**EXPOS 20: PARADOX IN PUBLIC HEALTH**

**Spring 2014**

**INSTRUCTOR:**
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**OFFICE HOURS:** Mondays 1:00-2:30pm

**CLASS:**  
Robinson Hall 106  
Section 243: Monday/Wednesday 10am  
Section 244: Monday/Wednesday 11am

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** What happens when public health efforts to improve the wellbeing of a population undermine the wellbeing of individuals in that population? Can this outcome be avoided? Public health is characterized by the implications of this fundamental paradox: the health needs of a population are often at odds with the health needs of the very individuals who comprise that population. How does this larger paradox play out across various public health campaigns? For example, public health as practiced today is intended to empower individuals to make their own health decisions; however, much public health policy (seatbelt laws, anti-smoking ordinances, etc.) actually limit individual choices.

In this class, we will use scientific articles to consider potential paradoxes in public health, both historical and contemporary. In Unit 1, we will wrestle with issues of current vaccination requirements, and consider the intersection of personal choice versus societal responsibility using current MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccines. In Unit 2, students will debate the nature of public health motivation and practice—who decides what existing public health needs are? Two case studies will guide this discussion: goiter—a successfully eliminated (but now reemerging!) disease of micronutrient deficiency—and ongoing tobacco-control efforts. In Unit 3, students will conduct their own research on a controversial modern public health issue of their choice, and consider how the larger tension between the individual and the population is manifested in the student’s particular selected public health controversy.

Our course will be a combination of in-class and online discussion, activities, and lecture. Students will also be asked to meet individually with the instructor for conferences about the major papers. **At all times, questions/comments are welcomed and encouraged.**

**COURSE CONDUCT AND MATERIALS:** You are expected to actively participate in your own educational process, via asking questions, engaging in discussion, and experimenting with learning techniques to determine which is most helpful to you. Use common sense, and be respectful of each other and yourself.
There are no required texts for you to purchase for this course. Instead, I have compiled a set of texts and materials into a coursepack provided online and in-class over the course of the semester. You should obtain a binder (or similar) in which to print and archive these materials. **You are expected to bring your course binder to every class.**

All students are expected to take notes during class, and are responsible for the material covered during activities, in-class and online discussions, and lecture. Please do not use laptops during class unless otherwise instructed. Each morning, there will be a check-in sheet on which you should mark yourself “present”; the sheet will be removed at 10 minutes after the hour, after which you are considered to be late (three unexcused lates are equivalent to one absence). Students more than 20 minutes late to any class meeting are marked absent.

The course website has the syllabus, readings and other announcements. This will be the central administrative location for the class, so make sure to check it often. Outside of class, email is the primary method for communicating announcements and administrative arrangements. You must check your email daily, and you will be responsible for the information I post there. I will do the same, and will check and respond to email at least once each business day. Emails sent to the class are archived on the website.

Our conferences are meant to give you the kind of one-on-one attention a writing student needs. We will have three conference meetings during the semester. They will focus largely on strategies for making the kinds of revisions that go past the meager and simplistic process of spell checking or even extending a paper’s length. Scheduling during conference week is tight, and exacerbated by lateness or missed appointments. The time we set aside for you is your time; wasted or missed appointments will not be rescheduled. You are, of course, encouraged to see me outside these conferences, either during my office hours or via email, but during conference week, I can’t hold office hours of any kind.

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:** Your grades largely come from three major papers, each of which involves a draft, conference with me, revision, and final document. To take full advantage of the course, and to enable students to succeed on the major papers and assignments, there will be additional assigned activities and readings. The activities will be completed in-class or for homework. Activities and readings will be provided during class or available online on the course website. I will assess your participation grade holistically at the end of the semester based on the timely completion of short assignments, active participation in class, conferences and online, and thoughtful responses to the work of your peers; simply attending class is insufficient to receive full marks for participation. Grades are broken down as follows:

- Paper 1: 25%
- Paper 2: 30%
- Paper 3: 35%
- Drafts, Response papers, Peer critiques, Ready participation: 10%

- **Due dates:** You will routinely have assignments due before class on Mondays and Wednesdays, and Fridays online. *All paper drafts are due online on a Friday.* Due dates for assignments will be available on our course website.

- **Late assignments:** Please carefully review the Harvard College Writing Program Policy on Submission of Work, below: *if I cannot open or read a file you’ve uploaded for submission, it is subject to a late penalty as follows.*
  - **Revisions:** Grades for unexcused late assignments will depreciate by a third of a letter grade per day, including any fraction of a day late, from the original due date/time. For example, if you would have gotten a B+, it depreciates to a B being one day late, a B- for 2 days late, and so on. Unexcused late revisions will not be accepted more than 4 days past the deadline.
Drafts: Unexcused late drafts will affect the grade on your revised paper, as above; unexcused late drafts will not be accepted more than 4 days past the deadline. Due to the intense pace of the course, late drafts forfeit the opportunity to receive instructor feedback.

For those assignments that do not receive a letter grade, late or incomplete assignments adversely affect your participation grade. Due to the intense pace of the course, late assignments forfeit the opportunity to receive instructor feedback.

Units in Brief:

- **Unit 1:** All 50 US states require children to have vaccinations before entering public school. While all states currently allow medical exemptions from this requirement, some also allow religious and philosophical exemptions. Focusing on vaccines for measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR), students will use primary literature to craft and argue a policy position on vaccine mandates and exemptions. **Draft due date: February 21.**

- **Unit 2:** There have been many public health triumphs in the United States during the 20th century. We explore two of those examples—safer and healthier foods, and recognition of tobacco as a health hazard—using case studies from Michigan and Massachusetts respectively. But what is public health? What goals and motives does or should public health have? Students will explore these questions using the public health cases studies. **Draft due date: March 14.**

- **Unit 3:** Why is public health controversial? What are the main issues that frame that controversy? Within this framework, students will select a current, controversial public health intervention of their choice, and write a research paper outlining and taking a stand on the nature of the debate. **Draft due date: April 18.**

Course Policies:

- **Academic Honesty & Collaboration:** Throughout the semester we’ll work on the proper use of sources, including how to cite and how to avoid plagiarism. You should always feel free to ask me questions about this material. All the work that you submit for this course must be your own, and that work should not make use of outside sources unless that is explicitly part of the assignment. Any student submitting plagiarized work is eligible to fail the course and to be subject to disciplinary action by the Administrative Board. It is your responsibility to be familiar with the Harvard policy on plagiarism: [http://handbook.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k88702&pageid=icb.page516359](http://handbook.fas.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k88702&pageid=icb.page516359).

Scholars customarily turn to their colleagues for feedback on their work; when the help is significant, the colleague is thanked in a footnote, endnote or cover letter, and it is expected that you’ll follow that convention in Expos. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work.

The following kinds of collaboration are permitted in this course: developing or refining ideas in conversation with other students and through peer review of written work (including feedback from Writing Center tutors). If you would like to acknowledge the impact someone had on your essay, it is customary to do this in a footnote at the beginning of the paper. As stated in the *Student Handbook*, “Students need not acknowledge discussion with others of general approaches to the assignment or assistance with proofreading.” However, all work submitted for this course must be your own: in other words, writing response papers, drafts or revisions with other students is expressly forbidden and can result in disciplinary action by the Ad Board.
Accommodations: Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the Accessible Education Office (www.aeo.fas.harvard.edu/) and speak with the professor by the end of the second week of the term.

Harvard College Writing Program Policy on Attendance Because Expos has a shorter semester and fewer class hours than other courses, and because instruction in Expos proceeds by sequential writing activities, your consistent attendance is essential. If you are absent without medical excuse more than twice, you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and given a failing grade. On the occasion of your second unexcused absence, you will receive a letter warning you of your situation. This letter will also be sent to your Resident Dean, so the College can give you whatever supervision and support you need to complete the course.

Apart from religious holidays, only medical absences can be excused. In the case of a medical problem, you should contact your preceptor before the class to explain, but in any event within 24 hours: otherwise you will be required to provide a note from UHS or another medical official, or your Resident Dean. Absences because of special events such as athletic meets, debates, conferences, and concerts are not excusable absences. If such an event is very important to you, you may decide to take one of your two allowable unexcused absences; but again, you are expected to contact your preceptor beforehand if you will miss a class, or at least within 24 hours. If you wish to attend an event that will put you over the two-absence limit, you should contact your Resident Dean and you must directly petition the Expository Writing Senior Preceptor, who will grant such petitions only in extraordinary circumstances and only when your work in the class has been exemplary.

Harvard College Writing Program Policy on Completion of Work: Because your Expos course is a planned sequence of writing, you must write all of the assigned essays to pass the course, and you must write them within the schedule of the course—not in the last few days of the semester after you have fallen behind. You will receive a letter reminding you of these requirements, therefore, if you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of an essay by the final due date in that essay unit. The letter will also specify the new date by which you must submit the late work, and be copied to your Resident Dean. If you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of the essay by this new date, and you have not documented a medical problem, you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and given a failing grade.

Harvard College Writing Program Policy on Submission of Work: You will submit much of your work electronically this semester. As you send or upload each document, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have saved the document following the conventions for file name and document type outlined in the course Style Guide. It is your responsibility to ensure that the file you send is able to opened, and is not corrupted or damaged. If I cannot open or read the file you have sent, the essay will be subject to a late penalty.

Beyond Expos: Different fields have somewhat different styles of argument (different types of evidence, different modes of analysis, etc.). Keep an eye out for these “Beyond Expos” boxes in your course packet—they exist to help you understand differences among fields’ conventions and terminologies, and to make you aware of some of the writing assignments you may encounter in courses beyond Expos.

What to Do Now: When you get to this point, please e-mail me to say that you read the syllabus. Feel free to ask any questions that you may have about the seminar. I’ll do my best to answer you.
WHAT IF I NEED HELP?
Office Hours and Writing Center

The art and science of asking questions is the source of all knowledge.
--Thomas Berger

WHY GO TO OFFICE HOURS?
Many of you may never have attended faculty office hours. Throughout college, office hours are a common and preferred method of instructor-student interaction. Particularly in larger classes, this is a way for you to get more personalized attention in a course. It’s okay to come to arrive in the middle of the scheduled hours and to leave when you need to; you don’t have to stay the entire time. Here are some possible reasons you might have to come to office hours:

• I didn’t understand what you said about this one thing in class this week.
• I didn’t understand why you said this one thing in class.
• How can I use what we discussed on my paper?
• How can I use what we discussed in other classes?
• I’m working really hard and I’m not improving. What can I do?
• I don’t know how to start on this assignment. What can I do?
• I’m afraid to participate in class. What can I do?
• I have these Skittles and I’d love to share them with someone on a Monday afternoon…
• In another class, we learned this other thing which seems different than what you said. What’s up?
• I’m interested in the content of this article. How can I learn more about it?
• How can I figure out what study habits will work for me?

FINDING MY OFFICE AND THE WRITING CENTER:
Joe is the wonderful fellow who works at the front desk of the Writing Program throughout the year, and one of the least thankful tasks he faces each semester is directing people to the offices of Preceptors. In order to make life a little easier on Joe—who makes life a lot easier on students and Preceptors alike—here’s a step-by-step guide to finding my office without recourse to office personnel:

My office is located in the Writing Program’s main office suite #250, which is turn located on the second floor of 1 Bow St. To enter the building, you MUST press your Harvard ID card on the card reader on the left side of the building’s front door. Building hours are 8am-6pm M-F. For those of you who are less familiar with that side of campus, here’s a map of the area. Once in the building, take the elevator to the second floor—the Writing Program is to your right (Suite 250) upon exiting the elevator. The suite is unlocked 8:30am-5pm M-F. Once you enter the office suite, turn right, and my office is the first door on your left, #220.

WHY GO TO THE WRITING CENTER?
You may be aware that Harvard has a writing center staffed with tutors who can assist you with your writing. The Writing Center (writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu) is located just across the street from my building in the Barker Center. The University’s Writing Center provides free feedback and individual attention to your work, and you are encouraged to visit them early and often at any point in the semester. It is located on the garden level of the Barker Center, and gives you one of the best deals Harvard can offer. You can make an appointment online at their website. I strongly encourage you to make use of the Writing Center. I can be helpful while working on your draft and/or revisions of a paper.
HARVARD WRITING PROGRAM GRADING RUBRIC

Only a mediocre writer is always at his best. -- Somerset Maugham

A grade is simply an expedient shorthand for the quality of a specific piece of your work at a specific moment in your college career. It does not reflect on you as a person, nor does it augur the quality of your work for the rest of the semester.

The following criteria and rubric serve two purposes: first, they are meant to give you a means of self-evaluation as you draft and revise your papers; second, they are meant to translate the single-character grades you receive on your revised drafts into more useful terms. Ideally, a grade can thus be more than the end of discussion about your work—it can serve the practical purpose of helping you begin to understand the strengths and weaknesses of your own writing and help you focus on how to improve it in the future. Also, by providing you with the criteria and rubric used to arrive at your grades, you and I will be in the best position to evaluate together the degree to which you, as a writer, and I, as a reader, either are or are not on the same page.

A general note: Each paper prompt includes the major objectives emphasized in that paper. As the semester progresses, the grading for each paper will be increasingly harder, as you'll be asked to effectively use an increasing number of criteria.

CRITERIA:

• Thesis: Is there one main argument in the essay? Is it clear and focused? Does it fulfill the assignment? Does it address some analytical question, problem, issue, or controversy of consequence? Is the thesis clearly stated early in the essay? Is it interesting, complex? Is it argued throughout?

• Evidence and Analysis: Does the argument offer supporting evidence for each of its points? Is the evidence sufficient and appropriate? Is the analysis of the evidence insightful and convincing, extending beyond content summary to consider details, patterns, and implications? Is the evidence itself effectively analyzed and then used in support of your argument?

• Structure: Is the argument clearly organized? Is it easy to understand the main points? Does it develop its claims and implications in a clear, thoughtful way? Is it unified? Is it easy to follow? Does the paper signal its transitions? Does it effectively orient its reader?

• Sources: Are the appropriate or assigned sources being used? Are they introduced in an understandable way? Is their purpose in the argument clear? Do they do more than merely affirm the writer’s viewpoint or merely present a “straw man” for the writer to knock down? Are there sources which should have been included but weren’t? Are responsible inferences drawn from them? Are they properly attributed? Is the bibliographical information correct?

• Stance & Style: Is the style appropriate for its audience and subject matter? Is the writing concise, cohesive, and to the point? Are the sentences clear and grammatically correct? Are there spelling, proofreading, and formatting errors? Does the writer engage his or her readers respectfully? Is the language precise, concise, and grammatical? Is the tone of the paper appropriate to the audience?
**EXPOS 20 RUBRIC:**

The standards below are those I use to assign grades on the revised papers. I assign grades on the quality of the paper submitted, not on effort, amount of improvement or time spent. Pluses and minuses represent shades of difference within these standards.

- **A-level:** Excellent in every way (this is not the same as perfect). This is an ambitious, perceptive paper that grapples with interesting, complex ideas; responds discerningly to counter-arguments; and explores well-chosen evidence revealingly. It argues an insightful thesis claim and/or responds to a clear analytical question that controls the entire paper. The writing enhances, rather than underscores, the author’s knowledge (it doesn’t simply repeat what has been taught). There is context provided for all the ideas; someone outside the class would be enriched, not confused, by reading the paper. Its beginning opens up, rather than flatly announces, its thesis. Its end is something more than a summary. The language is clean, precise, and often elegant. Readers feel surprised, delighted, or otherwise have their ideas shifted. There’s something new here for the reader, something only the paper’s author could have written and explored, in this particular way. The author’s stake in the material is obvious and the significance is clear to the reader.

- **B-level:** A piece of writing that reaches high and achieves many of its aims. The ideas are solid and progressively explored but some thin patches require more analysis and/or some stray thoughts don’t fit in. The language is generally clear and precise but occasionally not. The evidence is relevant, but there may be too little; the context for the evidence may not be sufficiently explored, so that I have to make some of the connections that the writer should have made clear for me.
  - OR a piece of writing that does not reach as high as an A paper but thoroughly achieves its aims. This is a solid paper whose reasoning and argument may nonetheless be rather routine.

- **C-level:** A piece of writing that has real problems in one of these areas: conception (there’s at least one main idea but it’s fuzzy and hard to get to); structure (confusing); use of evidence (weak or non-existent—the connections among the ideas and the evidence are not made and/or are presented without context, or add up to platitudes or generalizations); language (the sentences are often awkward, dependent on unexplained abstractions, sometimes contradict each other). The essay may not move forward but rather may repeat its main points, or it may touch upon many (and apparently unrelated) ideas without exploring any of them in sufficient depth. Punctuation, spelling, grammar, paragraphing, and transitions may be a problem.
  - OR a paper that is largely summary or a book report of the sources, but is written without major problems.
  - OR a paper that is chiefly a personal reaction to something. Well-written, but scant intellectual/academic content or support—mostly opinion.

- **D & E-level:** These are efforts well short of that needed to grapple seriously with ideas;
  - OR those that are extremely problematic in many of the areas mentioned above: aims, structure, use of evidence, language, etc.;
  - OR those that do not come close to addressing the expectations of the paper assignment.