

## EXPOS 20: PARADOX IN PUBLIC HEALTH

### Spring 2018- tentative



#### INSTRUCTOR:

Jerusha Achterberg  
 1 Bow St, Suite 250, #237  
<http://scholar.harvard.edu/achterberg>  
[achterberg@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:achterberg@fas.harvard.edu)

#### CLASS:

1 Bow St, Room 317  
 Section 201: Monday/Wednesday 10am  
 Section 202: Monday/Wednesday 11am

#### OFFICE HOURS:

Mondays 1:30-3:00pm  
 Alternatives by appointment

#### COURSE WEBSITE:

<https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/36837>

#### CONTENTS:

- Course Description
- Units in Brief with draft deadlines
- Course Conduct and Materials
- Expos Notebook
- Course Assignments
- Writing Program Policies
- Office Hours and Writing Center
- Harvard Writing Program Grading Rubric
- Elements of Academic Argument

**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. *Draft due date: February 16.*
- **Unit 2:** There have been many public health triumphs in the United States during the 20<sup>th</sup> 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. *Draft due date: March 23.*
- **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. *Draft due date: April 19.*

*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).*

#### ➤ Beyond Expos:

*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.*

**REQUIRED COURSE 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.

- 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.
  - Because the scheduler built into Canvas is not particularly great, **we'll use an external site to schedule our meetings/conferences** for this course called Slotted (<https://slotted.co/>).
  - Throughout the semester, we will have the opportunity to meet via online **web-conference using a program called Zoom** (<https://zoom.us/>). In terms of equipment, **you need a**

**webcam and a headset with microphone.** The earbuds you use with your phone work okay, as will your laptop webcam. If you have a concern about this, discuss with instructor during first week of the course.

- 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.
  - On our website under Modules, you will see a list of supplemental materials which are provided under the header Recommended Beyond Expos (RBE). Please look through these, and take advantage of those you think will benefit you; for example, if you are having trouble with transitions, look that the materials on transitions. While these are not 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!
- 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.
- **[optional]:** At times, students ask me to recommend a good writing/grammar handbook. My current favorite is: Hacker D, Sommers N (2015). Rules for Writers, 8th Ed. Boston MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s. You are NOT required to obtain this text for our course, nor will material from this text be explicitly covered in class.

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.*

## 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.

### 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.

Grade Breakdown	
Paper 1:	20%
Paper 2:	30%
Paper 3:	40%
Course Citizenship:	10%

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. 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.

- Any meetings we conduct online via Zoom, must be treated with the same seriousness as in-class meetings, which includes behaving professionally, wearing appropriate clothing, and joining from a suitable, quiet location.

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 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 Paper 3, due to the semester’s scheduling constraints.

## WRITING PROGRAM POLICIES:

**Academic Integrity & 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. 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. 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/](http://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 be 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>. Through the SHARE website ([share.harvard.edu](http://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.

## SHARED EXPOS 20 GOALS

Expository writing seeks to inform, explain, clarify, define or instruct. As such, expository writing is the currency of communication in any academic field, and is characterized by: clarity, unity and coherence; focus on a main topic; logical supporting facts; details, explanations and examples; strong organization and smooth transitions.

Though there are many sections of Expos 20, they all share the same course goals, an equivalent amount of reading (taking into account both length and difficulty), the same general assignments, and the same grading standards. However, there may be slight differences in deadlines and course policies, so always make sure you're looking at the syllabus for *your* Expos 20 section!

Below are the official goals shared by all Expos 20 sections at Harvard. I've provided notes as to how and when we will address these goals in our specific section.

### By the end of the semester, students will have:

1. learned the concepts in the Writing Program's Elements of Academic Argument, those concepts in prompts, comments, exercises;
  - *The Elements of Academic Argument are included in the full syllabus. We will use these terms throughout the semester to discuss your writing processes.*
2. written three essays/papers of different kinds and lengths
  - *Units 1,2, and 3 each use different kinds and lengths of papers to assess how well you've mastered the major skills emphasized in each respective unit*
3. written "response" or "reaction" papers as part of each of the course's three units; this genre of writing will be an important part of coursework at Harvard and will take a variety of forms; been shown several strategies for decoding response paper assignments in courses outside of Expos;
  - *At Harvard, "response paper" is used as an umbrella term for many kinds of— usually ungraded — writing assignments. What is expected in a response paper may vary from course to course: some are simply checking that you have read and understood required texts, others are giving you practice at a skill that will be required in a later assignment. Because this genre ranges so widely, be sure that you understand what is expected of you in any given assignment and, when in doubt, ask!*
  - *In this course, I'll be providing various strategies for approaching the skills emphasized in each unit; each response paper assignment will require you to do something different. Most of these are intended to inform your academic writing overall. Others are intended to break the Unit's paper into manageable steps. Cumulatively, these response papers give you an arsenal for when you confront assignments in other courses where the writing process is largely left up to you.*
4. discovered their own thesis in all essays, their own animating analytical question or problem in at least two essays, and in at least one essay chosen their own sources;
  - *You'll create your own thesis throughout all units, practice articulating analytical questions in Units 2-3, and locate and choose your own sources in Unit 3.*
5. written at least one essay that requires a close reading of a text (for those of us teaching an Expos course anchored in the humanities) or careful analysis of data (for those of us teaching an Expos course anchored in

the natural and social sciences) and one essay (possibly the same essay) that requires them to assess the validity of an extended argument;

→ *Students complete a close reading response paper and a careful analysis of data response paper in Unit 1, assess the validity of an extended argument in Units 1-2, and depending on their selected thesis, employ these techniques in the final papers of all three units.*

6. read all sections of the new Harvard Guide to Using Sources (HGUS), with time allowed for discussion especially of the section on plagiarism, AND done at least one exercise on plagiarism; practiced one exercise on sources during Unit 1; and engaged in one exercise or discussion on different uses of sources in argument;

→ *Every unit includes  $\geq 2$  activities on source-use, including a focus on students' own writing.*

7. written one research paper (preferably for the third unit of the course) for which students must have located on their own and responsibly incorporated into their paper at least three sources mostly from the physical and online collections of the Harvard Libraries;
- been formally introduced to the fundamentals of the research process as it relates to writing undergraduate papers at Harvard, including how to
    - formulate and revise a good research question,
    - locate sources,
    - manage time,
    - manage the note-taking process to avoid plagiarism,
    - evaluate the credibility of a source and its relevance to a research paper,
    - integrate sources effectively, and
    - cite sources properly;
  - created an annotated bibliography as a key step in the students' research process
  - had a session facilitated or co-facilitated by a Harvard College Library (HCL) librarian instructor or had a session that you offer yourself as a physical or virtual visit to the HCL designed around a hands-on exercise;

→ *While these are emphasized in Unit 3, most of these skills are incorporated in Units 1-2 as well.*

8. had several occasions throughout the course to consider the transfer of Expos skills as well as the differences in writing among disciplines regarding kinds of questions asked, what counts as evidence, what "close reading" means and in what fields the term is not employed, other modes of analysis, use of sources, style of argument, and style of prose; examined some writing assignments from other Harvard classes in order to observe the transfer of Expos skills and to develop a repertoire of questions about the assignments with which to approach instructors;

→ *We discuss the major takeaways of each unit, with respect to the elements of argument and each student's own best writing process. Other assignments are formally considered in Unit 3.*

9. been apprised of basic rules of clear style in exposition, and practiced same.

→ *Students receive a course Style Guide, and are expected to use clear style and correct grammar throughout all assignments.*

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## ELEMENTS OF ACADEMIC ARGUMENT:

### What the essay is about:

**Thesis:** your main insight or idea about a text or topic, and the *main* proposition that your essay demonstrates. It should be true but arguable; be limited enough in scope to be argued with available evidence; and get to the heart of the text or topic being analyzed (not be peripheral). It should be stated early and it should govern the whole essay.

### Why it matters:

**Motive, or What's at Stake:** the context or situation that you establish for your argument at the start of your essay, making clear why someone might want to read an essay on this topic or need to hear your particular thesis argued (why your thesis isn't just obvious to all, why other theses might be less persuasive). In the introduction, it's the moment where you establish "what's at stake" in the essay, setting up a genuine problem, question, difficulty, oversimplification, misapprehension, dilemma or violated expectation that an intelligent reader would really have.

### What the thesis is based on:

**Evidence:** the data – facts, examples, or details – that you refer to, quote, or summarize to support your thesis. There needs to be *enough* evidence to be persuasive; the right *kind* of evidence to support the thesis; a *thorough* consideration of evidence (with no obvious pieces of evidence overlooked); and sufficiently *concrete* evidence for the reader to trust.

### Where the evidence comes from:

**Sources:** texts (or persons) referred to, summarized, or quoted, that help a writer demonstrate the truth of his or her argument. In some arguments, there will be one central primary source. In others, sources can offer (a) factual information or data, (b) opinions or interpretation on your topic, (c) comparable versions of the things you are discussing, or (d) applicable general concepts. Remember that there are different ways of citation—all of which are designed to help your readers learn about the origin of your evidence.

### What you do with the evidence:

**Analysis & interpretation:** the work of interpretation, of saying what the evidence means. Analysis is what you do with data when you go beyond observing or summarizing it: taking it apart, grappling with its details, drawing out the significance or implication not apparent to a superficial view. Analysis makes the writer feel present, as a thinking individual, in the essay.

### Evidence and analysis add up to:

**Argument:** the series of ideas that the essay lays out which, taken together, support the essay's thesis. A successful argument will do more than *reiterate* the thesis, but rather make clear how each idea develops from the one before it. The argument should show you not only analyzing the evidence, but also reflecting on the ideas in other important ways: *defining your terms* or assumptions; considering *counter-argument* – possible alternative arguments, or objections or problems, that a skeptical or resistant reader might raise; offering a *qualification* or limitation to the case you've made; incorporating any *complications* that arise, a way in which the case isn't quite so simple as you've made it seem; drawing out an *implication*, often in the conclusion.

### How to organize the argument:

**Structure:** the sequence of an argument's main sections or sub-topics, and the turning points between them. The sections should follow a logical order which is apparent to the reader. But it should also be a progressive order -- they should have a direction of development or complication, not be simply a list of examples or series of restatements of

the thesis ("Macbeth is ambitious: he's ambitious here; and he's ambitious here; and he's ambitious here, too; thus, Macbeth is ambitious"). In some arguments, especially longer ones, structure may be briefly announced or hinted at after the thesis, in a road-map or plan sentence.

### The argument is articulated in part through:

**Key terms & assumptions:** the recurring terms or basic oppositions that an argument rests upon. An essay's key terms should be clear in their meaning and appear throughout; they should be appropriate for the subject (not unfair or too simple -- a false or constraining opposition); and they should not be clichés or abstractions (e.g. "the evils of society"). These terms can imply certain *assumptions* -- unstated beliefs about life, history, literature, reasoning, etc. The assumptions should bear logical inspection, and if arguable they should be explicitly acknowledged.

### You keep the reader clear along the way through:

**Transitions and signposts:** words that tie together the parts of an argument, by indicating how a new section, paragraph, or sentence follows from the one immediately previous (transitional words and phrases); and by offering "signposts" that recollect an earlier idea or section or the thesis itself, referring back to it either by explicit statement or by echoing earlier key words or resonant phrases.

### ...and through:

**Orienting:** brief bits of information, explanation, and summary that orient readers who aren't expert in the subject, enabling them to follow the argument, such as: necessary introductory information about the text, author, or event; a brief summary of a text or passage about to be analyzed; pieces of information given along the way about passages, people, or events mentioned.

### Addressing your readers involves:

**Stance:** the implied relationship of you, the writer, to your readers and subject. Stance is defined by such features as style and tone (e.g. familiar or formal); the presence or absence of specialized language and knowledge; the amount of time spent orienting a general, non-expert reader; the use of scholarly conventions of format and style. Your stance should be established within the first few paragraphs of your essay, and should stay consistent.

### ...and:

**Style:** choices made at the word and sentence level that determine *how* an idea is stated. Besides adhering to the grammatical conventions of standard English, an essay's style needs to be clear and readable (not confusing, verbose, cryptic, etc.), expressive of the writer's intelligence and energetic interest in the subject (not bureaucratic or clichéd), and appropriate for its subject and audience.

### And last (or first):

**Title:** should both interest and inform, by giving the subject and focus of the essay as well as by helping readers see why this essay might be interesting to read.

## HARVARD WRITING PROGRAM GRADING RUBRIC

*Only a mediocre writer is always at his best. -- Somerset Maugham*

The following criteria and rubric serve two purposes: first, they are meant to give you a means of self-evaluation as you draft and revise your papers; second, they are meant to translate the single-character grades you receive on your revised drafts into more useful terms. Ideally, a grade can thus serve the practical purpose of helping you begin to understand the strengths and weaknesses of your own writing and help you focus on how to improve it in the future. Because every first-year student takes Expos 20, every Preceptor uses the grading standards given by the Writing Program to ensure fairness in their evaluation of student work across sections. Pluses and minuses represent shades of difference within these standards.

- **A-level:** Excellent in every way (this is not the same as perfect). This is an ambitious, perceptive paper that grapples with interesting, complex ideas; responds discerningly to counter-arguments; and explores well-chosen evidence revealingly. It argues an insightful thesis claim and/or responds to a clear analytical question that controls the entire paper. The writing enhances, rather than underscores, the author's knowledge (it doesn't simply repeat what has been taught). There is context provided for all the ideas; someone outside the class would be enriched, not confused, by reading the paper. Its beginning opens up, rather than flatly announces, its thesis. Its end is something more than a summary. The language is clean, precise, and often elegant. Readers feel surprised, delighted, or otherwise have their ideas shifted. There's something new here for the reader, something only the paper's author could have written and explored, in this particular way. The author's stake in the material is obvious and the significance is clear to the reader.
- **B-level:** A piece of writing that reaches high and achieves many of its aims. The ideas are solid and progressively explored but some thin patches require more analysis and/or some stray thoughts don't fit in. The language is generally clear and precise but occasionally not. The evidence is relevant, but there may be too little; the context for the evidence may not be sufficiently explored, so that I have to make some of the connections that the writer should have made clear for me.
  - OR a piece of writing that does not reach as high as an A paper but thoroughly achieves its aims. This is a solid paper whose reasoning and argument may nonetheless be rather routine.
- **C-level:** A piece of writing that has real problems in one of these areas: conception (there's at least one main idea but it's fuzzy and hard to get to); structure (confusing); use of evidence (weak or non-existent--the connections among the ideas and the evidence are not made and/or are presented without context, or add up to platitudes or generalizations); language (the sentences are often awkward, dependent on unexplained abstractions, sometimes contradict each other). The essay may not move forward but rather may repeat its main points, or it may touch upon many (and apparently unrelated) ideas without exploring any of them in sufficient depth. Punctuation, spelling, grammar, paragraphing, and transitions may be a problem.
  - OR a paper that is largely summary or a book report of the sources, but is written without major problems.
  - OR a paper that is chiefly a personal reaction to something. Well-written, but scant intellectual/academic content or support--mostly opinion.
- **D & E-level:** These are efforts well short of that needed to grapple seriously with ideas;
  - OR those that are extremely problematic in many of the areas mentioned above: aims, structure, use of evidence, language, etc.;
  - OR those that do not come close to addressing the expectations of the paper assignment.

## OFFICE HOURS AND WRITING CENTER

*The art and science of asking questions is the source of all knowledge.*  
 --Thomas Berger

### WHY GO TO OFFICE HOURS?

Many of you may never have attended faculty office hours. Throughout college, office hours are a common and preferred method of instructor-student interaction. Particularly in larger classes, this is a way for you to get more personalized attention in a course. It's okay to come to arrive in the middle of the scheduled hours and to leave when you need to; you don't have to stay the entire time. Here are some possible reasons you might come to office hours:

- I didn't understand what you said about this one thing in class yesterday.
- I didn't understand why you said this one thing in class.
- How can I use what we discussed on my paper?
- How can I use what we discussed in other classes?
- I'm working really hard and I'm not improving. What can I do?
- I don't know how to start on this assignment. What can I do?
- I'm afraid to participate in class. What can I do?
- I have these Skittles and I'd love to share them with someone ...
- In another class, we learned this other thing which seems different than what you said. What's up?
- I'm interested in the content of this article. How can I learn more about it?
- How can I figure out what study habits will work for me?

### FINDING MY OFFICE:

Here's a step-by-step guide:

My office is located in the Writing Program's main office suite #250, which is in turn located on the second floor of 1 Bow St. To enter the building, you **MUST** press your Harvard ID card on the card reader on the left side of the building's front door. Building hours are 8am-6pm M-F. For those of you who are less familiar with that side of campus, here's a map of the area. Once in the building, take the elevator to the second floor—the Writing Program is to your right (Suite 250) upon exiting the elevator. The suite is unlocked 8:30am-5pm M-F. Once inside the suite, turn right and follow the hallway. My office is #237.



### USING THE TUTORS AT THE WRITING CENTER:

You may be aware that Harvard has a writing center staffed with tutors who can assist you with your writing. The Writing Center ([writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu](http://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu)) is located just across the street from my building in the Barker Center. The University's Writing Center provides free feedback and individual attention to your work, and you are encouraged to visit them early and often at any point in the semester. It is located on the garden level of the Barker Center, and gives you one of the best deals Harvard can offer. You can make an appointment online at their website. I strongly encourage you to make use of the Writing Center. It can be helpful while working on your draft and/or revisions of a paper.