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 become increasingly prevalent in the cultural landscape and public consciousness – from politics 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 feminist knowledge is not required for success. Men can take this class! (All genders welcome!)

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Dr. Alexandra Gold
she/her

- 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)
  OR
  by Zoom appointment (other days)
- Class Mascot: Zorro the Aussie → → →
**DIFFICULT MATERIAL**

Our readings and discussions will occasionally deal with potentially distressing material, especially around sexual and racial violence and abuse. 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 to ensure that this class remains a welcome environment for all!

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**Unit 1**

focuses on three literary short stories by contemporary authors: Roxane Gay, Carmen Maria Machado, and Jenny Zhang. You’ll write analytical, textual arguments about the questions these stories raise about women’s embodiment, sexual autonomy (or lack) and much more, and consider how they speak to intersectionality: the oppressive nexus of gender, race, sexuality, class, age, and ability.

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**Unit 2**

moves into the broader realms of art, especially visual art, and the arena of “hashtag activism,” considering social media movements like #MeToo. We’ll probe the relationship between art and activism, asking whether and how art and social media might achieve a form of “representational justice.” Students independently develop and research topics on art, activism, social media, and their connections.

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**Unit 3 (Capstone)**

asks you to “re-mediate” your research essays, making the knowledge you’ve produced accessible to a larger, public audience. The two-part capstone project asks you to work in groups to curate and present a social media platform (Insta, TikTok, podcast, YouTube, etc.) that highlights aspects of your research.

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**Course Writing #Goals**

- understand that thinking is writing, and that writing is a process
- develop thesis-based, evidence-driven analytical arguments with stakes
- analyze various genres of text, including visual media and dense feminist theory
- plan, draft, and revise your own written work and assess that of your peers’
- learn how to effectively use a variety of sources and to responsibly avoid plagiarism
- practice organizing complex ideas in a clear, progressive, and persuasive manner
- cultivate writing style by carefully considering sentence- and word-level decisions
**Your Writing (70%)**

**Major Essays 1&2 (60%)** This course requires two major essays — a single-text analysis (25%) and a research paper (35%) — each with one preliminary draft. Drafts do not receive grades, but they receive significant audio-visual feedback. We’ll also meet to discuss your drafts in individual or group conferences. The revised, final version of each paper is graded and receives written comments.

**Writing With Sources (10%)** Between essays, you’ll complete a short (two paragraph) writing assignment that asks you to engage with the feminist theory you’ve read. This assignment allows you to develop your ability to work with academic sources in advance of your research paper.

**Group Capstone (20%)**

In lieu of a third major essay, you’ll complete a 2-part group capstone assignment. This is a hands-on opportunity to think about how to communicate with a broader audience by translating the written research you’ve done for your final essay into a different, interactive media genre. In Part 1, you’ll produce a social media “re-mediation” of your research projects, creatively synthesizing what you’ve learned in a new format. In Part 2, you’ll then give a brief group presentation on your project. The capstone, including one additional class meeting for the presentation, will be completed over Reading Days & Final Exam period.

**Engagement (10%)**

Participating in discussions as an active listener and contributor can clarify your understanding of an assigned text and consider others’ perspectives. This requires showing up to classes prepared as well as contributing to small and large group activities, including draft and peer review workshops: opportunities to share works-in-progress and to refine your revision skills by collaborating on fellow students’ work. *I know some students struggle to participate in discussion, but there are many ways to participate in and engage with the class community. I’m happy to discuss individual strategies.*

Response Papers are crucial facet of the Expos curriculum. Your timely, thorough completion of them will count toward your overall course engagement. These can allow you to be an active class participant and prepare you to successfully write your essays. In each major essay unit, you’ll complete one or two ungraded response exercises, some of which will be turned in for comments from me and some of which will used for in-class activities like peer review. The better you complete these, the easier the writing process will be!

Check out examples of past capstone work [here](#) & [here](#)
A / A-
Essays are excellent (not perfect) and complete, with a fully realized beginning, middle and end. They skilfully 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.

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 “Elements.”

This schema overlaps with other Expos courses and 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 IS

**A specific metric**
A measure of how successfully you’ve met the criteria for a specific writing & thinking task.

**Additive**
You **earn** points based on how well you’ve mastered each assignment’s core skills through the writing and revision processes.

**More stringent with each assignment**
The skills you learn in essay 1 should be implemented and improved upon in essay 2, etc. Assignments are designed to increase in complexity, but the core skills should continue to improve through practice.

**A reflection of original work**
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; it **is free of plagiarism**.

**Criteria-Based**
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 of course important, this is ultimately a writing class.

## Grading IS NOT

**The rule**
A measure of self-worth, intellectual potential, or a determinant of your future. It is not a measure of effort **per se** (though sustained effort can pay off).

**Deductive**
You don’t **lose** points from a singular, idealized paper. Each student strives toward their own “ideal” paper based on their drafting/revision processes.

**Always linear**
Writing is not always an even process. Some assignment types may be more familiar or exciting to you than others. Some weeks/months may be more challenging personally or academically than others.

**A reflection of perfection/failure**
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.

**Consistent Across Disciplines**
Different courses, profs, TAs, etc. may have different approaches to grading. Expos courses may prioritize writing criteria that other courses and disciplines do not. Check with your course head or syllabus.

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****Grade Change Protocol**

Because you **are accountable for your own work**, you determine the grade it receives. If, however, you feel that an earned grade is unfair, you may write a letter responding to my feedback **within 1 week** of receiving comments, making one **strong argument** for a different grade backed by supporting evidence from your own work. The letter **does not guarantee** a new grade, but well-supported arguments will be carefully considered.

**NOTE:** Grade grubbing in office hours and otherwise is both **inappropriate** and unlikely to result in a better grade.
All course documents and assignments are available on and 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 advise you to back up all work to a cloud like Google Drive or Dropbox.

Early & Frequent 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 question 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 question or concern!

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 pressing 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 would always prefer that you come to me with deadline issues than not turn in the work.
Completion of Work

Because Expos is a planned sequence of writing, you must write all 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.

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 discussion-based; and because instruction in Expos proceeds by sequential writing activities, your consistent attendance is essential to your learning.

While I 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 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.

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, workshopping 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