EXPOS 20: PARADOX IN PUBLIC HEALTH
Fall 2017- Provisional Syllabus

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OFFICE HOURS: TBA

CLASS: Location TBA
Section 201: Monday/Wednesday 10am
Section 202: Monday/Wednesday 11am

COURSE WEBSITE: TBA

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: What happens when public health efforts to improve the wellbeing of a population undermine the wellbeing of individuals in that population? Can this outcome be avoided? Public health is characterized by the implications of this fundamental paradox: the health needs of a population are often at odds with the health needs of the very individuals who comprise that population. How does this larger paradox play out across various public health campaigns? For example, public health as practiced today is intended to empower individuals to make their own health decisions; however, many public health policies (seatbelt laws, anti-smoking ordinances, etc.) actually limit individual choices.

In this class, we will use scientific articles to consider potential paradoxes in public health, both historical and contemporary. In Unit 1, we will wrestle with issues of current vaccination requirements, and consider the intersection of personal choice versus societal responsibility using current MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccines. In Unit 2, students will debate the nature of public health motivation and practice—who decides what existing public health needs are? Two case studies will guide this discussion: goiter—a successfully eliminated (but now reemerging!) disease of micronutrient deficiency—and ongoing tobacco-control efforts. In Unit 3,
students will conduct their own research on a controversial modern public health issue of their choice, and consider how the larger tension between the individual and the population is manifested in the student’s particular selected public health controversy.

Our course will be a combination of in-class and online discussion, activities, and lecture. Students will also be asked to meet individually and in teams with the instructor for conferences about the major papers. At all times, questions/comments are welcomed and encouraged.

UNITS IN BRIEF:

- **Unit 1:** All 50 US states require children to have vaccinations before entering public school. While all states currently allow medical exemptions from this requirement, some also allow religious and philosophical exemptions. Focusing on vaccines for measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR), students will use primary literature to craft and argue a policy position on vaccine mandates and exemptions.

- **Unit 2:** There have been many public health triumphs in the United States during the 20th century. We explore two of those examples—safer and healthier foods, and recognition of tobacco as a health hazard—using case studies from Michigan and Massachusetts respectively. But what is public health? What goals and motives does or should public health have? Students will explore these questions using the public health cases studies.

- **Unit 3:** Why is public health controversial? What are the main issues that frame that controversy? Within this framework, students will select a current, controversial public health intervention of their choice, and write a research paper outlining and taking a stand on the nature of the debate.

Beyond Expos:

The term “science writing” refers to a genre of literature that interprets science for a general audience. Science writing encompasses a wide variety of niches that can include writing for newspapers, mass-market magazines, trade publications, university press offices, broadcast media, and newsletters, as well as the writing of fiction, historical fiction, and science fiction. For more information, see the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing (casw.org).

In our expository writing class, we aren’t exploring the genre “science writing”; we are instead looking at some examples of “writing in the sciences”. Here, the audience is generally other scientists, sometimes within the same field as the author and sometimes not. This genre emphasizes clear communication, use of evidence, and clarity of argument, just as “writing in the humanities” does.

COURSE CONDUCT AND MATERIALS: You are expected to actively participate in your own educational process, via asking questions, engaging in discussion, and experimenting with learning techniques to determine which is most helpful to you. Use common sense, and be respectful of each other and yourself. All students are expected to take notes during class, and are responsible for the material covered during activities, in-class and online discussions, and lecture. Please do not use laptops during class unless otherwise instructed.

- There are no required textbooks for you to purchase for this course. Instead, I have compiled a set of texts and materials into a coursepack provided online and in-class over the course of the semester. You must obtain a binder in which to print and archive these materials.

- You MUST purchase a spiral-bound notebook or composition book. This will serve as your writing “lab book”, and you will be asked to do assignments and classwork in it. You are expected to bring your notebook and course binder to every class. Instructions for setting up the Notebook are provided below.
The course website has the syllabus, readings and other announcements. This will be the central administrative location for the class, so make sure to check it often. Outside of class, email is the primary method for communicating announcements and administrative arrangements. You must check your email daily, and you will be responsible for the information I send to you.

Each week on the schedule, you will see a list of supplemental materials which are provided on the website. Please look through these, and take advantage of those you think will benefit you; for example, if you are having trouble with transitions, look at the materials on transitions. While these are necessarily required for all students, students asking for additional assistance are expected to have first made use of the “Recommended Beyond Expos” selections. If you have any requests or suggestions for additional content, please let me know!

Our three conferences during the semester focus largely on strategies for making the kinds of revisions that go past the meager and simplistic process of spell checking or simply extending a paper’s length. Scheduling during conference week is tight, and exacerbated by lateness or missed appointments. The time we set aside for you is your time; wasted or missed appointments will not be rescheduled. You are, of course, encouraged to see me outside these conferences, either during my office hours or appointment, but during conference week, I can’t hold office hours of any kind.

Avoid Disaster! Keep a copy of all your work: you should both regularly save your work and periodically print working drafts as you write (in other words, you should never be in the position of having "finished" an essay or revision with nothing to show for it if your computer crashes). Consider making regular use of cloud storage (google drive, dropbox, etc).

Beyond Expos: Different fields have somewhat different styles of argument (different types of evidence, different modes of analysis, etc.). Keep an eye out for these “Beyond Expos” boxes in your course packet—they exist to help you understand differences among fields’ conventions and terminologies, and to make you aware of some of the writing assignments you may encounter in courses beyond Expos.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:
As with all Expos 20 sections, this course is divided into three units. Each unit has both a topical focus and a targeted writing objective. All the assignments in the unit use that topical focus as a way to learn and practice the elements of the unit’s major writing objective. These objectives will be articulated in the Unit Prompts, which you will receive at the beginning of each respective unit.

Because expository writing is a skill that comes only through repeated practice, it is not reasonable to expect perfect quality from a student the first time they attempt a new technique. Therefore, most assigned activities and readings in this course, completed in-class or for homework, do not receive a letter grade. This is intended to provide you the opportunity to test and hone your writing process before you are formally assessed for the unit. To formally assess students, Expos 20 considers largely come from three major papers, each of which involves a draft, conference with me, and final 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 – always at least a week after the draft is due, and usually 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. These final unit papers are intended as a capstone for the unit wherein students can display the various skills they’ve learned throughout the ensuing course. These papers are weighted more significantly as the semester proceeds in order to acknowledge the assignments’ increasing length and complexity. Since the goals of each unit build on the skills developed in the previous one(s), the interpretation of grading criteria will become more stringent as the semester progresses.
Please note that I expect your assignments to be free of grammatical, spelling, and formatting errors; failure to meet these expectations may result in a lowered grade. Although we do not cover mechanics in class, I am happy to answer any questions you may have in an individual appointment. To ensure fairness, I evaluate the words on the page before me and do not factor in perceptions as to the effort that went into completing the assignment. This means I will not grade a weak paper up—or a strong paper down—based on my imagination of a student’s capability. Because the essay itself is the only evidence I take into account, an essay’s grade indicates solely the extent to which the work submitted meets the criteria for a given assignment. Because every first-year student takes Expos 20, every Preceptor uses similar grading standards to ensure fairness in their evaluation of student work across sections.

**Course Citizenship** represents a serious measure of your thoughtful completion of response papers, drafts, and cover letters, your constructive participation in class discussion and conferences, and the care with which you respond to fellow students' work; simply attending class is insufficient to receive full marks for participation. You’ll be able to keep track of your performance on Canvas. If you have questions or concerns about your citizenship, I am always happy to consult during an office hour appointment. Keep in mind that citizenship is not so much about isolated instances as it is about patterns. Citizenship is categorized as follows: no credit; half credit; full credit; supplemental credit. Late assignments reduce that earned categorization by one step from what the assignment would have received. Due to the intense pace of the course, late assignments forfeit the opportunity to receive instructor feedback. Work that Counts Toward Course Citizenship:

**Response Papers:** A response paper (a term which encompasses many types of assignments at Harvard) may receive supplemental, full, half, or no credit. A response receives full credit if it is on time and demonstrates a reasonable attempt to complete the assigned task. It receives no credit if it is missing or does not address the task.

**Drafts:** Drafts are always ungraded. A draft receives full credit if it is on time and acceptable. At a minimum, a draft is considered acceptable if it is at least half the assigned length and it demonstrates an attempt at engaging with the sources and skills expected in the assignment; it receives half credit if it meets one of the two above criteria. Late drafts affect the revision paper grade.

**Cover Letters:** Cover Letters are ungraded, and may receive supplemental, full, half, or no credit. A cover letter receives full credit if it demonstrates substantive, critical reflection. It receives half credit if it provides at least superficial reflections, showing an attempt at completion. It receives no credit if it is missing or does not address the task.

**Participation:** Factors that contribute to strong participation include arriving to class and conferences on time and prepared, effectively using your Expos Notebook, participating actively in class by consistently contributing thoughtful and thought-provoking comments and questions in response to others’ ideas, and working energetically in small group or pair activities. Factors that contribute to weak participation include arriving to class or conferences late or unprepared, not participating in class discussion, getting off-task during group or pair activities, or being disruptive or otherwise disrespectful.

**Workshop Involvement:** Workshop involvement is ungraded, and may receive supplemental, full, half, or no credit. Every writer will have one paper reviewed by the class (or, in the third unit, a group). Because active participation in the workshop is so crucial to developing your own objective stance as a writer, workshop participation is considered independently from overall class participation.

**Reader’s Letters:** As part of the workshop, each member of the class (or group) will compose a letter to the paper’s author responding to the draft under review. Letters are ungraded, and receive full, half, or no credit. A letter receives full credit if it offers substantive criticism and suggestions for revision.
Late policies: Successful operation of this course requires that we adhere to a tight schedule. Consequently, it is imperative that you arrive at class punctually and turn your work in on time. You will routinely have assignments due before class on Mondays and Wednesdays, and Fridays online. Please carefully review the Harvard College Writing Program Policy on Submission of Work, below: if I cannot open or read a file you’ve uploaded for submission, it is subject to a late penalty.

- **Late to class:** Class begins promptly at 7 minutes past the hour. If you arrive to class more than 10 minutes after the hour, you are considered to be late (three unexcused lates are equivalent to one absence). Students more than 20 minutes late to any class meeting are considered to be absent.

- **Late drafts/revisions:** Grades for unexcused late graded-assignments will depreciate by a third of a letter grade per day, including any fraction of a day late, from the original due date/time. For example, if you would have gotten a B+, it depreciates to a B being one day late, a B- for 2 days late, and so on. Late drafts and revisions both affect the revised paper grade. Unexcused late drafts/revisions will not be accepted more than 4 days past the deadline. Due to the intense pace of the course, late drafts forfeit the opportunity to receive instructor feedback.

- **Extensions:** Even in the most carefully organized semesters, unexpected circumstances arise. Therefore, each student is allowed ONE 24-hour extension without penalty. To avoid being penalized for your late work, you must:
  - Let me know by email at least one day before the assignment is due that you are taking your “wild card” extension;
  - Submit the work via the dropbox within 24 hours of the original due date/time;
  - Be on time with other work due on that day.
  - Caveat: Unfortunately, you cannot take the wild card extension on the draft of the Unit 3 paper, due to the semester’s scheduling constraints.

**EXPOS NOTEBOOK**

You are each required to have a notebook or composition book for the duration of this course. You may choose one you like, but it MUST be a full size, 1-subject notebook that is used for this class only. The purpose of this notebook is multifaceted. You will use it to:

- Take class notes
- Take notes from readings
- Complete in-class work
- Complete certain homework assignments
- Organize ideas for essays
- Take notes in conference

In essence then, this notebook is akin to a lab book you’d use in a chemistry class; indeed the overall purpose of Expos is to hone your skills needed to complete the full process of writing academic papers from the most nascent beginning to the final end product. Just as in the sciences (or any field of academic inquiry), mastering a process requires a full documentation of ideas and experiments, trial and error. The notebook then is a way for us to be explicit about the process of writing, rather than just the final product.

Throughout the semester, I will be looking at your notebook both in-class and in conference. You will submit your overall notebook at the end of the semester as part of your final assignment; it will subsequently be returned to you to keep.

**SET-UP:**

- Please write in ink throughout. During the semester I will ask you to scan or photocopy parts of your Notebook, and pencil often doesn’t show up properly. Talk to me if you are concerned about this.
- Please write your name and section on the front cover.
• Leave a couple of pages blank at the beginning to add a table of contents.
• Make and label a section of ~5 pages somewhere in the Notebook—this will be your running Revision Checklist, to which you’ll be adding throughout the semester.
• Each time you write in your notebook, put the date at the top of the page.

Usage:
• In-class and conference, use the notebook for notes. Please bring your notebook to all conferences and meetings with me.
• Outside class, use the notebook for brainstorming or organizing or paper, and taking notes on the assigned readings.
• For each unit, there will be instructions on when to use your notebook for specific class assignments.
• As the semester progresses, I expect that you will be using the notebook in a much more self-directed manner for documenting your personal successful writing process.

Writing Program Policies:
Academic Honesty & Collaboration: 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.

Accommodations: Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the Accessible Education Office (www.aeo.fas.harvard.edu/) and speak with the professor by the end of the second week of the term.

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 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.

**Please note:** In order for an absence to be excused, students must provide documentation in a timely manner, and upon request of the preceptor and/or Senior Preceptor. Significantly retroactive documentation (i.e. well after the original absence or missed work) will not be accepted under any circumstances.
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. *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.*

Harvard College Writing Program Policy on Submission of Work: You will submit much 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 following the conventions for file name and document type outlined in the course Style Guide. It is your responsibility to ensure that the file you send is able to opened, and 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.*

Use of Student Work: As research shows that students can improve learning outcomes by using models and examples of work, participants in this class acknowledge that excerpts of their work may be used for in-class instructional purposes. This is done only to enhance learning outcomes, and authors’ identity will be kept confidential.

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](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.

What to Do Now: When you get to this point, please e-mail me to say that you read the syllabus. Feel free to ask any questions that you may have about the seminar. I'll do my best to answer you.