COURSE OVERVIEW

What’s for dinner? A seemingly simple question, but one that raises many more. What should we eat? What do we eat? Why do we eat it? These questions and the psychology behind what we eat are the focus of this course. Some argue that the modern industrial food system is utterly broken – it is polluting the environment, contributing to climate change, brutalizing animals, making millions too fat, and leaving millions of others undernourished. They urge a rethinking of what we eat for dinner – eat organic, eat local, eat less meat, eat more real food. Others argue that there is no broken system; nothing needs to be fixed. From their point of view, the modern food system represents a technological marvel that has enabled more humans than ever before to eat well and to live longer. While the most affluent consumers might distract themselves with concerns about the provenance of their broccoli, the real concern is how to feed the seven billion plus citizens of the world. Throughout this course, we will use scientific evidence to weigh in on this debate and others and to inform our thinking about food and eating.

Above and beyond being a course about the psychology of food choice, this course is an introduction to academic writing. It is guided by the Expos philosophy “that writing and thinking are inseparably related and that good thinking requires good writing” (Harvard Writing Program website). Thinking is a process, and writing is a process. The course is designed to engage you in these processes throughout the semester. You will work on organizing, composing, and revising your ideas as you craft your arguments into essays.

The course is structured around three units:

Unit 1: We will begin with an analysis of the “local food movement” argument put forth by journalist and activist Michael Pollan (author of The Omnivore’s Dilemma) and criticized most recently by Pierre Desrochers and Hiroko Shimizu in their book, The Locavore’s Dilemma. For your first essay, you will compare these arguments in light of research on the economics, environmental impact, and psychology of our food choices to consider whether this debate reveals something fundamental about what drives our decisions about what to eat.

Unit 2: We will next turn to questions about eating and health. Although hunger remains a serious problem throughout the world, for many living in the United States eating too much is the more pressing concern. For your second assignment, you will consider at a recent food-related policy decision aimed at addressing the problem of obesity: former NYC Mayor Bloomberg’s ban on large-sized sodas. Despite being struck down, debate over the ban’s potential benefits and limitations continues. You will use psychology research on eating, decision-making, habits, and behavior change as a “lens” through which to view this policy and to evaluate its soundness.

Unit 3: In the final unit of the course, you will have an opportunity to investigate daily food choices from the perspective of a Harvard student. In the third essay, you will use your and your classmates’ experiences as well as your own search of the literature to evaluate why you eat what you eat and how one might go about changing a food-related behavior. In this multisource research paper you will have the opportunity to explore further the topics we have already covered and to gather additional information on other influences, such as culture, parents, peers, advertising, physical cues, and innate preferences, in order to develop a better understanding of what drives your own or your fellow students’ food choices.
**Important Due Dates**

Essay 1 Draft due: Friday, February 21, 9:45 a.m.
Essay 2 Draft due: Friday, March 28, 9:45 a.m.
Essay 3 Draft due: Friday, April 25, 9:45 a.m.

**HOW THE COURSE WORKS**

**Required and Optional Materials**

Please note: Although you do not need to purchase any books for this class, you will need to print many documents, so plan accordingly.

- Reading Packets for Units 1, 2, and 3 (handed out in class or available on the course website).
- A composition book, notebook, or blank paper for in-class writing assignments.
- Optional: A writing handbook to consult about questions of grammar, mechanics, and style. (For example, *Rules for Writers* by Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers.)

**Grades**

The majority of your grade comes from your three essays, according to the following breakdown:

- Essay 1 = 25%
- Essay 2 = 30%
- Essay 3 = 35%
- Class Participation & Ungraded Work = 10%

The standard for each essay also becomes more demanding as we progress, because you are building on certain fundamental skills and techniques with each essay. This is a writing course, so most of your grade will depend on your essays. The remaining 10% represents a serious measure of the quality of your ungraded work (exercises, response papers, drafts, turning in work on time), your constructive participation in class discussion and conferences, and the care with which you respond to fellow students' work. Although individual exercises and response papers count for a relatively small portion of your final grade, they are crucial to the essay-writing process and, when added together, they can definitely impact your final grade.

**Class Participation**

One of the benefits of Expos is its small class size. However, to get the most out of this benefit, every student needs to participate fully in the class. We all learn much more from formulating, articulating, and questioning our 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, being on time, and being prepared 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.
Communication

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:

- **Conferences:** We will have three conferences throughout the semester, in between the first draft and final revision of each essay. These conferences are our chance to work closely on your writing and to focus your work in revision. They are most worthwhile when you are the one to guide them. Please come to each conference prepared. You need to have reviewed your essay, considered your questions, and begun to think about revision possibilities and strategies. You should plan on taking notes during our discussions. Because the schedule during conference days is so tight, it might not be possible to reschedule missed conferences.

- **Electronic Communication:** I will rely heavily on email and the course website to communicate with you. It is also the best way for you to communicate with me. As part of your participation in the course, you need to check your email and the course website daily. You are responsible for the information I post there. Likewise, I promise to check my email once every weekday for questions from you. In reality, I check my email much more often than that. Please note that I might not respond right away to e-mail received after 10:00 p.m., but I will always respond within 24 hours, except over the weekend.

Because much of the communication for the course will be done electronically, you need to make sure you have access to the Internet if you go out of town. I will not accept computer breakdowns or lack of email access as excuses for not being prepared for class or for not completing assignments. Always back up your work.

Course Website

The course website is an important resource best accessed through http://www.my.harvard.edu. We will use the website in a variety of ways, so check it often. The website is where you access:

- Class announcements.
- The electronic dropbox for turning in work.
- The conference sign-up tool. This will take you to the online sign-up list where you can choose a time slot. Make sure you click the tabs to reveal all available sign-up times.
- Course readings and handouts.

Laptops, Cell Phones, and Other Portable Electronic Devices

Even though many of our readings will be in digital form on the course website and even though much of our communication will done electronically and even though I love my iPhone as much as the next person, for the most part, there will be no need for students to use any electronic devices in class. This is the case even if you are only three moves away from passing level 323 on Candy Crush. On the rare occasions when you might need to use a laptop in class or need to have access to something on the course website during class, I will certainly let you know ahead of time. Otherwise, please close your computer and put away your phone during class. That way we can all make eye contact. In addition, research suggests that we are not as good at multi-tasking as we like to think we are (for more details, see unicycling clown study by Hyman, Boss, Wise, McKenzie, & Caggiano, 2010).
Attendance and Tardiness

The Harvard College Writing Program has a clear and firm policy on attendance. It is the same across all sections.

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 me 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 me 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.

Please note: If you get to class more than 15 minutes late three times, that will be counted as an absence.

**WRITTEN WORK**

**Submitting Essays**

All drafts and revisions must be uploaded to the dropbox on our course website. The document must be in *Microsoft Word*. Please pay careful attention to the instructions and the general guidelines about format and other details that are explained on each unit assignment.

Please note: You will submit nearly all your work electronically. As you upload each document, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have saved the document as a *Word* document (.doc or .docx). It is also your responsibility to ensure that the document you upload is not corrupted or damaged. If I cannot open or read your document, the essay will be subject to a late penalty.

**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 – usually at least five days after your draft conference. Because you will have a significant span of days in which to revise, the expectations for this aspect of your work in the course are high.
Deadlines

For many class meetings, you will have due a preliminary assignment (e.g., response paper, presentation) or some other reading or writing exercise to help you develop your thinking and writing 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. Turning preliminary assignments in late will have a negative impact on your participation grade.

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 must contact me right away, and you may be required to produce a note from UHS. In the event of a family emergency, you must contact me right away, and you may be required to ask your dean to contact me by email or phone.

Of course, even in the most carefully organized semesters, unexpected circumstances can arise. Therefore, each student is allowed ONE 24-hour extension (a “wild card”) for a response paper or an essay draft or an essay revision. To avoid being penalized for your late work, you must let me know you are taking your wild card extension, you must submit the assignment to me in the electronic dropbox within 24 hours of the original due date and time, and you must be on time with the other work due on that day as well. You cannot use your wild card on the Essay 3 revision, which has to be turned in on May 8 per university policy.

Other than this single wild card extension, all deadlines in the course are firm. I do not grant further extensions, except in the case of medical or family emergency.

Work Completion

The Harvard College Writing Program has a clear and firm policy on completion of work. It is the same across all sections.

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. If you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of an essay by the final due date in that essay unit, you will receive a letter reminding you of these requirements. The letter will also specify the new date by which you must submit the late work and will 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 work, and that work should not make use of outside sources unless that is explicitly part of the assignment or you have discussed it with me and I have approved the outside source. Any student submitting plagiarized work is eligible to fail the course and to be subject to disciplinary action by the Administrative Board.
Collaboration

Students in writing courses often receive feedback on their ideas and written work from their peers, their instructor, and possibly from tutors in the Writing Center. Such collaboration, which also includes developing or refining ideas in conversation with other students and through peer review of written work, is permitted in this course. Scholars customarily turn to their colleagues for feedback on their ideas and their work. When the help is significant, the colleague is thanked in a footnote or endnote. It is expected that you'll follow that convention in Expos. However, please keep in mind that all the work you submit must be your own; in other words, writing response papers, drafts, or revisions with other students is prohibited and can result in disciplinary action by the Administrative Board.

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.