READING THE BODY

Course Overview

What does it mean—and what has it meant—to have a body? Is a body a physical boundary separating a self from the rest of the world? If so, how do we account for cases like contagion or reproduction, where bodies implicate one another? How does the way we think about our bodies depend upon both the technologies we use to manage, diagnose, and measure them and the artistic forms we use to represent them? We’ll begin to explore these questions by analyzing several local collections of medical curiosities and instruments—which include phrenological models of the brain, fetal skeletons, medical diagrams and prints, Civil War surgical instruments, and even Phineas Gage’s skull. In our second unit, we will read across the boundaries of theology, literature, and science—genres we usually imagine as distinct—to understand how writers from a range of perspectives have grasped and represented the origin, construction, and development of the human body. We will examine the works of Jean Baptiste de Lamarck, William Paley, and Charles Darwin and analyze A. S. Byatt’s treatment of their debate in her novella, “Morpho Eugenia.” This interest in how the body has been understood in the past will inform your final research paper, where you will analyze representations of the body in the contemporary texts or contexts of your choice. Throughout the semester, we will ask how and why the body has been theorized in such conflicting ways, calling into question any singular understanding of what constitutes a human body.

We will explore these questions and issues through three multi-draft essays with preliminary exercises, in-class workshops, and individual conferences. For the first essay, you will practice close reading as you create an original argument in response to the object of your choice, found during your field trips to the Warren Anatomical Museum and Massachusetts General Hospital. In the second essay, you will read from the work of Lamark, Paley, Darwin, and Byatt and examine the conversation between at least two of these works about how to define and represent the human body. In the final essay, you will continue to practice the elements of academic argumentation while analyzing multiple texts. You will create a compelling thesis about the body in the text or context of your choice, from film like Contagion to a context like nude portraiture. Through all of these assignments, you will become familiar with the messy yet rewarding process of reading, questioning, writing, rethinking, and rewriting.

The goal of our work in this course is to introduce you to the kinds of writing assignments you will encounter at Harvard – and to approaches to and strategies for those assignments – so that you will be able to write academic essays with confidence and skill. With each essay in this class, you will learn to work with the fundamental methods of academic writing that
all students and scholars use: reading closely, analyzing texts and questioning sources; reasoning with evidence toward your own complex and original ideas; constructing and organizing persuasive arguments; and communicating your ideas in clear and effective prose.

Together as a class, we will explore specific writing issues and challenges common to Harvard assignments. The three units of the course are designed to help you learn about distinct types of essays. But this course consists of not only the work we do together in class; we also focus on the individual questions, interests and strengths you bring to the course. We will focus on the goals particular to your own progress and work as a writer: developing your sense of what you already do well; challenging you to figure out how you want to grow as a writer; expanding your repertoire of drafting and revision techniques.

The three points below form the foundation for our work this semester:

- your writing grows strongest when you treat it as a process. You will develop and write response papers and drafts, which we will discuss in conference and for which you will receive feedback from me and from your fellow writers; you will then revise those drafts, giving your analysis time to evolve and become more interesting and complex.

- your writing will improve most when you possess clear ideas about what you want to accomplish in each assignment: what you want to say, and how you want to grow and improve. Therefore this class asks you to be thoughtful and self-reflective about your writing own process, evaluating your own work in each assignment (in your essay Cover Letters) and in the course as a whole.

- your writing progresses most effectively with the benefit of individual feedback. We will have mandatory individual conferences for each essay you write between each draft and revision. These conferences are our chance to work closely on your writing and to build on the work you do in each response paper and each essay. In addition, my written comments on your work will offer you extensive feedback throughout the semester.

**HOW THE COURSE WORKS: WRITING AND DISCUSSION**

You develop your ideas partly through the writing process itself and partly by discussion. To encourage this discussion, Expos 20 is structured as a seminar, emphasizing frequent conversation, workshops and peer-group work. The basis for much of that discussion throughout the semester is the writing you do. You will also have frequent individual conferences with me throughout the term, including a revision conference for each essay.

**The Writing**

Expos 20 is organized around three units, in which you will write short response papers, drafts of essays and full revisions of those essays. The response papers and the essays are typical of other assignments you will write at Harvard. Here’s how the writing will work in each unit:
- **Response papers.** As we read and work with the assigned sources, you will first write brief response papers, which will focus on analytical approaches that will be at the foundation of many essays you write. All of these response papers will help you master those skills, and some are also designed to help you develop ideas for your essay.

- **Essays.** In each unit, you will write a full draft of your essay, arguing for a thesis with concrete evidence and well-developed analysis. After the draft, we will have a conference to discuss how you will keep developing and improving the essay. Then you will write the final revision, which is the graded version.

The three major essays will progress in complexity: in the first essay, you will work with one object, analyzing the object through close analysis. In the second essay, you will work with multiple texts from a range of genres—theology, science, and literature—and develop an argument about the conversation between at least two of them. Your final essay will be a research essay on the topic of your choice. These essays represent types of writing assignments found in many of your Harvard courses.

Two other important issues to note about your writing in this course:

- Writing is one of the best ways to figure out and develop your ideas, and so we will write often in this class. You should expect to write at least one piece each week, sometimes one for each class. These pieces will include graded work (revisions) as well as less formal ungraded assignments (class exercises, reading notes, responses to your classmates’ work).

- All of the writing you do for this course is public – which means that it may be read by your fellow writers in the class (not just by me). If at any time you turn in a piece of writing that you would rather not have other students read, please tell me so – but also please note that you cannot make this request about every piece you turn in. Hearing the ideas and reactions of other readers is one of the most valuable opportunities a writer can have.

**Discussion and Class Participation**
One of the benefits of Expos 20 is its small class size. That benefit means the most when every student participates fully in the class; you learn much more from contributing your own ideas to our discussion than from simply listening to others do so. Our time together is largely devoted to discussion and small-group work. You therefore are responsible for being in class, prepared and on time, each time we meet.

- "Being prepared" means that you have given careful thought to the reading and writing assigned for the day, and that you are ready to offer ideas and questions to open our discussion. In addition to the response papers that you will write, please pay careful attention to the questions listed on the syllabus for your reading notes and to handouts about exercises and class preparation throughout the semester – these will all help you be ready for what we're doing in class.
“Being prepared” also applies to conferences. These conferences are only useful if, before we meet, you have reviewed your response papers and your draft, considered your own questions, and started to think about possibilities for revision. These conferences are a required part of the course. I count a missed conference as an absence; missing conferences will also result in a low or failing participation grade for the course.

**Grades**
The majority of your final grade comes from your three essays, which are weighted more significantly as the semester goes along. These grades will be based on the quality of your final essay for each unit. Grading becomes more stringent as we progress (since you are expected to have mastered certain skills and techniques). The remaining 10% of your grade represents a serious measure of the quality of your response papers, your drafts, your cover letters, class discussions, conferences, and the care with which you respond to your fellow students’ writing. Please be advised that final grades (that is, grades on revised essays) are indeed final. I will not read or grade a further revision of a revision.

| Essay 1: | 25% |
| Essay 2: | 30% |
| Essay 3: | 35% |
| Participation: | 10% |

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Required Texts and Materials**
- With the exception of *Angels and Insects*, I will supply copies of the required reading for the class. I will post the readings to the course website; you will be responsible to print them.
- Folders for your readings and class handouts (there will be a lot!)
- You will print a lot for this course, so be sure your printer cartridge or account is ready for that volume.

**Communication**
Please remember a few important things about keeping in touch:

- **Office Hours**: In addition to our formal conferences, you are of course free to see me during office hours about your questions or developing ideas. If the scheduled office hours conflict with other requirements in your schedule, please see me about setting up another time to meet.
- **E-mail**: Rather than take up our class time with announcements and administrative arrangements (and there will be many of them!), I use e-mail to communicate most of that information and to update you on reading questions for class. As part of
your participation in the course, you will need to check your e-mail daily; you are responsible for the information I post there. Likewise, I will check mine once every weekday for questions from you (though please note that I don't check it late at night – e-mail that reaches me after 7:00 p.m. will be answered the next day). Please note that e-mail works best for questions that I can answer quickly; if you would like me to review your written work with you, make an appointment to see me during office hours with your specific questions.

**Deadlines**

For many class meetings, you will turn in a response paper or prepare some other reading or writing exercise to help you develop the essay for that unit. All essay deadlines in the course are firm, in order to make sure that you're not falling behind on the frequent assignments and in order to be fair to each student. Our work together in class will also often be based on those assignments. For those reasons, it is imperative that you turn your work in on time.

I only grant extensions for medical or family emergencies. Response papers, essay drafts and revisions turned in after the deadline without an approved extension will be penalized an entire letter-grade on the final essay for each day they are late. If you cannot meet a deadline due to a medical emergency, you must contact me right away, and a note from UHS may be required; in the event of a family emergency, you must contact me right away, and a note from your dean may be required. In those circumstances, we will also need to work out a schedule for you to make up your missed work.

Electronic submissions. You will submit most 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 as a .doc or .docx file. It is also your responsibility to ensure that the file you send 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.

**Attendance and Lateness: Official Expos Policy**

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.

**Completion of Work: Official Expos Policy**
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.*

**Academic Honesty: Official Expos Policy**
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.

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.

**Writing Center**
At any stage of the writing process -- brainstorming ideas, reviewing drafts, approaching revisions -- you may want some extra attention to or feedback on your essays. The Writing Center (located on the ground level of the Barker Center) offers hour-long appointments with trained tutors. I can’t stress strongly enough how helpful those sessions can be; regardless of the "strength" or "weakness" of the essay, any piece of writing benefits from further review and a fresh perspective. Visit the Writing Center's web site at http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wrcntr to make an appointment. Tutors also hold drop-in office hours; see the website for locations.