



THE WASHINGTON MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

May 18, 2009

Dear Student:

On behalf of the Washington Mentorship Program, we welcome you to American University. To set the stage for your first semester here at AU, we have chosen a book that we call our “community text” for you to read before you arrive in August. You and your classmates will discuss the book and write about it in your first-semester College Writing class. The College Writing Program also sponsors an essay contest to honor the best writing inspired by the community text.

We’re delighted to announce this year’s choice: Farhad Manjoo’s *True Enough: Learning to Live in a Post-Fact Society*. We will bring Mr. Manjoo to campus this August for the twelfth annual Writer as Witness Colloquium on **Friday, August 21**. He will address the American University community and meet with students and faculty to discuss the book.

In *True Enough*, Mr. Manjoo explores what Stephen Colbert calls “truthiness”— something that feels true without a substantial basis in fact – and argues that modern communications technology has intensified our dependence on belief over fact. Drawing on research in psychology and economics, Manjoo shows how we choose “facts” that accord with our beliefs. Disagreements arise, therefore, not merely about opinions and interpretations but about the truth of essential “facts” themselves.

Mr. Manjoo was born in South Africa and immigrated to the U.S. with his family in the late 1980s. In 2000, he graduated from Cornell University, where he edited the *Cornell Daily Sun*. He has written for *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Salon*, and *Wired*. He is currently a staff writer at *Slate Magazine*, writing frequently on journalism, politics, and new media. We are eager to introduce you to Mr. Manjoo at the Writer as Witness Colloquium and to hear your responses to his book.

As you read this summer, think about possible questions for the author to address during the August Colloquium. You may email questions or comments to <cw@american.edu>. You also will have the chance to ask your questions directly at the Writer as Witness Colloquium on August 21. We look forward to meeting you there to begin our campus-wide conversation about the issues raised by Mr. Manjoo’s work. Enjoy the rest of your summer.

Cordially

David Brown
Dean, Washington Semester Program