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**ANTONIN SCALIA LAW SCHOOL, GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
LEGAL RESEARCH, WRITING, AND ANALYSIS**

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**LRWA I: Introduction to Legal Research, Writing, and Analysis  
FALL 2023 SYLLABUS**

LAW 096-all sections (2 credits)

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**Program Administration**

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Ashley Matthews

Reference and Instructional Services Librarian

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(703) 993-8604 | [amatthe@gmu.edu](mailto:amatthe@gmu.edu)

**Textbooks & Subscriptions**

Required texts:

- Christine Coughlin et al., *A Lawyer Writes: A Practical Guide to Legal Analysis* (3d ed. 2018) (“ALW”) (electronic version free through Lexis Study Aids)
- Kent C. Olson, *Legal Research in a Nutshell* (14th ed. 2021) (“Nutshell”) (electronic version free through West Academic Study Aids)
- *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* (Columbia Law Review Ass’n et al. eds., 21st ed. 2020) (“Bluebook”) (electronic or hard copy)

Required one-year subscriptions: (Follow “Start-Up Instructions” on Main TWEN)

- Peerceptiv
- Core Grammar for Lawyers 5th ed. (“Core Grammar”)

Optional resources:

- Richard Wydick & Amy Sloan, *Plain English for Lawyers* (6th ed. 2019) (or any earlier edition) (electronic version free through Lexis Study Aids)
- Tracy L.M. Norton, *Interactive Citation Workbook for The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation 2023 Edition* (2023) (on reserve in the law library)

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**TWEN**

Courses to add:

- LRWA I Main
- LRWA I [Professor's Name] Section [#]

Students must be enrolled in both Main TWEN and their Section TWEN. Main TWEN contains material relevant to all sections, including a detailed calendar that can be exported to Outlook, iCal, or Google Calendar. Main TWEN also contains the Research Exercise Drop Box. Section TWEN sites have professor-specific material and drop boxes for writing assignments. Please **check the "Section Assignments"** document posted on Main TWEN to find your LRWA I section number and professor. **Students may not join a Section TWEN other than their own.**

**Course Description**

LRWA I is a skills course that focuses on the fundamentals of legal research, writing, analysis, and citation essential for law practice. The writing assignments this semester are predictive in nature. Students learn to use research tools to find the law, to use legal reasoning to analyze the law and solve client problems, and to communicate their findings in written forms expected in the legal profession.

**Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the semester, students should be able to do the following:

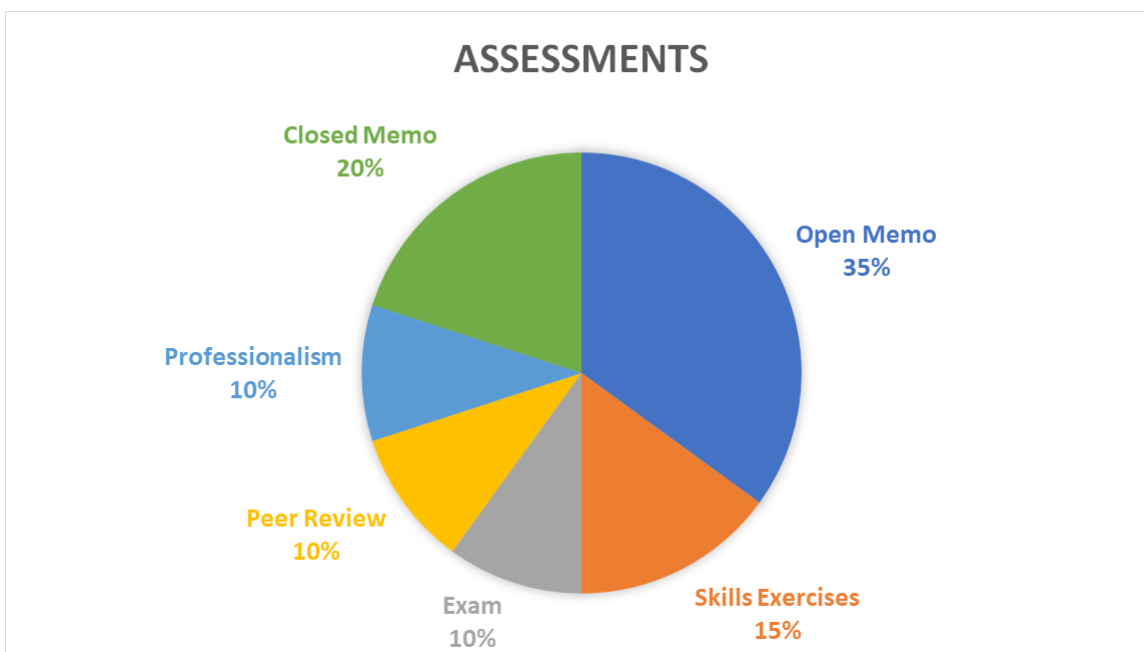
- Locate primary and secondary authority relevant to a legal problem
- Distinguish between mandatory and persuasive authority
- Read and interpret cases and statutes
- Identify and articulate a rule from a case
- Synthesize a rule from multiple sources
- Apply the law to client facts using rule-based and analogical reasoning
- Write using the basic structure of legal analysis
- Understand the form and content of an office memorandum
- Use basic case citation
- Use grammar, syntax, and tone appropriate for the intended audience and purpose
- Demonstrate professionalism expected in practice

**Course Format**

All LRWA I sections follow a uniform syllabus, with uniform assignments and deadlines. Most weeks, LRWA I meets in a small group setting led by a full-time or adjunct professor. All sections have at least one Writing Fellow, a third-year law student who serves as a teaching assistant and mentor. On research weeks, research instruction is led by law librarians.

### **Assessments and Grading**

The course is graded on a B+ curve, and students are evaluated relative to the students in their small section. The charts below summarize how each assessment contributes to the final grade in the course, followed by a more detailed description of each component.



<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Weight</b>
Closed Memo	20%
Open Memo	35%
Skills Exercises	15%
LRWA Exam	10%
Peer Review	10%
Preparation, participation, and professionalism	10%

#### Closed and Open Memos:

The significant writing projects this semester are based on two client files that simulate problems a new attorney might face in practice. For the Closed Memo, students will be provided with all the research needed to answer the client’s question. The Open Memo requires students to conduct their own research to analyze the client’s problem. An assignment memorandum detailing the expectations for each project will be posted on LRWA I Main TWEN.

The Closed Memo and Open Memo will be anonymously graded, meaning that the professor will not know the identity of the writer when grading. Students must select a different anonymous grading number (AGN) for each project before the assignment deadline. The

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Closed Memo and Open Memo will be graded on a six-point scale, in quarter-point increments, and the professor will report the high, low, and mean grades for the section. The six-point scale is described in the “LRWA Grading Guide” posted on LRWA I Main TWEN.

On written assignments, whether draft or final, students should submit the highest quality work they are capable of when the assignment is due, as would be expected in law practice. Doing so will help the evaluator provide relevant feedback. Students will receive feedback in various forms, including oral and written comments from professors and Writing Fellows as well as comments from peers in the context of structured peer review (described below). Professors will respond as supervising attorneys and teachers, not as editors. A professor may, for instance, correct an error the first time it appears but leave it to the student to correct the error throughout the rest of the paper and in future assignments. Students are expected to integrate readings, exercises, feedback, and classroom instruction to self-edit their work.

Skills Exercises:

**Research Exercises:** Research exercises will be completed under the guidance of law librarians during research classes. Each exercise will be evaluated on a credit/no credit basis. Students will receive credit if they successfully complete the exercise and upload it to the Research Exercise Drop Box on LRWA I Main TWEN by 11:59 p.m. on Friday following class.

**Interactive Citation Workstation (ICW) Exercises:** ICW exercises will help students learn the Bluebook, a uniform legal citation system, and will be completed independently online on Lexis+ (free to students). See “Start-up Instructions” on Main TWEN to get started.

This semester, students must complete all problems in **Bluebook Exercises 1, 2, 3, 5, 12, and 13**. Each exercise will be graded on a credit/no credit basis. To receive credit for an exercise, a student must correctly answer at least 70% of the problems before the deadline and comply with the setup and submission instructions. Students will have three chances to correctly answer each problem. Students struggling with setup or citation should seek help from a Writing Fellow.

**Core Grammar Exercises:** Core Grammar for Lawyers is an online tool designed to ensure that students have the grammar skills expected in the legal profession. **Students must enter the correct class code** on the Core Grammar platform to receive credit for their work. Class codes are posted with the “Start-up Instructions” on the LRWA I Main TWEN. **Do not opt out of the Pre-Test.**

Core Grammar exercises are divided into lettered sections, each of which contains four lessons. Students must complete the Pre-Test, complete or test out of all lessons in sections A through F, and complete the Post-Test by the deadlines in the Course Calendar. If all tests and lessons are timely completed, **the first score earned on the Post-Test will be recorded as the student’s Core Grammar score.**

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LRWA Exam:

The LRWA exam will take place in class during Week 12, so mark the date now. The exam will cover research skills and other core LRWA skills. More details on the content and format of the exam will follow.

Peer Review:

As noted in the Course Calendar, several assignments will be submitted on the Peerceptiv platform. Following submission, students must review their peers' work, and give feedback on the helpfulness of comments received. Please track all three deadlines: **submission**, **review**, and **feedback**. These deadlines are listed on the calendar on Main TWEN. Students' peer review grades will be based on the quality of their writing, the accuracy and helpfulness of their reviews, and timeliness.

Preparation, Participation, and Professionalism:

The Course Calendar contains weekly class prep assignments, which may be supplemented by individual professors. These assignments are designed for students to prepare for class, to attempt new skills, and to stay on schedule for graded projects. Class prep assignments allow students, Writing Fellows, and professors to gauge learning and respond accordingly.

Class prep assignments are "entry tickets" for class, and students who fail to complete them may be asked to leave class. In such cases, the student will be marked absent. Failure to complete class prep assignments may also result in a failing grade for the course. A good-faith effort is required on all course assignments regardless of whether they are graded, and additional work may be assigned when a student's original assignment does not demonstrate minimum competency.

Students are expected to participate in class and behave as professionals. Participation and professionalism include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Completing reading and other assignments before class
- Fully engaging in class discussions and exercises
- Demonstrating a willingness to experiment with new skills and approaches
- Exhibiting respect for classmates, Writing Fellows, librarians, and professors
- Preparing for individual meetings with an agenda, emailed in advance to the professor (see below)
- Asking questions only after attempting to find answers using available resources
- Using technology appropriately

An in-depth discussion of professionalism is posted on the LRWA I Main TWEN, and a description of appropriate preparation for individual meetings follows.

Preparation for Individual Meetings

Mandatory individual writing conferences take place twice during the semester. These are student-led conferences; as such, students are expected to prepare an agenda aimed at

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improving their understanding and their work product. Such preparation necessarily entails feedback review and self-reflection. Ideally, a student should prepare specific questions or direct the professor to specific parts of a paper. Broad questions like “how is my draft?” or “could you explain IRAC?” are not effective topics for an individual meeting. Targeted issues like “I am having trouble identifying the key facts that should be included in a case illustration” are appropriate. Students should be mindful that meetings last approximately 15 to 20 minutes and should tailor their agenda accordingly; typically, about three issues can be addressed in the time allotted. Professors may set additional requirements for meetings and will notify students of such requirements in advance.

**Where to Get Help**

*Program Concerns:* Professor FitzGerald or Professor Trumbo

*Class Content:* Section Professor or Writing Fellow

*Citation, Formatting, and Writing Style:* Writing Fellows

*Research:* Reference Librarians

*Basic Grammar:* University Writing Center

*Accommodations:* University Disability Services / [ods@gmu.edu](mailto:ods@gmu.edu) / 703-993-2474 Please visit <https://ds.gmu.edu> for detailed information about the Disabilities Registration Process. If you have questions about how accommodations are implemented at the law school, please contact Annamaria Nields, Associate Dean for Administration and Student Affairs, at [aniels@gmu.edu](mailto:aniels@gmu.edu).

**Syllabus Changes**

The Director reserves the right to revise the syllabus and LRWA Rules. Students will be notified of any changes, and a revised syllabus will be posted on LRWA I Main TWEN.

**Course Calendar**

Due dates may be exported to Outlook, iCal, or Google from the LRWA I Main TWEN calendar.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>To Prepare for Class</b>
Week 1 8/21-8/25	Introduction to the Course & the Office Memo  Outlining a Rules & Identifying Issues  WF Punctuation Review	<b>Read:</b> LRWA I Syllabus & Rules ALW Ch. 1 & 4, Appendix A Week 1 Folder (Main TWEN)  <b>Set up:</b> <b>ICW, Peerceptiv &amp; Core Grammar</b> accounts  <b>Submit:</b> <b>Library Tour</b> to Research Exercise Drop Box on Main TWEN before class  <b>Bring to class:</b> <b>Jammer Exercise 1</b>

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<b>Core Grammar Pre-Test due 8/27 before 11:59 PM</b>		
Week 2 8/28-9/1	Introduction to IRAC  <b>IRAC:</b> Rules & Case Illustrations  WF Active Verbs	<b>Read:</b> ALW Ch. 6-7 Week 2 Folder  <b>Bring to class:</b> <b>Jammer Exercise 2</b>
<b>Core Grammar Sections A, D &amp; F due 9/3 before 11:59 PM</b>		
Week 3 9/4-9/8	<b>IRAC:</b> Applying the Law & Concluding  Revising for symmetry  WF Case Anatomy & Basic Citation	<b>Read:</b> ALW Ch. 8-9 & Ch. 16 (pp. 259-67) Week 3 Folder  <b>Submit:</b> <b>Jammer Exercise 3</b> to Peerceptiv before class
<b>Core Grammar Sections B, C &amp; E due 9/10 before 11:59 PM</b>		
Week 4 9/11-9/15	Organizing Authority  Connecting IRACs  WF Signals & Short Forms	<b>Read:</b> ALW Ch. 5 & 12 Week 4 Folder  <b>Bring to class:</b> <b>Closed memo case charts</b>
Week 5 9/18-9/22	Research Session 1: Introduction to Research	<b>Read:</b> Nutshell Ch. 1 No weekly folder; material will be posted <i>after class</i> under "Research Materials"  <b>Submit after class:</b> <b>Research Exercise 1</b> to Research Exercise Drop Box on Main TWEN before 11:59 PM on 9/22
<b>CLOSED MEMO CONFERENCE DRAFT due 9/24 before 6 PM SELF-ASSESSMENT due 9/24 before 11:59 PM ICW Exercises 1, 2, 3 &amp; 5 due 9/24 before 11:59 PM</b>		
Week 6 9/25-9/29	Facts & Conclusion  WF Surplus Words	<b>Read:</b> ALW Ch. 14-15 Week 6 Folder  <b>Submit:</b> <b>Facts &amp; Conclusion</b> to Peerceptiv before class
<b>Core Grammar Post-Test due 10/1 before 11:59 PM</b>		

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Week 7 10/2-10/6	Individual Meetings	<p><b>Read:</b> ALW Ch. 16 Week 7 Folder</p> <p><b>Email:</b> <b>Conference worksheet &amp; list of questions</b> to professor 24 hours before your meeting</p>
<b>CLOSED MEMO due 10/8 before 6 PM</b>		
Week 8 10/9-10/13	Research Session 2: Secondary Sources	<p><b>Read:</b> Nutshell Ch. 2 (read) &amp; Appendix B (skim) Open Memo Materials (Main TWEN) No weekly folder; material will be posted <i>after class</i> under "Research Materials"</p> <p><b>Submit after class:</b> <b>Research Exercise 2</b> to Research Exercise Drop Box on Main TWEN before 11:59 PM on 10/13</p>
Week 9 10/16-10/20	Research Session 3: Cases & Citators	<p><b>Read:</b> ALW Ch. 5 (review) Nutshell Ch. 3 No weekly folder; material will be posted <i>after class</i> under "Research Materials"</p> <p><b>Submit after class:</b> <b>Research Exercise 3</b> to Research Exercise Drop Box on Main TWEN before 11:59 PM on 10/20</p>
	WF Research Meetings	<p><b>Submit:</b> <b>Open Memo Research Plan</b> to Section TWEN 24 hours before your meeting</p>
Week 10 10/23-10/27	<p>Question Presented &amp; Brief Answer</p> <p>Research Debrief</p> <p>Using Cases Effectively</p> <p>WF Explanatory Parentheticals &amp; Advanced Signals</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> ALW Ch. 13 Week 10 Folder</p> <p><b>Submit:</b> <b>Open Memo Annotated Outline</b> to Section TWEN before class</p> <p><b>Bring to class:</b> <b>QP/BA worksheet</b></p>



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Week 11 10/30-11/3	Open Memo Questions  E-memos  WF IRAC for Essay Exams	<b>Read:</b> ALW Ch. 18 Week 11 Folder  <b>Submit:</b> <b>Open Memo Roadmap &amp; IRAC</b> to Peerceptiv before class
<b>ICW Exercises 12 &amp; 13 due 11/5 before 11:59 PM</b>		
Week 12 11/6-11/10	<b>LRWA Exam (in class)</b>  Individual Meetings	<b>Submit:</b> <b>Open Memo Conference Draft, conference worksheet &amp; list of questions</b> 24 hours before your meeting to Section TWEN
Week 13 11/13-11/17	Common Issues  Final Editing & Polishing	<b>Read:</b> ALW Ch. 16 (review) Week 13 Folder  <b>Email:</b> Short <b>Open Memo excerpt</b> for group critique to professor and Writing Fellow 24 hours before class  <b>Bring to class:</b> Complete and near-final <b>Open Memo</b>
<b>OPEN MEMO due 11/19 before 6 PM</b>		

**LRWA Rules**

**Scope of the Rules**

These Rules apply to all students and assignments in LRWA I: Introduction to Legal Research, Writing, and Analysis (“course”). The Rules simulate court rules that practicing attorneys must follow.

**Rule 1. Course Attendance & Engagement**

1.1 **Course Attendance.** A professor or Writing Fellow will take attendance during every class session. Students are also responsible for maintaining their own attendance records. Pursuant to Academic Regulation 4-1, a student must be present for at least 75% of a class session to be counted as having attended that session, and any student missing more than 20% of the class sessions will not receive credit for the course. Each mandatory individual writing conference counts as a class session.

1.2 **Excessive Absences.** Any student who may miss more than 20% of the class sessions should immediately notify Annamaria Nields, Associate Dean for Administration and Student Affairs.

1.3 **Postings and Email.** Students must check both Main TWEN and their Section TWEN daily for updates to the course syllabus and assignments. Students must also check their George Mason email account each day.

## **Rule 2. Individual Work and Sources of Assistance with Assignments**

2.1 **Restrictions on Assistance, Discussion, and Collaboration.** All coursework submitted by a student is expected to be the student's own work. Therefore, except as provided below, students may not seek, provide, or accept writing, editing, or proofreading assistance from any person. Likewise, in accordance with the law school GAI policy, students are prohibited from using generative artificial intelligence in drafting or writing coursework. Outside of class, students may not discuss the substantive content of course assignments, nor may students review each other's coursework during the semester. Because later assignments build on earlier assignments, this prohibition applies to drafts as well as final or graded assignments.

2.2 **Permitted Classroom Discussion, Group Exercises, and Peer Review.** Students are permitted to, and encouraged to, engage in collaborative discussion and writing exercises when directed by their professor or Writing Fellow. Professors or Writing Fellows may distribute student work in class or post student work for instructional purposes, including critique and analysis. Students may also be asked to exchange work in class or on the Peerceptiv platform for peer review exercises. Students should discuss fellow students' work in a professional and respectful manner.

2.3 **Permitted Assistance.** Students may seek assistance on course assignments from their section professor, law librarians, Writing Fellows, the Director, the Assistant Director, and the Writing Center only.

2.4 **Consequence(s) of Violation(s).** Students who violate these rules may receive a "0" for the assignment(s) involved, an "F" for the final grade in the course, a referral to the Honor Committee, or any combination of these penalties.

## **Rule 3. Plagiarism**

3.1 **Plagiarism.** A student must provide proper attribution when using the words or ideas of another person or a court. Students must use quotation marks when using another writer's exact wording or when only slightly altering another writer's wording. Carelessness or lack of intent does not excuse plagiarism.

3.2 **Consequence(s) of Violation(s).** Students who violate this rule may receive a “0” for the assignment(s) involved, an “F” for the final grade in the course, a referral to the Honor Committee, or any combination of these penalties.

#### **Rule 4. Submission of Assignments**

4.1 **Due Dates and Times.** Assignments are due as provided in the Course Calendar. **For deadlines “before” a stated time, submissions at or after the stated time are late. Late submissions will receive a “0.”**

4.2 **Submission Method.** Students must follow the submission instructions outlined in the syllabus or assignment memorandum, or provided by the professor.

4.3 **TWEN Submissions.** For assignments that require TWEN submission, students should access the appropriate drop box. Before submitting, students should ensure that they have attached the correct document. Resubmissions will not be allowed.

Because there may be a time delay on TWEN, students should **begin to submit assignments at least fifteen minutes before the deadline** to ensure timely submission. The clock on the TWEN will determine the time of the submission. **Students assume the risk of a late submission by waiting to submit an assignment until the final minutes before a deadline.**

Upon submission, the student will receive a confirmation email that contains the date and time of submission. Students must retain a copy of the confirmation email; this email will be required if the student has any submission issue or question regarding timely submission of any assignment.

In the unlikely event that an assignment fails to upload to TWEN because of a TWEN malfunction, a student may email the assignment to the Director at [sfitzg11@gmu.edu](mailto:sfitzg11@gmu.edu). The time and date of receipt of the email will determine the timeliness of the submission. In the event of an email submission, the Director may investigate the student’s activity on TWEN, including when submissions were attempted via TWEN, and any email submission may be rejected if the student did not first attempt submission via TWEN.

4.4 **Penalties Associated with Anonymous Grading Numbers.** Students must use an anonymous grading number (“AGN”) instead of their name on anonymous-graded assignments. A student’s final grade on any anonymous-graded assignment may be reduced by 0.25 of a point if the student fails to register an AGN by the deadline or submits the assignment with the wrong AGN.

**4.5 Deadline Extensions.** Only the Director may grant an extension of an assignment deadline; students must not direct extension requests to section professors or Writing Fellows. Extensions will be granted rarely and only for circumstances entirely beyond the control of the student. Students seeking an extension must (1) inform the Director of the emergency before the due date and time for the assignment, if possible, (2) provide a written request to the Director as soon as practicable, and (3) provide documentation if requested. Extensions will not be granted for computer malfunctions, internet service disruptions, or other technological issues; such issues are not unexpected or rare.

## **Rule 5. Format**

**5.1 Formatting Requirements.** Unless specifically directed otherwise, all writing assignments must be:

- In Microsoft Word format;
- Formatted for 8-1/2" x 11" unruled white paper with 1-inch margins;
- In black Times New Roman 12-point font (including footnotes and page numbers);
- Left aligned, with indentation to indicate the beginning of a paragraph;
- Page-numbered, with only the typed page number centered at the bottom of the page;
- Double-spaced, with no extra spacing between paragraphs or sections *except* (1) extra space must be added to avoid stranding a heading at the bottom of a page, (2) footnotes, block quotations, multi-line section headings must be single-spaced, and (3) multi-line components in the main heading (e.g., a two-line subject) must be single-spaced.
- In compliance with the page or word limit, if stated;
- For office memoranda or portions of office memoranda, in compliance with LRWA Rule 6;
- For anonymous-graded assignments, students must include their anonymous grading number (AGN) in the file name and memorandum heading. No other identifying information should appear anywhere in the file name or the document. Students are therefore responsible for excluding their names and for removing metadata from anonymous-graded assignments.

**5.2 Special Formatting Instructions.** Special formatting instructions, different from or in addition to those specified above, may apply to a course assignment. Whenever students are expected to follow special formatting rules, students will be informed of such expectations in writing.

**5.3 Penalties for Non-Compliance.** Failure to comply with any formatting rule on an anonymously graded assignment will result in a deduction from the final grade for the assignment of one-quarter (0.25) point per violation, not to exceed a cumulative one-point deduction on any given assignment.

**Rule 6. Memorandum Heading**

Office memoranda and portions of office memoranda must have the following heading:

**MEMORANDUM**

To: [INSERT professor's name]

From: [INSERT student's name or AGN, as appropriate]

Date: [INSERT assignment due date]

Re: [INSERT subject]

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[INSERT body of memorandum]

**Rule 7. Document Retention**

**7.1 Retention Requirements.** Students must retain one ungraded copy of every assignment submitted and the graded copy returned from their professor until all grades for the course are available from the registrar. The student must also retain the TWEN email confirmation indicating the date and time of submission.

**7.2 Retained Documents for Grade Appeals.** Grade appeals on individual assignments are not permitted. Any student wishing to appeal a final course grade must follow the procedure outlined in the Academic Regulations, and must retain and make available to the Director the ungraded copies, the email confirmations and attachments, and the graded copies of all assignments submitted by the student for the course.