Cross-Cultural Contact Zones
Expository Writing 20

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EXPOS 20, Sections 66/67
MW 12 PM/1 PM; Sever Hall 205

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Please note that in addition to fulfilling the Expos 20 requirement, this course can also count towards the fulfillment of an Ethnicity, Migration, Rights (EMR) Secondary Field.

Course Description
As our lives turn increasingly global, cross-cultural encounters between Eurocentric and non-Eurocentric worlds are becoming more the norm than the exception. But in what ways do the specific social and political circumstances under which these contacts occur influence the nature of the cross-cultural encounters as well as the manner in which authors represent these? How do issues of power, class, and gender function differently in cross-cultural environments for the racial groups involved than they would had they remained within a single culture? These are the central questions we’ll pose as we explore a selection of contemporary fiction by writers of both western and nonwestern origins who represent such cross-cultural contact zones. We’ll begin by analyzing depictions of transient cross-cultural encounters—experienced by those who only engage in short-term border crossings—in three short stories by Sherman Alexie, Margaret Atwood, and Albert Camus, respectively. Next, we’ll read Heat and Dust by the cosmopolitan writer, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala: through this novel about British colonial and postcolonial encounters with India, we’ll investigate the issues surrounding longer-term western presence in a nonwestern space. Finally, we’ll examine the complex cross-cultural experiences generated by the growing presence of people of non-western origins in the US, as represented in immigrant-themed short fiction by writers such as Edwidge Danticat, Junot Diaz, Oscar Hijuelos, Gish Jen, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Don Lee.

Course Materials
Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Heat and Dust, Counterpoint 1999 Paperback Ed.


A significant amount of individual printing—as well as occasional photocopying—of course materials will be required throughout the course: please be prepared to do this.

Course Goals and Design
The primary purpose of this course is to teach you analytic argument and expository writing. It will help you engage seriously with texts and argue persuasively about the ideas generated by them. You will have the opportunity to hone these skills by examining a common body of texts with your peers, and by sharing your verbal and written responses with them. We will thus emphasize writing as a social process.

The texts that you and your peers write in conversation with the readings and each other will receive our greatest attention: the readings will only serve as a set of tools to help you compose strong arguments. You will write three academic essays, one for each of the three course units. Every essay will require you to undertake a series of steps—reading, analyzing, discussing, drafting, revising—that will teach you specific skills you will need throughout your time at Harvard. Each essay will also build on the previous ones, allowing you to refine these skills while you acquire new ones. You will be constantly encouraged to transform your own texts substantially by rethinking, revising, and rewriting your drafts. Moreover, you will be asked to respond critically—sometimes as an entire class and sometimes in pairs—to the early drafts of your peers’ papers, so that they too can transform their original texts in significant ways. The course, therefore, is designed to engage you in the challenging yet rewarding processes of academic writing, which will enable you to increase the power of your written words.

Course Requirements
This course is designed as a collaborative learning experience: you will need to attend every class meeting, well prepared and ready to contribute to verbal discussions and writing workshops. Missing class and/or not participating adequately in class will adversely affect your growth as a writer, as well as your course grade. Also, make sure to be punctual so as not to disrupt class activities.

I will schedule three twenty- to thirty-minute conferences with each of you, during which we will address ways to improve your writing. As with class, you should come prepared to participate fully in these conferences: reflect, in advance, on the issues you are confronting while working on a particular essay, and on potential solutions. Missed conferences may not be rescheduled.

You will need to submit all assignments—short exercises, drafts, and final versions of essays—on time, according to course schedule. Unless I specify otherwise, you should hand in every assignment to me as hard copy; consistently use a standard font style, ensuring that all your writing is in double-spaced 12-point font and retains at least one-inch margins on all sides. Furthermore, you will need to use the MLA citation style for all formal writing assignments in this course.

Assignments
As indicated above, you will write three major essays of increasing length (starting at 5 pages), one corresponding to each of the three course units. In preparation for these formal essays, you will also complete a series of required preparatory assignments, such as response papers and drafts. Brief descriptions of each essay follow:
Essay #1: A Close Critical Analysis of a Single Literary Text
You will identify an arguable question regarding the representation of a transient cross-cultural encounter in one of the three short stories we’ll read in the first unit and then closely analyze evidence to advance an argument in response to that question.

Essay #2: An Analysis of a Literary Text against a Critical Context
This may be called a “lens” essay: it invites you to analyze a fictional text against a particular critical/theoretical context. More specifically, you will be analyzing the representation of the colonial and postcolonial encounters between the British and the Indians in Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s *Heat and Dust* against critical concepts advanced about such representations by Edward Said and Karen Lawrence.

Essay #3: A Comparative Critical Analysis incorporating Secondary Sources
The final project calls for an argument comparing contemporary representations of the immigrant-of-color experience in the white-dominant US society. In addition to the two primary sources, you will also need to incorporate different kinds of secondary sources to construct a well-researched, persuasive argument.

Grade Distribution
Although I will read all your writing during the semester, I will only assign individual letter grades to your three formal, revised essays. At the end of the semester, I will also assign a letter grade for your class participation: this grade will be based on the overall quality of your in-class discussions and on a portfolio of your shorter assignments (e.g., response papers, peer responses, etc.). Your final grade for the course will be assigned as follows:

Essay #1 = 25%
Essay #2 = 30%
Essay #3 = 35%
Class Participation = 10%

Policy on Late Work
Response papers for each of the essays must be submitted on the due date specified for the relevant course unit: because I do not accept any late response papers, you will lose points for that exercise if you don’t submit one on time. Should a serious need arise, I will grant one penalty-free extension—of a maximum of two days beyond the specified due date—for either the first draft or the final version of the first or second essay (please note that this option will not be available for the final essay). If you take any extension beyond your one penalty-free allowance for either a first draft or a final version, you will be graded down by at least a third of a letter grade on that essay.

Policy on Collaboration
This course allows you to develop, rethink, and refine ideas in conversation with other students, and through peer review of written work (including feedback from Writing Center tutors). Should you want to acknowledge the impact someone had on your essay, please do so at the end of the essay, immediately before your “Works Cited” list.
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 written work submitted for this course must be your own: writing response papers, drafts, or revisions with other students is expressly forbidden.

**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 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 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 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.*

**Policy on Academic Integrity**  
In this Expository Writing course, we’ll study many features of academic argument that will help you to understand how scholars make use of sources, and distinguish their own ideas from those of other scholars. You’ll learn to accurately quote, paraphrase, and cite sources, to assess their validity and usefulness to your own thinking, to use
some kinds of sources as evidence that you’ll analyze and argue about, and other kinds of sources as a theoretical foundation or counterargument to extend or deepen your own ideas about a subject. You will learn why it is crucial to the academic enterprise that we all clearly distinguish our own work from that of our sources, and you will learn at least one of the citation methods by which scholars acknowledge their sources. 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.

**Please also pay particular attention to the following statement from the Harvard College Policy on Academic Dishonesty (excerpted from the Student Handbook):**

“It is expected that all homework assignments, projects, lab reports, papers, theses, and examinations and any other work submitted for academic credit will be the student's own. Students should always take great care to distinguish their own ideas and knowledge from information derived from sources. The term "sources" includes not only primary and secondary material published in print or online, but also information and opinions gained directly from other people. Quotations must be placed properly within quotation marks and must be cited fully. In addition, all paraphrased material must be acknowledged completely. Whenever ideas or facts are derived from a student’s reading and research or from a student’s own writings, the sources must be indicated.

And:

“The responsibility for learning the proper forms of citation lies with the individual student. Students are expected to be familiar with the Harvard Guide to Using Sources, which is available at [http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu](http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu). Students who are in any doubt about the preparation of academic work should consult their instructor and Resident Dean before the work is prepared or submitted.

Students who, for whatever reason, submit work either not their own or without clear attribution to its sources will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including requirement to withdraw from the College. Students who have been found responsible for any violation of these standards will not be permitted to submit a Q evaluation of the course in which the infraction occurred.”