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**Jeremy Allen Jacobson\*** ([jeremy.a.jacobson@emory.edu](mailto:jeremy.a.jacobson@emory.edu)), 400 Dowman Dr, Atlanta, GA 30322, Mathematics and Science Center, Suite E427, Atlanta, GA 30329. *On the signature of a quadratic form.*

The signature of a quadratic form plays an important role in the study of quadratic forms in a Witt group. For any algebraic variety  $X$  over the real numbers  $\mathbb{R}$ , it allows one to relate quadratic forms over  $X$  to the singular cohomology of the real points  $X(\mathbb{R})$ . This has applications to bounding the order of torsion in the Witt group of quadratic forms over  $X$ . (Received September 16, 2014)