

PHYS/GLBL 280

Writing Lab 03/22/2026

Discussion of RE3v2 & RPCR

RE4

- **RE4v1 Due April 1st at 10 pm**
- Scenario: You are an intelligence analyst for the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), which brings together analysts and specialists from the CIA, FBI, DoD, and other federal agencies. With personnel changes arising from the transition between two presidential administrations, you are in charge of writing and disseminating a brief report that establishes a shared baseline for incoming staff. The January 2026 report from the Department of Homeland Security's Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Office (CWMD), which documented over 1,000 operations, engagements, trainings, and exercises across 48 states and territories in Calendar Year 2025, underscores the ongoing urgency of this briefing. Your report should explain the NCTC's accepted definition of terrorism, the key distinctions between types of terrorism relevant to a nuclear context, and the principal avenues by which terrorist actors might seek to acquire nuclear-explosive materials or intact nuclear weapons. The report will serve as an introductory document to facilitate a more productive and informed discussion of nuclear terrorism threats among new Center personnel.

RE4

- Scenario cont.: The body of your report should begin with a brief summary of the report's content and purpose, include an introduction that establishes the stakes and context of the issue for your specific audience, address all required content in a logical and well-organized sequence of sections, and conclude with a brief reflection on the broader significance of the issue for your audience. Unlike previous required essays, no further structural guidance will be given; determining the most logical and effective organization is part of the assignment, and RE4v0 is designed to help you work that out before you begin drafting.

RE4v0

- RE4v0: In real technical writing, we are often not given much more direction than the prompt above. RE4v0 is meant to help you identify the tasks you need to complete before you begin drafting, as well as the important writing elements to consider, such as style choices. It is also the basis for determining how to structure the body of your RE4v1: the organization of your sections, the order of your arguments, and the genre conventions you will follow are all decisions you should work out here before you begin drafting. For RE4v0, write 2 to 3 bullet points that describe important aspects of each of the following categories:
 - Coverage of issues and information
 - Precise and accurate use of concepts
 - Explanation and argument
 - Professional style (including sources to be used)
 - Conformity to conventions

RE4v0

Identify the following:

- Course texts from which to pull information for your report.
- An appropriate report structure for a BLUF-format intelligence product ('Bottom Line Up Front')
- Key NCTC writing style and conventions to follow, including accuracy, brevity, and clarity standards described in the [BLUF guide](#).
- Content necessary to meet the aims of this document, including definitions, typologies, acquisition pathways, and fissile material stocks.

RE4v0 is worth 5% of your RE4v1 grade.

In the Writing Lab on **March 30th**, you will finalize your rubric suggestions and discuss them with your classmates to collectively develop the [assessment rubric](#). After receiving your suggestions, submitted as RE4v0, the course staff will compile the key aspects discussed into a formal collective rubric. You will use this rubric to guide your first draft and your peer response.

RE4v1

- Base your report on the assigned course readings and the current (Spring 2026) class slides on Nuclear Terrorism. You will identify the relevant readings as part of RE4v0.
- You will be graded on the content and clarity of your report as well as your ability to conform to the writing style of your chosen genre; see the [rubric](#) and the [NCTC Terrorist Threat Snapshot](#).
- Assume your reader is a knowledgeable federal official who is new to the NCTC and needs clear, direct, and efficiently organized information.
- 1.25-1.5 pages
- Use only the sources identified in RE4v0

RE4v1

After writing your own complete draft, you will use the AI to stress-test your reasoning about acquisition pathways.

1. Write your own complete standalone draft (no AI use) of the report. This draft should reflect your best effort to conform to the genre conventions.
2. Provide your completed draft and the sources you used to your AI tool. Prompt it to critique your discussion of the possible pathways by which terrorist actors might seek to acquire fissile materials or a nuclear device, and to evaluate your choice of the highest-risk pathway.
3. Compare the AI's response to your own analysis. Write a paragraph explaining why you either accept or reject the AI's assessment, using specific evidence from your course readings and slides.
4. Using what you learned from this exchange, revise your draft where necessary.
5. Prepare the final version of RE4v1.

Note: the goal of this procedure is not to replace your own analysis with the AI's. It is to sharpen your reasoning by comparing your conclusions to an outside perspective and defending your choices with evidence. Your final report should be entirely your own.

RE4v1

- AI Disclosure Statement and Writer's Memo
- Peer Review - include 3-5 questions for your peer reviewer in the writer's memo

Preparation for Midterm (Essay Question)

1) https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_preptalks_buddemeier_facilitator-slides.pdf

2) <https://www.fema.gov/blog/preptalks-brooke-buddemeier-saving-lives-after-nuclear-detonation>

(First 14 minutes of 25)

3) Extra Reading (not for writing lab): https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_oet-72-hour-nuclear-detonation-response-guidance.pdf

4) Discussion: What are the most important steps the cities of Urbana-Champaign should take shelter promptly? Use information discussed in Buddemeier's talk