

Dr. Christina Becker
 Expository Writing 20
 Tu & Th, 10-11am, 11-12pm
 Classroom: Barker 218

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Woolf and Hemingway: Spanning the Modernist Gender Gap

Course topic

Ernest Hemingway and Virginia Woolf—few authors of the twentieth century have been as celebrated and as influential as these two great literary stylists. Yet it's also hard to imagine two authors more unlike. For many readers, Hemingway epitomizes the writer-as-sportsman or adventurer, and his stripped-down writing seems to advocate a masculine ethic of tight-lipped toughness and restraint. By contrast, Woolf is often regarded today as the century's great female writer and forerunner of contemporary feminism; her writing—ethereal, abstract, impressionistic—seems to embody a distinctively female aesthetic. In this course, we will read Woolf and Hemingway together, side by side; and in the essays we write, we will investigate what really distinguishes them—in terms of gender and art (among other things)—and consider how modernist literature may be configured between the opposing values these two icons have come to represent. Primary texts will include short stories by Hemingway, critical essays and short fiction by Woolf, Hemingway's novel *A Farewell to Arms*, and Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Course structure: the three essays

The course is divided into three units. Each unit consists of a series of reading and writing assignments that culminate in the writing of an expository essay. The specific assignments within each unit are arranged so you may practice the writing skills needed to produce the essay that concludes the sequence. The three essay units are organized sequentially for a similar reason; as the semester progresses, you should be able to build on the skills and knowledge you have acquired from your work in the preceding units.

- The **first essay** will give you practice in close reading, which is one of the fundamental critical skills you will be expected to master at college. We'll be closely reading, analyzing, and interpreting a number of very short texts by Hemingway and Woolf in this unit. We begin with some exercises: one on devising significant questions about a story, the other on summarizing a text and locating complication within it. These exercises will also allow us to inquire into the difference between observation, inference, and interpretation. For the essay, you will be asked to select one of the short texts we are reading, to devise a question about it, and then to answer that question by conducting a close-reading of the text. Writing elements discussed in this unit include thesis, motive, orienting, evidence, and style.
- Our **second essay** will give you the opportunity to conduct an argument about a long text—a novel—while investigating the context in which it was written. In this unit, we'll be reading Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, as well as various background materials by Woolf and about modernism. We'll also be reading about arguments and how they are conducted. The pre-draft exercise in this unit will give you some practice reading Woolf's novel with the help of background material: what more can we see in the opening of Woolf's novel when we read it through the lenses of

“Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street”(the short story from which Woolf’s novel sprung) and Woolf’s essays about modern fiction? For the essay in this unit, I will pose a series of questions that address some important aspect of *Mrs. Dalloway*; you will produce, in response, an argument that involves close analysis of the novel and draws support from the background material. Elements of the essay discussed in this unit include analysis, keyterms, sources, and style. We will also work on developing skills of comparison and contrast and look closely at introductions and conclusions.

- The **third essay** will ask you to conduct an argument about a novel—Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms*—while entering the scholarly conversation that critics have had about it. Whereas the second unit effectively brackets off scholarship so you may engage one-on-one with a book and its historical context, this third unit asks you to actively explore scholarship and create an argument that adds to our collective understanding of the text. Besides reading various critical interpretations of the novel, we will also be reading a host of background materials about Hemingway. As usual, you will be given a choice of essay topics to write about. In a preliminary exercise for this unit, you will be asked to choose one of the essay topics and to analyze some of the critical arguments that have published on it. In your essay, you will devise an original argument about your topic that addresses at least three of the critical essays you have read. In this unit, we’ll discuss how to deal with counter-evidence and counter-arguments in your writing. We’ll also address the following writing concerns: stance, structure (which involves matters like unity, coherence, flow, and pacing), paragraphing, transitions, and (once again) style.

Texts

Course readings: photocopied readings to be either handed out in class or downloaded from course iSite (indicated by * in the syllabus)

Ernest Hemingway, *The Short Stories: The First Forty-Nine*

Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

Wayne Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research*, third edition

Gordon Harvey, *Writing with Sources*

(<http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic624846.files/WritingSourcesHarvard.pdf>)

The Harvard Writing Center’s *Strategies for Essay Writing*

(<http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k33202&pageid=icb.page143936>)

Exposé (a magazine of essays by previous Expository Writing students at Harvard)

The Woolf, Hemingway, and Booth texts are available for purchase at the Harvard Coop. *Writing with Sources*, *Strategies for Essay Writing*, and *Exposé* are available in the aforementioned web addresses). All texts included in the course readings (*) will be either handed out to students or uploaded onto the course iSite at the start of each unit; **students will be responsible for buying a three-ring binder for collecting these course readings to create a course reader.**

Course Requirements

Writing Assignments: Essays and Exercises

All essays and drafts of essays you write for this course must be typed or printed, double-spaced, titled, paginated, proof-read, and secured with a staple or paperclip. You should set the margins for your essays at 1 inch all around; this will help make my often illegible marginal comments somewhat more legible. Please be warned that if your essay displays numerous spelling or grammatical errors, it may receive a lower grade. Also, I expect you to be consistent in the style of citation you adopt in any given paper. For our humanities course we will be using the MLA format.

I would like you to give me two copies of every draft and revision (i.e. one hard copy; one electronic copy uploaded to the course dropbox). I will make my comments on the hard copy and use the electronic one for conferences or class-related purposes (like workshops). Deadlines for essays will be listed in the syllabus and essay assignment sheets; these deadlines should be strictly observed. Late papers will be penalized.

Each of our three writing units includes one or more short writing exercises that will prepare you to write the longer essay that follows. These exercises are largely informal, but they should be typed, double-spaced, paginated, and proof-read. Exercises are due in class unless otherwise noted.

At the start of each of our three units, I will hand out and discuss in class the assignment for the upcoming preparatory response paper and essay.

Expository Writing 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 Freshman Dean and the Dean of the College. *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.*”

Class Participation

Our class is a seminar, which means that its success depends on the active involvement of all of its members. By involvement, I mean a number of things: taking part in class discussion; coming to class having done the reading and exercises, and being prepared to talk about them; providing other students in our class with thoughtful feedback on their writing during our draft workshops, peer-editing, and group conferences; being cooperative with others and respectful of opinions that differ from your own. Participation in general describes your efforts to make the course work.

Punctuality and attendance are mandatory. Class starts promptly 7 minutes past the hour. *If you are late to class, please be sure to notify me afterwards.* Otherwise, I will have marked you as absent during roll call. It is the student’s responsibility to keep track of their absences and lateness. Excessively late arrivals (more than ten minutes late) will be marked as unexcused absences.

Expository Writing 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 peril. This letter will also be sent to your Freshman Dean and to the Dean of the College, 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 Freshman Dean, as you will also be required in the case of protracted or repeated illness. *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 Freshman Dean and you must directly petition the Associate Director of Expository Writing, who will grant such petitions only in extraordinary circumstances and only when your work in the class has been exemplary.”

Conferences

You will meet with me at least three times during the semester to discuss your work-in-progress. Conferences will normally take place in the week after a draft of the essay is due and after I have had a chance to read and comment on your paper; they will run for 20 minutes. During the conference we will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of your draft and consider strategies for revision. You should prepare for these meetings by evaluating the progress of your previous unit assignments, re-reading your draft beforehand, picking up and reading my comments (which I will try to make available to you immediately before our conference), and being prepared to discuss any problems or questions you may have about the writing assignment. The third conference in the semester will be a group conference in which you and two other students will meet with me (for about an hour) to discuss each other's work. For this meeting, you should come prepared with comments and suggestions for the other students in our group.

During conference weeks, you will be responsible for signing up for a time slot electronically. You should make a note of when and where we are to meet, and I expect you to notify me well ahead of time if you must cancel your appointment. My schedule is very tight when I'm conferencing with students, so I may not be able to reschedule conferences that are missed without forewarning.

Draft Workshops

The texts used in these sessions will be the drafts that you and other students have produced for our class. The purpose of these workshops is to develop our appreciation for audience and to give you and others practice in evaluating your own work. Before the workshop takes place, I will distribute copies of the essays we will discuss, along with some guidelines for discussion and analysis. As with any class discussion, you are responsible for coming to the workshop having read and thought about the material. You will generally be asked to submit to me, and to the class, a written response to the workshopped material.

Email

We will use email to facilitate the exchange of work and ideas in our class. If you do not already have an email account, please go to the Science Center and open one by the second day of class. I will send you occasional bulletins via email: administrative details, reminders, etc. I will expect you to check your email daily; you will be responsible for information that I send you through it.

There are some things we will not be using email for in our class: for sending me (unsolicited) extra drafts of an essay; for last-minute conference cancellations; for late-night requests for an extension on an essay. Nor should you regard email as a substitute for conferences.

As a general rule, I will be reading my email once in the morning and once in the afternoon between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m (Mondays – Fridays).

Evaluation

Only the final version of an essay will be graded in this class. Preliminary drafts will be extensively commented on. Exercises will be nominally commented on and evaluated with a check, check plus, or check minus.

You should interpret grades in this class as follows: “A” means exceptional, “B” means good, “C” means adequate, “D” means deficient, and “E” means unacceptable.

What are some of the criteria I use when evaluating essays? A strong essay should develop a significant thesis in a coherent and engaging way. The author’s motive or purpose for writing the essay should be made clear, and a logical argument should be offered along with various kinds of evidence. A good essay should also be aware of its audience and should maintain the reader’s interest by using clear, inviting prose. Good writing takes into account possible objections to the author’s argument and engages its material in exciting ways. Throughout this semester, we will be studying criteria like these when we discuss what constitutes an essay. By identifying terms for describing and analyzing different aspects of writing, our course should help you become a more critical reader and writer.

Here’s how much weight I will be assigning to each essay and other work when I tabulate final grades:

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| Essay 1 (4-5 pp.): | 15% |
| Essay 2 (6-7 pp.): | 25% |
| Essay 3 (8-10 pp.): | 35% |
| Exercises and participation: | 25% |