



Telling Her Story: Narrative, Media & #MeToo

Course Overview

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In a powerful essay, writer and activist Audre Lorde suggested: “where the words of women are crying to be heard we must each of us recognize our responsibility to seek those words out, to read them and share them and examine them in their pertinence to our lives.” Lorde is not alone in asking us to pay attention to and take responsibility for women’s stories; for centuries scholars and activists have championed the stories of women, including women of color and queer women, that have routinely gone untold or unheard. Yet if this issue has always been pressing, the call to heed women’s stories is especially urgent at a moment when such stories have come to dominate the cultural landscape and public consciousness – from news accounts to popular shows, literature to Twitter hashtags. Responding to our current moment, this course examines how women’s stories are narrated across a variety of media and explores what impact sharing them can have. Prior knowledge of women’s studies or feminist issues is not required for success in this course.

Dr. Alexandra Gold
she/her/hers

- **Class Times:** Tu/Th 10:30am & 12pm
- **Office:** 1 Bow Street, Suite 250
- **Email:** alexandra_gold@fas.harvard.edu
- **Office Hours:** Thursdays 3-5pm (in-person)
- **Zoom ID:** [ajgold](#) (*appt. outside of regular hours*)
- **Dog:** Zorro, Aussie ([@zorrothebandit](#))



Unit Breakdown

Unit 1 focuses on three literary short stories by contemporary women authors: [Roxane Gay](#), [Carmen Maria Machado](#), and [Jenny Zhang](#). We'll explore the questions their short stories raise about embodiment, family, love, and society and consider how they speak to [intersectionality](#): the nexus of gender, sex, class, ability, age, and race.

** DIFFICULT MATERIAL **

Our reading material and class discussions will sometimes deal with potentially triggering material, especially surrounding topics like sexual and racial violence, abuse, and body image. If this is or becomes a concern for you for personal, religious, or other reasons, please speak with me at any point in the semester to come up with an alternative plan. I want ensure that this class is a safe environment for all students!



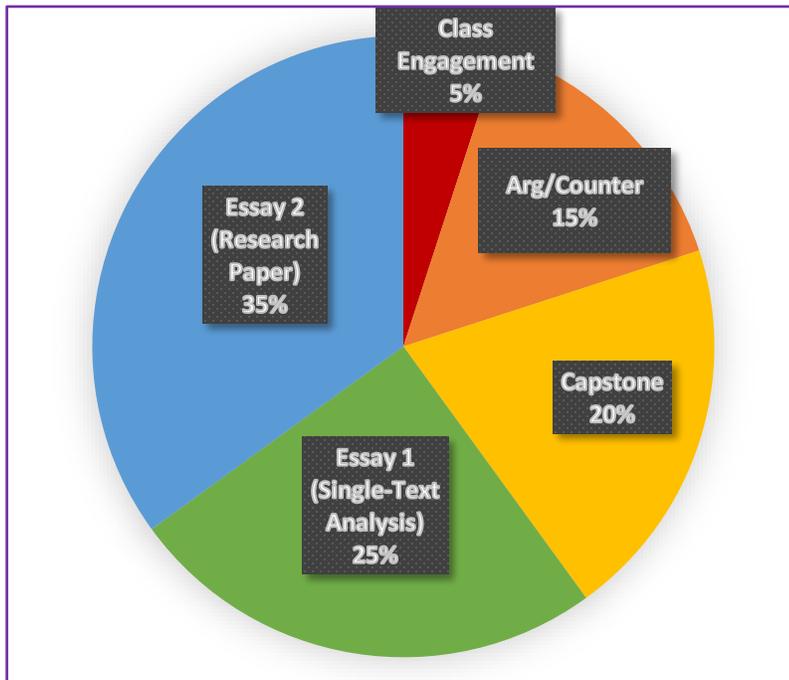
Unit 2 moves into the broader realms of art, especially visual art, and the arena of [“hashtag activism.”](#) considering the impact of social movements like #MeToo. We'll probe the relationship between art and activism, asking whether and how art and social media can achieve [“representational justice.”](#) Students independently develop and research topics on art, activism, social media, and their connections.

Unit 3 (Capstone) asks you to “re-mediate” your research paper, making what you’ve learned accessible to a larger public audience. The capstone is a three-part project that asks you to work in groups to curate and present [a social media platform](#) that highlights aspects of your research and then to individually write a brief piece that addresses what you’ve created.

Course Writing #Goals

- understand that thinking *is* writing, and that writing is a process
- develop thesis-based, evidence-driven analytical arguments with “stakes”
- “close-read” various genres of text, including visual media
- plan, draft, and revise your own and your peers’ written work
- learn how to effectively use a variety of sources and avoid plagiarism
- practice organizing complex ideas in a clear, coherent, and persuasive manner
- cultivate style by carefully considering sentence- and word-level decisions

ASSIGNMENTS



Major Essays 1&2 (60%) This course requires **two major essays**, each with **one preliminary draft**. Drafts do not receive grades, but they receive significant audio-visual feedback. We'll meet to discuss your drafts in **individual or group conferences**. The revised, final version of each paper is graded and receives written comments.

Argument/Counterargument (15%) In Unit 2, you'll complete a **short (two paragraph) writing assignment** that asks you to respond to theoretical pieces you've read. This assignment allows you to develop your ability to work with academic sources in advance of your research paper.

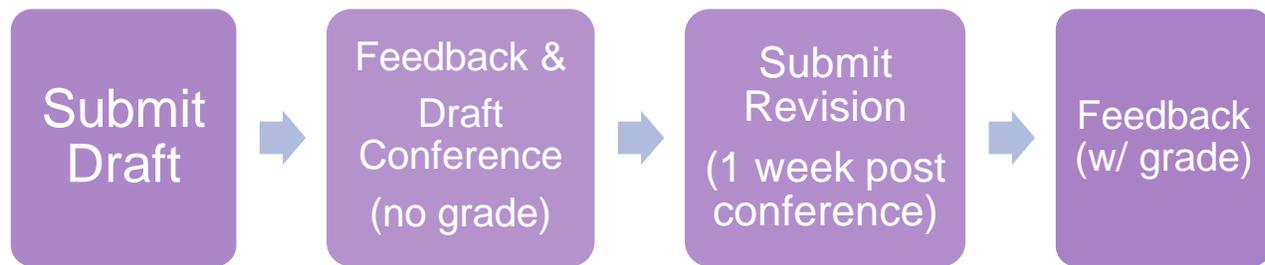
The Capstone (20%)

In lieu of a third major essay, you'll complete a **multi-step capstone assignment**. This is a hands-on opportunity to think about how to communicate with a broader audience. **The capstone, including one additional class meeting for the group presentations, will be completed over Reading Days & Final Exam period.** In **Part 1 & 2 (15%)**, you'll work in groups to produce a social media "re-mediation" of your research projects, creatively synthesizing what you've learned in a new format. You'll then give a brief, group oral presentation (10 minutes) on your project. In **Part 3 (5%)**, you'll write a brief, individual blog post that considers whether social media can be a meaningful form of activism.

Engagement (5%) Participating in discussion as an active listener and contributor helps clarify your understanding of assigned texts and consider others' perspectives. This includes showing up to class prepared as well as contributing to small and large group activities, including draft and peer review workshops – opportunities to share works-in-progress and refine your revision skills by collaborating on fellow students' work. **I know some students find it difficult to participate in discussion, but there are many ways to participate in the class community.** I'm happy to discuss individual strategies.

Response Papers are crucial facet of your engagement in the course. They allow you to be an active class participant and prepare you to successfully write your essays. In each unit, you'll be responsible for one or two response exercises. While not graded, some will be turned in to me, and I'll provide brief comments, but some will be used for class activities. The more thoughtfully and thoroughly you complete these, the easier the writing process should be!

Check out examples of past capstone work [here!](#)

**A / A-**

Essays are excellent (*not* perfect) and complete, with a fully realized beginning, middle and end. They skillfully express an argumentative thesis and adeptly handle the core “Elements of Academic Writing.” “A-” essays do this to a less successful degree, with notable shortcomings in one or more Elements of academic writing.

B+ / B / B-

Essays are strong and succeed in many ways but present a few key “Elements” that need significant work. While these essays offer an engaging and intelligent discussion, certain aspects don’t yet live up to their full potential. “B+” essays might, for instance, offer a partial thesis and some good work with evidence, but need substantial development in both areas and/or present shortcomings in others.

C+ / C / C-

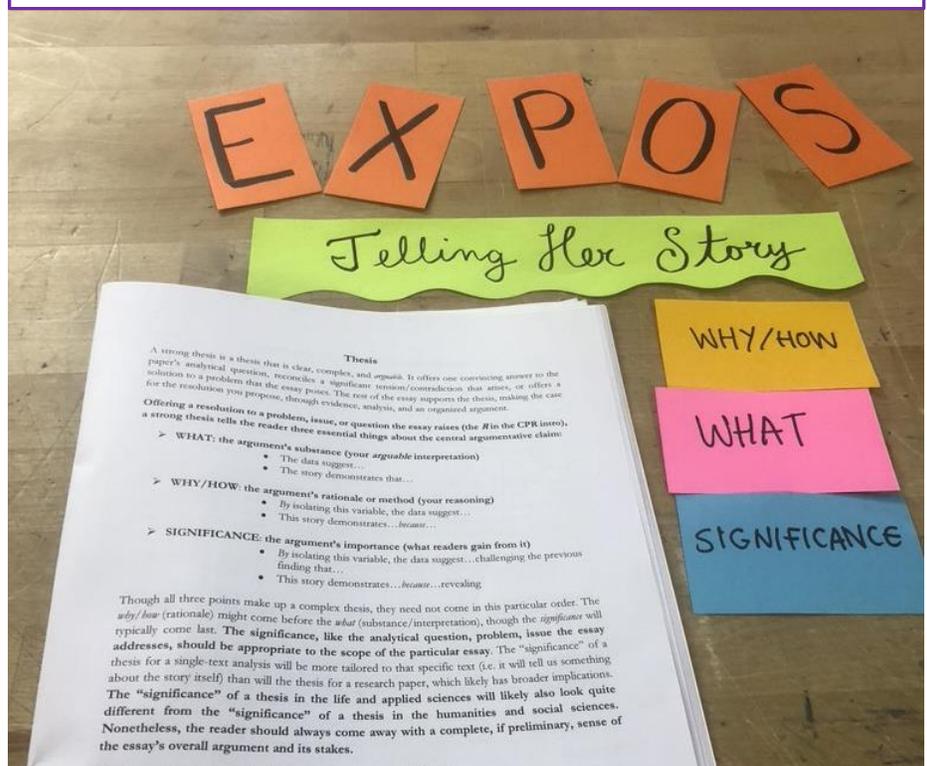
Essays possess potential but are flawed in their current form, with several areas that require substantial improvement. These essays require significant, further revision in all or most pertinent “Elements.”

This schema follows the Harvard Grading Policy.

Essay Revisions

Everyone gets substantial time for revision because your revisions should be substantial. Real revision requires real time; ***revising a final paper the day it’s due isn’t a strong revision strategy nor will it lead to the best outcome.***

I hold students to a high standard and expect them to meet it to their own greatest ability. I am here to assist you in that process, but **you** are accountable for your work and grades.



GRADING

<u>IS</u>	<u>IS NOT</u>
<p>A specific metric</p> <p>A measure of how successfully you've met the criteria for a specific writing & thinking task.</p>	<p>The rule</p> <p>A measure of self-worth, intellectual potential, or a determinant of your future. It is not a measure of effort <i>per se</i> (though sustained effort will likely pay off)</p>
<p>Additive</p> <p>You <i>earn</i> points based on how well you've mastered each assignment's core skills through the writing and revision processes.</p>	<p>Deductive</p> <p>You don't <i>lose</i> points from a singular, idealized paper. Each student strives toward their own "ideal" paper based on their drafting/revision processes.</p>
<p>More stringent with <u>each assignment</u></p> <p>The skills you learn in Unit 1 should be implemented and improved upon in Unit 2, etc. Assignments are designed to increase in complexity, but the core skills should continue to improve through practice.</p>	<p>Always linear</p> <p>Writing is not always an even process. Some assignments types may be more familiar or exciting to you than others. Some units may be more challenging personally or academically than others.</p>
<p>A reflection of <u>original work</u></p> <p>Original work derives from your own voice and insights to engage and educate readers. It may be informed by appropriate sources of collaboration: class discussion, the writing center, and responsible use of sources; <u>it is free of plagiarism</u>.</p>	<p>A reflection of perfection/failure</p> <p>No paper is perfect, even those by the best writers. No paper is a failure, unless it is not turned in or it is plagiarized, which might incur disciplinary action. Each draft and revision are steps in a writing and research process that will continue beyond this class.</p>
<p>Criteria-Based</p> <p>The core Elements central to each essay are noted on the assignment sheet; grades indicate how well you meet them. While content and quality of ideas is important, this is a writing class.</p>	<p>Consistent Across Disciplines</p> <p>Different courses, profs, TAs, etc. have different approaches to grading. Expos courses may prioritize writing criteria that other courses and disciplines may not. Check with your course head or syllabus.</p>

**** GRADE CHANGE PROTOCOL ****

Because you *earn and are accountable for your grades* and therefore play a significant role in the grading process, I am open to your concerns. If you feel that a grade you've earned is unfair, you may write me a letter detailing why you believe your grade should be higher and responding to my feedback within 1 week of receiving comments. Like any strong argument, it must be detailed, using *specific evidence* from your work as support. The letter does not guarantee a grade change, but if it presents a strong, well-supported argument, I'll consider it.



All course documents are available and all assignments will be turned in via Canvas. Please use only .doc or .docx file formats for submitted work. If you need Word software, it is [freely available here](#). It is your responsibility to ensure that your files are not corrupted or damaged. **I expect that you will turn in all assignments on time.** I strongly advise you to back up your work to a cloud like [Google Drive](#) or [Dropbox](#).

Additional Support

[Mental Health \(CAHMS\)](#)

[Office for Gender Equity](#)

[Office of BGLTQ+ Life](#)

[Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)

Communication is key!



You can always reach me by [email](#) or Slack DM (preferred) and in office hours to discuss questions or brainstorm ideas. I try to answer all correspondence in a timely manner during normal weekday hours (9am-5pm). If you have a question that might benefit the whole class, feel free to post it to Slack. ***If you have an especially complex, lengthy, or specific questions it's best to set up a quick meeting. I am also happy to arrange meetings outside of regular office hours. These meetings will likely take place via Zoom.*** Except in extenuating class, conversations are confidential. **Do not hesitate to reach out if I can support you in any way!**

PS: My office hours are designed for you. I welcome you to come chat about whatever is on your mind, even if you don't have a specific question or concern! I'd just love to get to know you!

Life Happens! Sometimes unexpected circumstances or unavoidable life events arise that conflict with assignment deadlines. **Each student is allowed one 24-hour extension without explanation.** It can be used on any major assignment except the final capstone. If circumstances allow, contact me *before the deadline* to tell me that you'd like to use the extension. If other circumstances arise, notify me as soon as possible so we can devise a plan. Deadlines lend the term structure and keep us on track, but with good communication, arrangements can be made. ***I always prefer that you come to me with deadline issues than not turn in the work.***



EXPOS POLICIES



All students are welcome. If you need any resources to be fully present – physically, mentally, and socially – in class, please speak with me at any time.

Completion of Work

Because Expos 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 when you have fallen behind). If you are unable to complete your work on time due to medical or family issues, please contact me before the deadline to discuss the support you might need and a possible new deadline arrangement. Communication about your situation is essential so that we can determine how best to help you move forward. If we have not already discussed your situation and you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of an essay by the final due date in an essay unit, you will receive a letter reminding you of these requirements and asking you to meet with me and/or your Resident Dean to devise a plan to catch up on your work. The letter will also specify the new date by which you must submit the late work. If you fail to submit at least a substantial essay draft by this new date, and if you have not documented a medical problem or been in touch with your Dean about other circumstances, you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and given a failing grade.

If you think you'll require some flexibility in the course for reasons of a documented disability, please schedule a meeting with me to discuss appropriate accommodations.

(To be eligible for such accommodations, you need to have provided documentation to the [Accessible Education Office](#) ahead of time.) The AEO works closely with Expos courses to develop a plan that is appropriate for your needs. It is always your responsibility to consult with me as the need for those accommodations arises.

Attendance

The Writing Program attendance policy is intended to make sure that you get everything you can out of Expos. Because Expos has fewer class hours than other courses; because the course is largely discussion-based; and because instruction in Expos proceeds by sequential writing activities, your consistent attendance is essential to your learning.

While I of course encourage you to be present every day in class, **you are allowed two unexcused absences for the semester with no consequence.** Some absences (religious holidays and medical situations) are automatically considered excused; some family circumstances may also be counted as excused absences. **If you miss two unexcused classes, I will ask you to meet with me to discuss any issues that may be keeping you from attending, and to advise you on your plan for catching up on the missed work. If you miss a third class, you will be required to meet with your Resident Dean about those absences, so that your Dean can give you any support you may need to help you get back on track in the class. Missing four classes--the equivalent of two full weeks of the semester--puts you at risk for missing crucial material necessary to complete your work.** Unless there is a medical or other emergency issue preventing consistent engagement with the class, students who miss four classes will receive a formal warning that they are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and given a failing grade.

In the case of a medical problem, you should contact me before the class to explain, but in any event within 24 hours; you should also copy your Resident Dean on that message. In the case of extended illness, you may be required to provide medical documentation. Absences because of special events or extracurricular involvement are not excused absences. If such circumstances lead you to want to miss more than two unexcused absences, you must petition the Associate Director of the Writing Program for permission.

Academic Integrity

One of the essential elements of the Expos curriculum is the work we do on effective source use, appropriate acknowledgement of sources, and expectations for citing sources in academic writing. Most forms of academic writing involve building on the ideas of others, contributing ideas of your own, and signaling clearly for readers where each idea comes from. This complex relationship with sources is part of our work through the whole semester, and you should always feel free to ask me questions about this material. As with all your courses, the expectation in Expos is that all **the work that you submit for this course must be your own. 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.

ACADEMIC HELP!!

[Writing Center \(Peer Tutoring\)](#)

[English Grammar & Language Tutor](#)

[Academic Resource Center \(ARC\)](#)

Collaboration & Course Permissions

Because of our small class size, collaboration among students is encouraged. However, only the following kinds of collaboration are permitted in this class: 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.” All work submitted for this course must be your own. **Except for the final capstone, which explicitly requires group work, writing response papers, drafts, or revisions with other students is expressly forbidden.**

The work we do together in class—discussions, exercises, workshoping essays—is intended for the members of our class. **Students are not allowed to record class and are not allowed to post video or audio recordings or transcripts of our class meetings.** While samples of student work will be circulated within the course (and all work you do may be shared with your classmates), you may not share fellow students’ work with others outside the course without their written permission.



Citation is feminist memory. Citation is how we acknowledge our debts to those who came before [...] Citations are feminist bricks: they are the materials through which, from which, we create our dwellings.

-Sara Ahmed, [Living a Feminist Life](#)