

**Expos 20**  
**Telling Her Story: Narrative, Media, and #MeToo**



**Spring 2019**

Tu/Th 9:00-10:15 & 10:30-11:45 (Emerson 104)

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**Office Hrs.:** Tu/Th 4:00-5:00pm

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

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 words 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 social media. Responding to our current moment, this course examines how women’s stories are narrated across a variety of media and explores what impact sharing of them can have.

**Unit 1** begins with literary narratives, focusing on three short stories by contemporary women authors: Roxane Gay’s “Strange Gods” from her collection *Difficult Women* (2017), Carmen Maria Machado’s “Real Women Have Bodies” from *Her Body and Other Parties* (2017) and Jenny Zhang’s “We Love You Crispina” from *Sour Heart* (2017). We’ll explore the questions they raise about embodiment, family, love, and society and consider how they speak to intersectionality: the nexus of gender, sex, class, ability, age, and race.

**Unit 2** turns to another narrative media form: television. Students will screen three episodes of Hulu’s 2017 adaptation of Margaret Atwood’s dystopian novel *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Our discussions of the show will be informed by two critical feminist texts: Laura Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975) and Gayle Rubin’s “The Traffic in Women.” Examining the connections between

these theoretical sources and the show, we'll consider how they together illuminate the troubling relationship between gender, authority, power, and image.

**Unit 3** moves into the realm of visual and performance art as well as the arena of “hashtag activism,” considering social media movements like #MeToo, #SayHerName, #BlackLivesMatter and more. We'll probe the often reciprocal relation between art and activism in our contemporary media climate, looking at pertinent examples like Emma Sulkowicz's mattress performance “Carry That Weight” and Kenyatta A.C. Hinkle's visual print series *The Evanesced*. Students will have the opportunity to pursue and explore their interests in art and/or activism in-depth, developing their own research topics.

### IMPORTANT COURSE NOTE

Our reading material and class discussions will deal with difficult, potentially troubling material, especially surrounding topics like sexual violence, abuse, and body image. If this is or becomes a concern for you, I encourage you to speak with me at any point in the semester to see how we can best accommodate your needs. I am committed to ensuring that the course remains an open, safe environment for every student. Accordingly, I expect students to treat each other and me with respect, fostering a space for collaborative learning in which all students can equally and freely participate. I ask students to approach the course and each other with an open mind, and I support productive disagreement, so long as everyone treats each other with civility and dignity.

### COURSE GOALS

As an introduction to college-level academic writing, Expos 20 helps you hone fundamental reading and writing skills to succeed in your other Harvard courses. Throughout the semester, you will

- develop thesis-based, evidence-driven analytical arguments
- articulate the “stakes” of your position, idea, or argument
- “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 avoiding plagiarism
- practice organizing complex ideas in a clear, coherent, and persuasive manner
- cultivate your writing style by carefully considering sentence- and word-level decisions

### READINGS & OTHER MATERIALS

All required texts and course materials are on Canvas. **Please print them out and bring to class.**

Roxane Gay, *Difficult Women*

Carmen Maria Machado, *Her Body and Other Parties*

Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”

Gayle Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex”

Jenny Zhang, *Sour Heart*

Additional, short scholarly and critical essays

You will also screen *The Handmaid's Tale* (Season 1, Episodes 1-3). Episodes are available on Amazon and iTunes (a one-time cost of ~\$9) or on Hulu – students can subscribe through Spotify for \$4.99/month <https://www.spotify.com/us/student/>. If these costs are prohibitive, please speak with me. I encourage you to view these episodes with classmates, when possible.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS & ASSIGNMENTS

**In-Class Discussion and Activities (5%)** are critical to the success of this course and your development as a writer and thinker. Engaging in discussion allows you to clarify your understanding of assigned texts and to consider classmates' perspectives. **Participation** includes consistently showing up to class prepared and on time and contributing to small and large group activities, including **draft workshops**. Draft workshops are opportunities to share works-in-progress and refine your own revision skills by collaborating on fellow students' work. This course depends on the active contribution of every student. *\*\*\*I recognize that some students find it more difficult to participate than others. If this is a concern, please feel free to speak with me at any point in the semester.*

**Response Papers (5%):** Response papers are a crucial facet of Expos and this course. They ensure that you complete and consider the required reading, allow you to be an active class participant, and prepare you to successfully write your essays. In each unit, you will be responsible for one or two response exercises. Some will be turned in to me, and I will provide brief comments. Others will be used in class meetings and activities. If response papers are not turned in, they will still receive feedback from class members in some form. I expect that all response papers are completed thoroughly and thoughtfully. Failing to give these response papers full effort and attention will only prove detrimental when it comes to essay writing time. Hold yourself accountable for completing all work to the best of your ability.

**Major Assignments (90%):** This course requires **three essays** as well as **one preliminary draft per paper**. Drafts will not receive explicit grades, but they will receive written and oral feedback. Each of you will meet with me to discuss your draft in **individual or group conferences**. The revised, final version of each paper will be graded and receive timely, written comments from me. All papers should follow the instructions outlined on the assignment sheet, including proper documentation of sources. Each essay increases in length and complexity, helping you build a repertoire of reading, writing, and revision strategies to carry into other courses. Writing and revision are processes. Ideally, your work will become stronger as you continue to practice and refine your skills.

- **Essay 1 (25%):** In Unit 1, you'll write a 5-6 page analytical essay on your choice of *one* of three short stories we read: Roxane Gay's "Strange Gods," Carmen Maria Machado's "Real Women Have Bodies," or Jenny Zhang's "We Love You Crispina." The essay asks you to develop close-reading and argumentative skills based on a single text.
- **Essay 2 (30%):** In Unit 2, you'll write a 6-7 page essay that uses a critical feminist text – either Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" or Gayle Rubin's "The Traffic in Women – as a lens for interpreting Hulu's *The Handmaid's Tale*. The essay asks you to think about the connections between two texts and practice applying a theory another source.
- **Essay 3 (35%):** In Unit 3, you'll write an 8-10 page research paper that speaks to the intersection of art, activism, and social, adopting one of the provided approaches. You'll have the opportunity to define your own topic and select your own sources and to expand beyond women's narratives, focusing on art/social movements that deal with any aspect of gender, sexuality, race, class, and their various intersections.

## EXPOS / COURSE POLICIES

**Technology:** \*\*\**Laptops, tablets, and cell phones should be silenced and stored at the beginning of class.* I ask that you take notes by hand. This is a seminar-style course, not a large lecture, and it is distracting to me and your fellow students – not to mention your own learning – for you to be on your devices during class. I believe that you will get the most out of this course if you are engaged with each other without the barrier of technology. \*\*\**However, if you require technology as a part of your learning accommodations, please speak with me in advance. Likewise, in emergency cases when cell phone access is required, please let me know.*

**Disability Accommodations:** I want all learners to feel welcome in and benefit from this course. Should you require any accommodations to do so, please reach out to me as soon as possible to discuss what arrangements can be made. Please note, however, that I cannot make any accommodations without official notice from the Accessible Education Office: <http://aeo.fas.harvard.edu>.

**Submission of Work:** Unless otherwise stated, *all assignments will be submitted electronically through Canvas.* Please use only .doc or .docx file formats so that I can comment on your work via Word. If you need Word software, it is freely available at <https://mso.harvard.edu/office-proplus-harvard-college-students-overview>. It is your responsibility to ensure that files you send me are not corrupted or damaged. If I cannot open or read the file, the essay may be subject to a late penalty. In addition, *I expect that you will turn in all assignments completed and on time.* Pay careful attention to the assignment sheet and syllabus to ensure that you are meeting deadlines. Late final essays will be penalized a third of a letter grade for each day they are late. That said, I realize that unexpected circumstances arise. \*\*\**Each student is therefore allowed one 24-hour extension on a revision (final essay) during the semester. You must contact me before the deadline to request the extension and submit the late work to Canvas before the end of the 24-hour grace period.* Should other unforeseen circumstances arise, such as a medical or family emergency, additional extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis. Please notify me of such emergencies as soon as possible so that we can arrange for you to submit your work in a timely fashion. If you find that turning in your work on time is difficult, please speak with me or your Resident Dean so that we can direct you to the appropriate support resources.

Note: I strongly advise you to keep digital and/or hard copies of all of your work throughout the semester. It is good practice to back up your files to an external hard drive or cloud software like Google Drive or Dropbox in case of a computer crash or other malfunction. Though I understand how frustrating these incidents are, extensions will not be granted for technological mishaps.

**Expos Completion of Work Policy:** Because this 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 when 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 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.*

**Expos Attendance Policy:** 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 me before class to explain (or within 24 hours), otherwise you will be required to provide a note from UHS or another medical office, 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 me 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.

**Collaboration:** Because of our small class size, collaboration among students is not only encouraged but built into the nature of the course. 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. Writing response papers, drafts, or revisions with other students is expressly forbidden.

**Academic Honesty:** 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 important issue. **\*\*\****All the work 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.* When outside sources are required (e.g. in Unit 3) please follow the citation guidelines I provide. 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. If concerns about plagiarism or responsible use of sources arise, you can always consult the *Harvard Guide to Using Sources*, <https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/>, which we’ll discuss in Unit 1.

**Office Hours & Email:** My office hours are designed for you. I am eager to help you formulate ideas, answer complex questions, or discuss any other course issues during that time. If you cannot make my office hours, I am glad to set up an alternate meeting time. You can always reach me by email at [alexandra\\_gold@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:alexandra_gold@fas.harvard.edu). I will do my best to answer emails in a timely manner during weekday hours. (Emails received after 6pm and on weekends may have a longer response time). However, please do check your syllabus and assignment sheets before contacting me with basic questions about due dates, paper length, and other information readily available on these documents. **\*\*\****In addition, please note that I will not read full drafts of your essay more than once (i.e. for our designated draft conference). Doing so would place an undue burden on my time and is unfair both to your classmates and to your own writing and revision processes. I am, however, happy to address specific questions/concerns that arise after conferences in office hours.*

## CAMPUS RESOURCES

Harvard maintains an extensive network of resources to help you with everything from housing to study skills. Listed below are just some of these. If you need assistance of any kind throughout the semester and feel comfortable speaking with me in confidence, I am happy to help you locate whatever resources you require to be fully present – physically, intellectually, socially, and mentally – in my course. While I cannot provide counseling or professional assistance, I will do everything in my power to get you the services or information you deserve.

**Harvard Writing Center:** At any stage in the writing process – from brainstorming to polishing – you may want extra one-on-one essay advice. The Writing Center offers hour-long appointments with trained tutors who can offer invaluable feedback. I highly encourage you to take advantage of this free service. The Writing Center is located in the Barker Center, 12 Quincy Street. For more information or to schedule an appointment, visit the writing center website: <http://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/>

The Writing Center's **English Grammar and Language (EGL) tutor** is available to work with students who have questions about grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and writing in English as a second language. The EGL holds drop-in hours at the Writing Program offices on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of One Bow Street, room 227. For more, see: <https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/egl-tutor>

**Harvard College Bureau of Study Counseling:** The BSC supports a wide variety of educational opportunities, including peer tutoring, ESL consultation, learning workshops, study groups, and more. If you need help with things like study skills or time management, I encourage you to utilize their comprehensive learning resources: <https://bsc.harvard.edu/what-we-offer>

**Dean of Students/First-Year Experience Office:** FYE is responsible for all aspects of the first year at Harvard College as students transition into a new community. For more on what FYE has to offer, including important information about academics, advising, yard life, wellness programs and more, see: <https://fdo.fas.harvard.edu/>

**Technology Assistance:** If you encounter any technology issues (printing, Wi-Fi, HarvardKey, software), IT help is available at [https://harvard.service-now.com/ithelp?id=sc\\_home](https://harvard.service-now.com/ithelp?id=sc_home) or in person in the basement of the Science Center (B14), 1 Oxford Street.

**Mental Health (CAHMS):** I take mental health extremely seriously. If you are struggling with mental health issues that require care or wish to speak to someone about counseling, you can make an appointment, without referral, at <https://huhs.harvard.edu/services/counseling-and-mental-health>. CAHMS is located at the Smith Campus Center, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor and can be reached by telephone at (617) 495-2024. 24 hour urgent assistance is also available at (617) 495-5711.

**Office of Sexual Assault Prevent & Response (OSAPR):** The OSAPR provides survivors of sexual and gender-based violence confidential support and advocacy. They can be reached via 24-hour hotline (617) 495-9100 or by appointment. Harvard, in accordance with Title IX, has a detailed Sexual and Gender Based Harassment policy, which can be found in full via the OSAPR website. A comprehensive list of Harvard, local, and national resources (including medical, legal, and peer counseling) can be found on the OSAPR website: <https://osapr.harvard.edu/harvard-resources>