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## **Expos 20 206/07: Green Spaces, Urban Places**



From Boston Common to the Charles River Esplanade and the Arnold Arboretum, Boston boasts many beautiful green spaces. Closer to home, the leafy lawns of Harvard Yard provide a respite in a busy urban environment. With over half of the world's population living in cities, urban green space is more important than ever. The value of public parks to those fortunate enough to live near them is considerable, whether the reduction of the negative effects of climate change, improved public health, or ample opportunities for residents to connect with and appreciate the power of the natural world. But as cities boom and prices skyrocket, access to spaces like parks is increasingly expensive and exclusionary. This course will consider a series of related questions: What exactly are the benefits of resources like public parks? Should urban green space be considered a right of every citizen? Has access to green space in cities become a privilege of the elite? We will explore these questions, thinking about why access to green space matters in an increasingly urbanized world.

Our first unit will focus on the green spaces of Harvard's campus. You'll question the role that access to nature plays for the Harvard community by touring campus and choosing a site to study. We'll then move to examine questions of public access to parks through the case study of Boston Common, America's oldest urban park. We'll think through the thorny relationship between public and private green space for urban communities by working with the Friends of the Public Garden and reading an increasingly influential essay on the fate of public space, "The Tragedy of the Commons." Our third unit will provide you with a unique opportunity to explore how academic research on questions of environmental access is playing out on the ground through a partnership with Groundwork, a community organization in neighboring Somerville.

Groundwork works to build community and environmental health through projects such as urban gardens and youth education. You will consider the relationship between urban green initiatives and the residents who benefit from them while learning about Groundwork's urban farming initiatives in conjunction with your research. Students will have a chance to present their innovative ideas and research from their writing at a capstone fair at the end of the semester.

*There will be three outside-of-class activities students will be asked to attend at specific times, and for which they should plan to keep their schedules open:*

- *Friday March 8, 3:15-5:30 p.m.—A discussion with Elizabeth Vizza, Executive Director of the Boston Friends of the Public Garden*
- *Wednesday April 3, 4:30-6 p.m. – A panel discussion with the Groundwork Green Team*
- *A capstone fair during Reading Period (Time and Date TBA)*

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

**Writing is a process.** You will take notes on your reading; write and revise response papers; write drafts of your essays; and fully revise those essays. This continued process of drafting and revision is the primary work of this class, and is the main way your writing grows stronger. It's worth noting that while inspiration is the moment we all hope for in our writing, it comes most readily when that inspiration is earned—in other words, when you have dedicated *sustained effort to that process* of reading, thinking, questioning, drafting and revising.

**Writing is thinking.** That evolving writing process also allows you to develop your thinking with greater depth and meaning. Writing is one of the best ways to *figure out* your ideas. . . and so you should expect your ideas and arguments to evolve during the writing process. When you hand in a draft, you should not think that you are 'done' with the paper. The draft is part of a step to a final product, and the more work you put in, the more I will be able to help you.

**Writing is a conversation.** When you write, you are often in conversation with the sources you are writing about. You are likewise in conversation with your audience. You will express your ideas in your response papers, drafts and revisions, and your audience from this course will be responding to those ideas, telling you what their strengths are and where they can grow stronger. In addition to the feedback you get from your classmates, you will have individual conferences with me about each essay (these conferences are a required part of the course), and you will receive extensive written feedback from me throughout the semester.

In addition, throughout the semester, we will pay attention to the writing you will do (and are doing) **beyond Expos**. We will explore common principles of academic writing—such as thesis, evidence, analysis and argument—which will be part of much of the writing you do at Harvard. Different occasions and disciplines also call for different approaches and conventions, and so we will also examine some of the ways those conventions have different inflections—or even very different appearances—in different disciplines.

The course is structured in the following units:

**Unit 1: “Green Spaces, Crimson Places: An Analysis of Harvard’s Campus.”** We begin in your new backyard, Harvard’s renowned and much-photographed campus. This essay will ask you to reflect critically on the role of green spaces for the Harvard community. How do the campus’s outdoor spaces affect your experience of Harvard? You’ll have the chance to explore your new environment and select a site to analyze in relation to student experiences and the campus’s attitudes towards nature and sustainability. Your first essay will give you the opportunity to engage in one of the most essential skills in academic writing: posing an analytical question or problem and engaging in a close analysis that argues for an answer.

**Unit 2: “Green Places, Common Spaces: Boston Common and a Theory of Public Space.”** After our exploration of greenspace on Harvard’s campus, we’ll head across the river and into the heart of Boston. In this unit, we’ll learn about the public space of Boston Common, and in particular, the importance of this iconic greenspace for the city. Boston Common dates back to 1634, when it became the first city park in America. Originally a place to pasture sheep, the Common is still open to all. A non-profit organization, the Friends of the Public Garden, has worked for decades to protect the landscape features of this park while ensuring that it remains a public space for all. We will be learning about the Common and the challenges of maintaining it as a public green space through a discussion with Elizabeth Vizza, the Executive Director of the Friends of the Public Garden. In conjunction with learning about Boston Common, we’ll read “The Tragedy of the Commons.” In this famous essay, the American ecologist, Garrett Hardin presents a controversial and influential theory about public space and limited natural resources.

**Unit 3: “Green Spaces, Urban Farms: Exploring Environmental Equity.”** Finally, we turn to the neighboring city of Somerville to consider an important question at the heart of urban greenspace: How green is green enough? While green spaces provide many benefits for urban residents, they have also been linked to gentrification, a displacement of local residents that disproportionately affects minority groups. You’ll write a research essay in which you explore the question of “How green is green enough” in relation to a local community. We’ll be partnering with the non-profit, Groundwork: Somerville, to explore their urban farming initiatives. In addition to reading a shared group of sources about green initiatives and environmental justice, we’ll hear a presentation from their Green Team, the Groundwork youth division. The Green Team will present to the class on their current projects relating to climate justice, racial equity, and the food system. For this essay, you’ll write a research paper that engages in a critical debate about these issues in relation to Somerville and Groundwork.

## HOW THE COURSE WORKS

### Required Texts and Materials

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

→ Please note: While you are not required to purchase any texts for this course, you will print a great deal for this class, so please plan accordingly.

You should also have some writing handbook to consult when questions of grammar, mechanics, or style arise. I'm happy to recommend one if you don't own one already.

### Your Devices in the Classroom

To better foster a collaborative workshop environment, I ask that you please not use laptops or tablets to take notes in class. Though I understand their convenience, these devices too easily become windows into other places (where your classmates and I can't follow you). Bring a notebook and a pen.

You'll quickly see that this is not a hard-and-fast technology embargo. There will be a few days when computers or tablets are necessary, and I will let you know about them ahead of time. In general, you should expect to **print** any materials that I send you or post on the course website and bring those with you to class.

### 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 version of each essay. These conferences are our chance to work closely on your writing and to focus your work in revision, and are most worthwhile when you are the one to guide them. Please come to each conference prepared—having reviewed your essay and my comments, considered your questions, and begun to think about revision possibilities and strategies. You should plan on taking notes during our discussions. Since the schedule during conference days is so tight, missed conferences may not be rescheduled.

In addition to our formal conferences, you are of course free to come see me during office hours about your developing ideas or to set up another time to meet if office hours aren't convenient.

- **E-mail**: Rather than take up our class time with announcements and administrative arrangements (and there will be many of them), I use e-mail to communicate most of that information. As part of your participation in the course, I ask that you check your Harvard e-mail account daily; you are responsible for the information I post there. Likewise, I make sure to check mine once every weekday for questions from you. Please note that I don't check e-mail later than 7:00 p.m. I can answer most questions within 24 hours, except over the weekend.

### **Class Participation**

One of the benefits of Expos is its small class size. That benefit is best realized when every student participates fully in the class; as in any seminar, you learn much more from formulating, articulating, and questioning your own thoughts than from simply listening to what others have to say. Our time together is largely devoted to discussion and small-group work. Therefore you are responsible for being in class, prepared and on time, each time we meet. "Being prepared" 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.

### **Final Grades**

Revision of Essay 1: 15%

Revision of Essay 2: 25%

Revision of Essay 3: 40%

Capstone Project 10%

Participation 10%

Participation encompasses active participation in class discussions, pre- and post-draft assignments, drafts, cover letters, and workshop letters to your peers. If you neglect to submit these written assignments, you will not receive credit towards your participation grade.

Please note that I expect your revisions to be free of grammatical, spelling, and formatting errors. I am happy to explain any technical issues that seem confusing or obscure. Failure to meet these expectations may result in a lowered final grade.

### **Attendance and Lateness**

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.

Class begins promptly at the scheduled time (1:30pm or 3pm). Three latenesses of more than ten minutes will be counted as an absence.

## **WRITTEN WORK**

### **Submitting Essays**

You will turn in drafts and revisions through our course website. Please be sure to check the syllabus for details on when things are due, and pay careful attention to the general guidelines about format, etc. explained at the end of this syllabus.

You will submit most 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 in a form compatible with Microsoft Word (your file should end in .doc or .docx). It is also your responsibility to ensure that the file you are sending 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.

All work you submit to the course is for public readership—in other words, we will use essays and excerpts from the writers in the class (possibly yours!) as some of our texts this semester. If at any point you submit a draft or revision that you would prefer other students not read, please let me know that – but please don't make that request about everything you turn in this semester.

### **Deadlines**

For many class meetings, you will have due a response paper or some other reading or writing exercise to help you develop the essay for that unit. Our work together in class will also often be based on those assignments. For those reasons, it is imperative that you turn your work in on time. Of course, even in the most carefully organized semesters, unexpected circumstances can arise – therefore each student in this section is allowed ONE 24-hour extension on a response paper, draft or revision during the semester. To use that 24-hour extension without penalty, you must: contact me *before* that deadline; submit the late work to Canvas; and be on time with the other work due on that day as well. Otherwise, the work will be counted as late. And beware:

taking that one-day extension can mean that you're crunched for time at the beginning of the next unit. After you have used this extension, I will not be able to offer feedback on late assignments.

Other than that "wild card" extension, all deadlines in the course are firm. Except in the case of medical or family emergency, I do not grant further extensions. Essay drafts or revisions turned in after the deadline will be penalized a third of a letter-grade on the final essay for each day they are late (an A would become an A-, an A- a B+, etc.). If you cannot meet a deadline due to a medical emergency, you must contact me right away, and may be required to produce a note from UHS; in the event of a family emergency, you must contact me right away, and may be required to ask your dean to contact me by e-mail or phone. In addition, please contact me as soon as possible so we can work out an alternative schedule.

### **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.

### **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.*

### **Policy on Collaboration**

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.

### **Academic Integrity**

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.

## **Writing Center**

At any stage of the writing process – brainstorming ideas, drafting, or revising – 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 <https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/> to make an appointment. Tutors also hold drop-in office hours at other campus locations; see the Writing Center website for details.

## **Submitting Essays**

Following the guidelines below will ensure that I can focus on your ideas and your prose when I read your essays, rather than devoting time to issues of formatting, pagination, etc. The guidelines apply both to essay drafts and revisions. Forgetting to check your essays for these matters can result in a lower grade for the essay.

All essays should adhere to the standard format:

- double-space in a reasonable font (Times New Roman 12 or equivalent), with one-inch margins
- number all pages and paragraphs
- include your name, the course title, my name, the date, the essay number and your essay title on the first page (don't use a title page)
- include your name on each subsequent page
- proofread thoroughly for typographical, grammatical, and punctuation errors. Consistent errors will lower the grades on your essays.
- use the MLA in-text citation method to document your sources, and include a correctly formatted list of Works Cited. Consult the *Harvard Guide to Using Sources* for the appropriate citation information.

Please consult the unit calendar for details on what needs to be submitted with each draft and revision.

## **And a word to the wise:**

*Keep a copy of all your work*, and be sure to avoid computer disaster: you should both regularly save your work and periodically print working drafts as you write or back your work up to multiple electronic locations (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).