passage of time communicated in visuals? What images in our society are iconic and culturally recognizable? Why?

Position Paper #3: Use the eight articles from May 20 and May 22. As you construct an argument, consider the following questions: What is the relationship between image and text? How does text influence the communication of images and vice versa? How are metaphors used in visual communication? How is scientific and technical communication affected by visuals and metaphors, despite being thought of as clear and accurate?

Position Paper #4: Use *Universal Principles of Design* and *Infographics*. As you construct an argument, consider the following questions: What makes for strong information design? Poor? How does following design principles affect perception and understanding? What makes infographics so compelling?

Position Paper #5: Use *Envisioning Information* and the two articles by Cooley and Gasperini. As you construct an argument, consider the following questions: Are design principles really universal? Why or why not? What makes information design ethical? Humanistic? What should be avoided?

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CHILDREN'S BOOK

Visual Project | Assignment Description

Due: May 22, in class

Deliverables: One hardcopy children's book; one PDF of the book on Canvas; one memo, written as a list

Value: 15 points, 15% of overall grade

Description and Rationale—One of the best ways to put theory into practice is to...make stuff! After reading about colors, shapes, and abstract drawings (among other things) and their relationship with emotion, you will have the chance to evoke an audience's emotion with your own visual storytelling.

Assignment—For this assignment, you will re-create a well-known children's story or fable by creating a multiple-page book. You are to apply the principles discussed in Molly Bang's work, *Picture This* and Scott McCloud's work *Understanding Comics*. The caveat is that your story must NOT use any words. You may hand-draw the pictures, use construction paper, or use imaging software, but you MUST keep the design to simple shapes, objects, and colors (no more than 5 colors). The book you create should be designed to captivate, inspire, and evoke targeted emotional response without relying on words. In a separate memo, you will need to highlight which of Molly Bang's and Scott McCloud's principles you applied and how it affects the emotion and storytelling of your book. In summary, you will create a book that tells a complete story, including a beginning, middle and end; contains no words (except in the title); and includes least six pages, not including the cover. Your memo can (should) be written concisely, in list form.

Scoring Standard—Even though this is a children's book, your work is expected to represent Master's quality work. If you don't feel comfortable yet using Photoshop or Illustrator, you are welcome to draw or cut out shapes. However, it should be obvious you took the time to make the details right (just like you would fix grammar and punctuation in an essay). You will be assessed on this assignment by demonstrating your understanding of the theory of visual communication expressed in our readings to this point, both in your final product and your brief memo description of it. You will also be assessed on following the instructions listed above.



METAPHOR LOG & POSTER

Visual Project | Assignment Description

Due: June 3, in class

Deliverables: One hardcopy and one PDF of each of the following posted on Canvas: metaphor log; metaphor poster; memo

Save As: Lastname_MetaphorLog.docx
Lastname_MetaphorPoster.pdf
Lastname_MetaphorMemo.docx

Value: 15 points (5 for the metaphor log, 10 for the poster), 15% of overall grade

Description and Rationale—As you will discover from the readings, metaphors are a regular part of the way we communicate. One of the best ways to improve your recognition and use of metaphors is to record the ones you hear, note how they were used, and try to use them yourself. Another good method is to take a figure of speech and turn it into a visualized statement. For this assignment, you will do both.

Metaphor Log—For this assignment, you will simply make a running log of all the metaphors you hear over the span of a week. You are encouraged to keep something that you can take notes on at all times (cell phone, notebook, etc.) Each time you hear a metaphor used, jot down the following: who said it, in what context (lyrics in a song, meeting at work, on TV), and what the metaphor was meant to represent. After a week's time, take your notes and compile them into a well-designed and organized list. You should have at least 20 metaphors listed.

Figure of Speech Poster—After reading Corbett's and Lakoff & Johnson's articles, you should have a good idea of the different types of figures of speech out there (metaphors are only one). Following the case study in Eshes' article, you will create a poster advertising a book, play, or film. The key is that you use a specific figure of speech and represent it visually.

Memo—After creating your poster, will write a short (less than 75 words) paragraph that describes the figure of speech you used for your poster, what it is intended to represent, and what you feel it communicates about the book, play, or film you are advertising.

Scoring Standard—Your metaphor log will simply be assessed on completeness and designing it to look professional. Your poster and memo will be assessed on the accurate use of a figure of speech to portray some important element of the work you are advertising. Exceptional design skills for the poster are not required, but it should be evident, as always, that you put time and thought into it.

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INFOGRAPHIC

Visual Project | Assignment Description

Due: June 17, in class

Deliverables: One hardcopy and one PDF of Infographic

Save As: Lastname_Infographic.pdf

Value: 15 points, 15% of overall grade

Description and Rationale—Displaying complex information can be a tricky task, one that has ethical and legal implications, and one that can have lasting effects on a society. As such, this assignment allows you the opportunity to attempt the creation of an infographic, a visualization of complex data. To do this, you will take multiple sets of data/information and amalgamate them into a comprehensible display that can be read quickly by broad audiences.

Assignment—For this assignment, you will research a topic, location, or idea and collect multiple sets (at least 3) of information or data about that topic. For example, you may research most popular American foods, foods eaten by state, and state-by-state obesity. You will then repurpose your information/data set into a visual display that will be interpretable by broad audiences. Ultimately, you will design an 11"X17" poster in full color that demonstrates understanding of information design principles such as the Five Hat Racks (see Universal Principles of Design on Blackboard), chartjunk, micro/macro readings, ambiguity, human-centeredness, and others. In essence, your poster will be some form of information graphic that includes text (either as a paragraph description—see “Strange Maps”—or as part of the design itself) designed in some creative but comprehensible way. The following are a few resources to get you thinking about your possibilities:

-STRANGE MAPS: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/interactive/2012/sep/07/weird-maps-to-rival-apple-in-pictures>

-WALL STATS: <http://www.wallstats.com/>

-VISUAL COMPLEXITY: <http://www.visualcomplexity.com/vc/>

-COOL INFOGRAPHICS: <http://www.coolinfographics.com/>

-INFOGRAPHICS NEWS: <http://infographicsnews.blogspot.com/>

-SMASHING MAGAZINE: <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2009/09/11/25-useful-data-visualization-and-infographics-resources/>

-GOOD MAGAZINE: <http://www.good.is/magazine>

Scoring Standard—Your infographic will be assessed on its ability to clearly communicate the complex data set you are representing. It should have a clear macro-micro reading, and identify at least three related statistics (while being careful not to exaggerate or jump to conclusions).



VISUAL ANALYSIS

Final Essay | Assignment Description

Due: June 20, by 6AM, on Canvas

Deliverables: One digital file on Canvas

Save As: Lastname_VisualAnalysis.docx

Value: 30 points, 15% of overall grade

Description and Rationale—As a culminating project to this course, this is your chance to synthesize the broad spectrum of visual communication perspectives we have addressed in class by analyzing a visual artifact of your choice and making an argument about it.

Assignment—For this assignment, you will need to do the following:

- 1) Select a visual of some kind (this could be a painting, photograph, advertisement, political cartoon, or any other visualization). For the purposes of this assignment, you will need to select a visual that you can research its origins and intents.
- 2) Research the visual and its purposes. Consider the following questions:
 - a. Genre: How does this piece fit into the genre in which this artist is generally categorized? Does it fit the conventions of this genre, or does it break some of these conventions? How does this affect the audience's reception of this piece?
 - b. Artist: How does this piece fit into the artist's oeuvre (body of works)? Is it typical of the artist's style, or does it mark a shift or break with his or her conventional presentation?
 - c. Medium: How well does the artist's choice of medium help or hurt his or her argument? Is there another medium that would have been more appropriate?
 - d. Audience: Who is the artist's audience? How receptive has this audience been to this message? How does the artist attempt to establish a connection with his or her audience?
 - e. Variations: Have other versions of this image been produced? Is this the original, or is there a pre-existing version? Which is more "authentic"? How does the existence of this/these other version(s) affect the viewer's or listener's experience of this piece?
- 3) Narrow your research findings and identify the guiding argument of the visual and how the author/artist/organization constructed the visual to make that argument effective.
- 4) Identify visual communication theories/perspectives (from in class and from without) that either support or negate the actual effectiveness of the visual.

Continued...

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VISUAL ANALYSIS

...Continued

Due: June 20, by 6AM, on Canvas

Deliverables: One digital file on Canvas

Save As: Lastname_VisualAnalysis.docx

Value: 30 points, 15% of overall grade

- 5) Write a well-developed essay in which you synthesize your research and argue how well (or not) the visual meets its communicative needs and intentions.

Scoring Standard and Guidelines—Your paper should range between 7 – 10 double-spaced pages (using MLA formatting guidelines) and include a title “works cited” page. You should have at least 8 sources cited. The content and argumentation should reflect Master’s-level writing, exhibiting the following characteristics: a clear well-developed thesis and argument; specific, thorough, and relevant citations; complex sentence structure and effective grammar usage; appropriate academic voice, tone, and language; and clear and effective organization, including a strong conclusion.