

Expos 20

Why SHAKESPEARE?



Instructor: Dr. Jeffrey R. Wilson
Course: Expos 20, Sections 249 and 250
Time: TTh 10 and 11 am
Place: Art Museums 0600
Course Website: canvas.harvard.edu/courses/12873

E-Mail: jeffreywilson@fas.harvard.edu
Office: One Bow Street, #229
Office Hours: Th 12-2 pm
Instructor Website: wilson.fas.harvard.edu

JEFFREY R. WILSON
EXPOS 20: WHY SHAKESPEARE?

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is an intensive seminar that aims to improve each student's ability to discover and reason about evidence through the medium of essays. Each section focuses on a particular theme or topic, described on the Expos Website. All sections give students practice in formulating questions, analyzing both primary and secondary sources and properly acknowledging them, supporting arguments with strong and detailed evidence, and shaping clear, lively essays. All sections emphasize revision.



SECTION DESCRIPTION

“Why Shakespeare?”

Shakespeare, we have all been told, is extremely important. You might agree or disagree with this pronouncement, but do you know why Shakespeare matters to so many people? Why does every high school in America assign Shakespeare? Why did the world erupt with jubilation on his 450th birthday in April 2014? Why did the British government pay \$2.4 million to have Shakespeare translated into Mandarin? Does Shakespeare deserve all this fuss, or is he really overrated? In this section, Shakespeare lovers and haters alike are invited to consider the question of Shakespeare's popularity by looking into the relationship between his methods of artistic creation and the values of the modern world. We'll begin with a reading of the most famous artwork of the past millennium, *Hamlet*, a play about a bad philosopher trying to avenge his father's murder. We'll proceed with a study of Shakespeare's *Richard III* (about a mentally unstable man willing to do anything, including murder, to gain political power) alongside the Netflix show *House of Cards* (which modernizes *Richard III* with twenty-first-century American politics). We'll also run *Richard III* through some theories of criminology, a modern field that claims to offer scientific explanations for why crime happens. Finally, we'll ask, “Why Shakespeare?” and entertain answers ranging from the cynical (Shakespeare is a dead, white male that other dead, white males have used to promote the values of dead, white males) to the euphoric (Shakespeare is universal; Shakespeare invented the human).

REQUIRED TEXTS

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Ed. A. R. Braunmuller. New York, NY: Penguin, 2001.
Shakespeare, William. *Richard III*. Ed. Thomas Cartelli. New York, NY: Norton, 2008.
Willimon, Beau. *House of Cards*. Netflix, 2013. [Season 1]
Harvard Guide to Using Sources, available online at <http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu>.
Course materials available online at our Canvas site.

As you can see, the texts you need to purchase for the class are few. But you will print a great deal for this class, so please plan accordingly. You should also have access to a writing handbook when questions of grammar, mechanics, or style arise. If you don't own one already, you might consider:

Hacker, Diana, and Nancy Sommers. *Rules for Writers*. 7th ed. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011.

JEFFREY R. WILSON
EXPOS 20: WHY SHAKESPEARE?

COURSE ARGUMENT

Certain modes and strategies of interpretation and argumentation are valuable to your life at Harvard and beyond regardless of the discipline or field you choose to pursue. In our course, we will discuss these modes and strategies using terms such as *thesis* (your main insight or idea about a text or topic) and *what's at stake* (why someone might want to read an essay or need to hear your particular thesis argued). Insofar as Expos 20, no less than the papers you'll write in it, is an argument, let's ask, first of all, "What's at stake in Expos 20? What's the thesis of Expos 20?"

What's at stake is nothing less than your success at Harvard and in life. More specifically, you need to know how to write good papers because the paper has emerged as the primary vehicle for scholarly communication. Scholars "talk" to one another through papers, and you'll "talk" to your professors through papers (among other ways). After graduation, you'll continue to "talk" to friends and colleagues through your writing, even if you're not writing formal academic papers, because you'll present your ideas using the skills of interpretation and persuasion discovered in our course and mastered in later courses.

The thesis of this course, then, is that rhetoric is a prerequisite for the successful pursuit of knowledge. That is, rhetoric, understood as the study of modes of interpretation and persuasion, is needed regardless of the discipline or field you plan to pursue because rhetoric equips you with the forms and strategies of thought and speech that you'll use to investigate and discuss material specific to your academic endeavors, whatever they may be. As such, our course will attend to the writing you'll be doing *beyond Expos*. We'll explore common principles of academic writing – such as *what's at stake* and *thesis* – which will be a part of any of the writing you'll do at Harvard. At the same time, different occasions and disciplines also call for different approaches and conventions, and so we'll also examine some of the ways those conventions have different inflections in different disciplines.

Some of our writing goals in this course will change unit by unit as you take on the distinct challenges of several important versions of the academic paper. Other goals will remain our focus throughout the whole course: developing your sense of what you do well and challenging yourself to grow as a writer; expanding your repertoire of revision techniques; and increasing the complexity and originality of your analyses as well as the effectiveness and elegance of your prose. One of the most exciting things to learn in a writing course is that the learning process never stops; you don't "arrive" at being a good writer, but rather continually become one. With these goals in mind, let's begin with three important premises:

- *Writing is a recursive process.* In our course, you'll take notes on your reading; write and revise response papers; write drafts of your papers; and fully revise those papers. This continued process of drafting and revision is the primary work of this class, and is the main way your writing grows stronger. Our course will also ask you to be reflective about that process and about what you want to accomplish in each assignment in your cover letters about each essay and in your writer's letters at the beginning and end of the term.
- *Writing is thinking.* That evolving writing process also allows you to develop your thinking with greater depth and meaning. Writing is one of the best ways to figure out your ideas, and so you should expect your ideas and arguments to evolve during the writing process.
- *Writing is a conversation.* When you write, you are often in conversation with the sources you are writing about. You are likewise in conversation with your audience. You will express your ideas in exercises, drafts, and revisions, and your audience from this course will be responding to those ideas, telling you what their strengths are and where they can grow stronger. In addition to the feedback you get from your classmates, you will have an individual conference with me about each essay (these conferences are a required part of the course), and you will receive extensive written feedback from me throughout the semester.

JEFFREY R. WILSON
EXPOS 20: WHY SHAKESPEARE?

COURSE UNITS

Our course will consist of the following three units, each devoted to a distinct kind of essay that you'll probably be asked to write at Harvard or elsewhere. A day-by-day calendar is available on the website.

Unit One: A Close Reading (Weeks 1-4)



Your first assignment is to write a close reading of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. A close reading is an analysis of a single text (or idea, event, or object), a reading that identifies, presents, and discusses some interesting or problematic aspect of that text (or idea, event, or object) without recourse to any other texts. In this assignment, you'll have the opportunity and responsibility to develop your own topic; class discussions will guide but not limit you. One of the great things about *Hamlet* (and one of the reasons for its popularity) is that it is so dense with questions and concerns from across the disciplines – philosophy, theology, psychology, sociology, politics, classics, crime, justice, gender relations, and (of course) literature and

specifically drama – that you should be able to “find” your own interests and obsessions somewhere in Shakespeare's text.

Unit Two: A Comparative Paper (Weeks 5-8)



Your second assignment is to write a comparative paper involving Shakespeare's *Richard III* and one additional text: either Beau Willimon's *House of Cards* (a recent television adaptation) or Erving Goffman's *Stigma* (a twentieth-century social scientific theory). A comparative paper doesn't simply observe similarities and differences between two texts; rather, it establishes the significance of those similarities and differences and argues why they matter for our knowledge of some specific field of inquiry. For example, we'll be measuring Shakespeare's treatment of villainy and tragedy with modern ideas about politics and society. Those ideas

might help us understand what's *really* going on in Shakespeare's play or, alternately, Shakespeare's play might help us test or even improve upon some of our modern political and sociological theories.

Unit Three: A Research Paper (Weeks 9-14)



Your third assignment is to write a research paper that responds to the question, “Why is Shakespeare so popular?” A research paper is your opportunity to make an original contribution to an on-going critical conversation. For us, that conversation will be about Shakespeare's reputation and canonization as “the greatest of all time.” Although Ben Jonson famously said that Shakespeare was “not of an age, but for all time,” Shakespeare was not always the demigod he is now: in the seventeenth century Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher were more popular than Shakespeare, and many (including himself) thought John Milton was destined to be England's prized poet. By the middle of the nineteenth

century, however, Shakespeare had clearly emerged as the favored son of England and indeed the Western world. More recently, Shakespeare has become a global phenomenon. This paper is your opportunity to ask, “Why?” Your response to this question could take any number of shapes. You could address Shakespeare's cultural ascendancy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, or you could address Shakespeare's lasting popularity today in the twenty-first century. You could ask why Shakespeare is so popular in academic culture, in mainstream culture, or in international culture. But your paper will be, at its core, about the relationship between the way that Shakespeare created his art and the values of those who created and/or sustain his reputation. As such, your paper will provide a close reading of *both* Shakespeare's artistic style (as you understand it from your reading of one of our assigned plays, or one that you seek out on your own) *and* the values of a specific culture (as you understand it from your independent research), all in an attempt to articulate why Shakespeare is (or isn't) popular in a given cultural context.

JEFFREY R. WILSON
EXPOS 20: WHY SHAKESPEARE?

GRADES

Your grade for this course will come from these four units, according to the following breakdown:

- Paper 1: 30%
- Paper 2: 30%
- Paper 3: 40%

The standard for each essay also becomes more demanding as we progress (since you are building on certain fundamental skills and techniques with each essay).

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Week 1	Begin <i>Hamlet</i>
Week 2	Finish <i>Hamlet</i> <i>Response Paper 1.1: Problems and Questions</i> due Thurs., Sept. 15
Week 3	<i>Response Paper 1.2: Evidence and Analysis</i> due Tues., Sept. 20 <i>Response Paper 1.3: A Basic Outline</i> due Thurs., Sept. 22
Week 4	<i>Essay 1: A Close Reading (Draft)</i> due Sun., Sept. 25 Workshop 1 on Tues., Sept. 27 Conferences Sept. 27-30
Week 5	<i>Essay 1: A Close Reading (Revision)</i> due Tues., Oct. 4 Read <i>Richard III</i>
Week 6	Watch <i>House of Cards</i> ; Read Goffman's <i>Stigma</i>
Week 7	<i>Response Paper 2.1: Comparative Analysis</i> due Tues., Oct. 18 <i>Response Paper 2.2: Text and Context</i> due Thurs., Oct. 20
Week 8	<i>Essay 2: A Comparative Paper (Draft)</i> due Sun., Oct. 23 Workshop 2 on Tues., Oct. 25 Conferences Oct. 25-28 <i>Response Paper 2.3: A Detailed Outline</i> due Sun., Oct. 30
Week 9	<i>Essay 2: A Comparative Paper (Revision)</i> due Tues., Nov. 1 Begin Unit 3 Readings
Week 10	Finish Unit 3 Readings
Week 11	<i>Response Paper 3.1: An Empirical Report</i> due Thurs., Nov. 10
Week 12	<i>Response Paper 3.2: An Annotated Bibliography</i> due Thurs., Nov. 17 <i>Response Paper 3.3: An Abstract</i> due Tues., Nov. 22
Week 13	<i>Essay 3: A Research Paper (Draft)</i> due Sun., Nov. 27 Workshop 3 on Tues., Nov. 29 Conferences Nov. 29 – Dec. 2
Week 14	<i>Essay 3: A Research Paper (Revision)</i> due Sun., Dec. 11

JEFFREY R. WILSON
EXPOS 20: WHY SHAKESPEARE?

HOW THE COURSE WORKS

Each unit will consist of some assigned readings, some written exercises, some in-class exercises, a draft of a paper, a conference with me about that draft, a workshop with the whole class, and a revised paper. The course works best when we treat it as a semester-long conversation about your writing. To make that conversation possible, there are a few important things to remember:

Class Participation: One of the benefits of Expos is its small class size. That benefit is best realized when every student participates fully in the class; you learn much more from formulating, articulating, and questioning your own thoughts than from simply listening to what others have to say. Our time together is largely devoted to discussion and small-group work. Therefore you are responsible for being in class, prepared and on time, each time we meet. Being prepared for class means that you have given careful thought to the reading and writing assignments for our class, and that you are ready to offer ideas and questions to open our discussions about Shakespeare. With that in mind, I hope that each of you is especially attuned over the next few months to the ways in which Shakespeare appears in the media, popular culture, daily discourse, etc. If you encounter a compelling or provocative instance of Shakespeare during the semester, please send me an email with a link and few thoughts on how he is being used. We'll incorporate these encounters into our ongoing attempt to develop and refine our sense of Shakespeare.

Aphorisms: Throughout the course, I'll refer you at times to some of my "aphorisms," which are short little handouts on writing and other topics. These aphorisms are available on my website (wilson.fas.harvard.edu), and our Canvas calendar will give links to the aphorisms relevant to each day. These aphorisms are meant to be a resource for you to read and review after topics have been introduced in class, when writing your papers, and hopefully far into your future at Harvard and beyond.

Response Papers: For each formal paper in Expos (i.e., the graded work for the course), you'll begin with plenty of material from response papers you've done to get you thinking and writing. Each response paper represents a way to break down the final paper assignment into significant steps: reflecting on the readings, brainstorming ideas, preparing to write, reshaping ideas, etc. Hopefully, you'll find that the thinking you do in these response papers informs the way you approach your essay. You'll also find in some cases that you've produced sentences, or even whole paragraphs, that make their way to your final essay. That is one of the intentions of these preparatory papers. When those happy occurrences strike, make the most of them (you're not plagiarizing yourself). At the same time, don't feel beholden to your early response papers (which means that they trap rather than prompt you). You are also likely to see your ideas evolve from the response papers to the actual essays, sometimes resulting in substantial changes in focus or argument. In these instances, the response papers have helped you work through less successful ideas on the way to discovering more challenging and interesting ideas. Unless otherwise noted, all response papers should be typed and properly formatted (you will be submitting them electronically). Please note, too, that response papers may be due on non-class days as indicated on the calendar.

Conferences: In each unit of the course, you will submit (in addition to the exercises) a draft and a revised essay. After you have submitted your draft, we will meet to discuss my feedback, which I will have sent to you beforehand. These conferences are our chance to work together closely on your writing and to focus your work toward revision, and they are most worthwhile when you are the one guiding them. My job during conferences is to talk through your ideas and clarify my feedback, and I'll be in the best position to do this job when you come to our conference prepared. My job during conference is not to give you a to do list that will translate into an "A" on your revision. That approach would not only undermine the holistic nature of persuasive writing; it would also undermine one of the most important goals of Expos, which is to help you go from writing as a student for "the expert" to writing as the expert for your colleagues, i.e., as a teacher. "Being prepared" includes having reviewed your essay, considered your questions, and begun to think about revision possibilities and strategies before we meet. You should

JEFFREY R. WILSON
EXPOS 20: WHY SHAKESPEARE?

bring a copy of your draft (with my marginal feedback and feedback letter) with you to our conferences, and you should plan on taking notes. Experience has shown that the most effective conferences last about 20 minutes, so the slots for each conference will be a cozy 25 minutes long. Since the schedule during conference days is so tight, missed conferences may not be rescheduled.

Workshop: On many class days, some of the texts we turn to will be your own writing: your response papers, drafts and revised essays will be part of what we read and discuss. All writing you do for this class is public – in other words, it may be chosen as one of the examples for us to consider. If there is ever a particular piece you don't want others to see, please just let me know.

Office Hours: In addition to our formal conferences, you are of course free to come see me during office hours about your developing ideas or to set up another time to meet if office hours aren't convenient. Due to the jam-packed nature of the week between drafts and revisions, I will unfortunately not be able to provide feedback for "second drafts" leading up to your final revision; however, by the time you are revising your drafts you will have received a number of stages of feedback and can by all means make appointments with the Writing Center!

Revision: Because of the emphasis this course places on revision, the schedule is designed to allow you as much revision time per essay as possible—at least a week after the draft is due, and at least five days after your draft conference. Since you'll have a significant span of days in which to revise, the expectations for this aspect of your work in the course are high.

Writing Center: At any stage of the writing process – brainstorming ideas, reviewing drafts, approaching revisions – you may want some extra attention on your essays. The Writing Center (located on the garden level of the Barker Center) offers hour-long appointments with trained tutors. I can't stress strongly enough the benefit of the service they provide; 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/~wricntr> to make an appointment. Tutors also hold drop-in office hours at other campus locations; see the Writing Center website for details.

POLICIES

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

JEFFREY R. WILSON
EXPOS 20: WHY SHAKESPEARE?

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: 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 such sources are explicitly part of the assignment.* Any student submitting plagiarized work is eligible to fail the course and to be subject to review by the Honor Council, including potential disciplinary action.

Sexual & Gender-Based Harassment Policy/Resources: The Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy educational and work environment in which no member of the FAS community is, on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity, excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination in any University program or activity. Gender-based and sexual harassment, including sexual violence, are forms of sex discrimination in that they deny or limit an individual's ability to participate in or benefit from University programs or activities. In order to protect the access of all members of our community to the full range of opportunities and resources provided at Harvard, the FAS has adopted the following:
<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/sexual-gender-based-harassment-policyresources>. Through the SHARE website (share.harvard.edu), you can connect with timely and confidential counseling, explore filing a complaint, contact specially trained 24/7 emergency services, and learn about engaging interim measures—academic, workplace, housing, or other support services—to help you continue to participate in all aspects of the Harvard community.

E-mail: Rather than take up our class time with announcements and administrative arrangements (and there will be many of them), I will try to use e-mail and Canvas to communicate much of that information. As part of your participation in the course, I ask that you check your e-mail daily. You are responsible for the information I send you, including the feedback to your drafts and revisions (which are easy enough to overlook on an iPhone). Likewise, I make sure to check my email once every weekday for questions from you. Please note, however, that unless prior arrangements have been made, you should not assume that I will check e-mail later than 9:00 p.m. I can answer most questions within 24 hours, except over the weekend.

Laptop Policy: Ordinarily I will ask that you not use laptops in class. There may be a few days when they are necessary, and I will let you know about them ahead of time. In general, you should expect to print any materials that I send you or post on the course website and bring those with you to class.

Submitting Essays: Essays and revisions will be submitted to the drop box on our course website. The attachment must either be in Microsoft Word or be easily compatible. If you use word processing software such as Pages, for example, please be sure that you are saving your work in a Word-friendly format. This will help minimize potential compatibility issues when we are sharing our writing with one another. 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, e.g., if your work is submitted as a .pages file, the essay will be subject to a late penalty. NB: Unless you have made prior arrangements to do so, please do not email me your essays—that unfortunately creates a whole series of potential glitches in the feedback loop. If your essay is late, please submit it to the dropbox and then send me an email letting me know that it's been posted.

JEFFREY R. WILSON
EXPOS 20: WHY SHAKESPEARE?

Deadlines: For many class meetings, you will have a response paper due or some other reading or writing exercise that is designed to help you develop the essay for that unit. Our work together in class will often be based on those assignments. For those reasons, it is imperative that you turn your work in on time. Of course, even in the most carefully organized semesters, unexpected circumstances can arise – therefore each student in this section is allowed ONE 24-hour extension on a response paper, draft or revision during the semester. To use that 24-hour extension without penalty, you must: contact me before that deadline; submit the late work to our drop box; email me once you've submitted the essay; and be on time with the other work due on that day as well. Otherwise, the work will be counted as late. And beware: taking that one-day extension can mean that you're crunched for time at the beginning of the next unit. Other than that "wild card" extension, all deadlines in the course are firm. Except in the case of medical or family emergency, I do not grant further extensions. Essay drafts or revisions turned in after the deadline will be penalized a third of a letter-grade on the final essay for each day they are late. If you cannot meet a deadline due to a medical emergency, you should contact me right away, and may be required to produce a note from UHS; in the event of a family emergency, you should contact me right away, and you may be required to ask your dean to contact me by e-mail or phone. In addition, please contact me as soon as possible so we can work out an alternative schedule.

A FINAL NOTE

Please send me an email when you have finished reading the syllabus. If you have any questions or concerns about the course, please let me know, and I'll either address them in an email response or in class at the beginning of our next session. Even if you don't have any questions or concerns, please send along an email – just so I know we're on the same page about the upcoming semester.