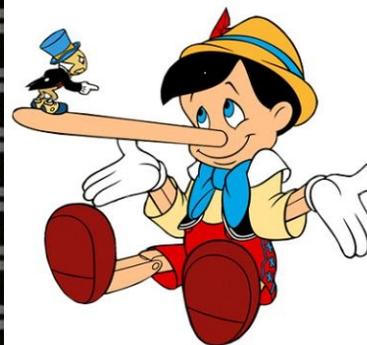


Faking It to Make It

Expos 20 Spring 2018



Dr. Andy Hakim
 Class Time: MW 1:00-2:00/2:00-3:00
 Classroom: Art Museums 0600

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 Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:00-1:00 & by appointment

Between 2002 and 2005, serial impostor Esther Reed took classes in the Harvard Extension School and participated in the university's debate team under the name Natalie Bowman. She later posed as an honors student at Columbia University. A similar deception took place at Princeton in the early 1990s when Alexi Indris-Santana, track team and Ivy Club member, was revealed to be a 31-year-old impostor named James Hogue. Reed's and Hogue's ability to pass as students at prestigious universities raises questions about the relationship between lying, success, and cultural standards. How do lies inform the ways we think about ourselves? What is the appeal of living one's life as a masquerade or performance? In a world where technology increasingly blurs the lines between life and fiction, is deception ever justified? This course examines the ways deception impacts our lives and shapes our sense of self at a time when notions of what is real and what is fake are increasingly being called into question. We begin by analyzing the role of rumors and storytelling in *The Great Gatsby*, where F. Scott Fitzgerald reshapes our understanding of the confidence man by turning him into a cultural icon. Then, we examine the ethics and morality of deception by testing Friedrich Nietzsche's and Sigmund Freud's notions of truth against films such as *Chicago*, *Quiz Show*, and *The Prestige*. In our final unit, students will have the opportunity to research an instance of imposture in contemporary culture or fiction and make an argument that interprets and assesses its significance. Sample topics include hoaxes such as Orson Welles' *The War of the Worlds* broadcast, the creation of fake online identities for "catfishing" the unsuspecting, and race, class, and gender passing.

Writing well requires a desire to discover, a willingness to tolerate uncertainty while staying the course, and a keen awareness of audience. The journey you take this semester will help you to develop the analytical and expressive skills needed to tell a convincing story. (That's really what we're doing here, much like the fakes, frauds, and charlatans we'll be considering – though for more scrupulous reasons.) You'll be actively engaging with the questions raised in class

sessions, considering the opinions and interpretations of your classmates in order to clarify your own positions, and rereading and rewriting to help you think more clearly. Perhaps most importantly, your job is to work and play in earnest, with concentration and imagination, in order to reach new heights as an intellectual and a writer.

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.



OVERVIEW OF ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment One — Believing Everything and Nothing: A Close Reading Argument About a Single Text (5 pps.)

Consider one of the specific stories Nick, Jordan, or Gatsby himself tells us about Gatsby alongside the rumors characters in the novel share about him. Make an argument about the significance of one of the gaps, tensions, or contradictions that arise between these accounts.

Assignment Two — Appearances Can Be Deceiving: Testing a Theory Using a Primary Source (6-8 pps.)

Craft an argument about the ways the imposture performed by Roxie Hart in *Chicago*, Charles van Doren in *Quiz Show*, or Alfred Borden and/or Robert Angier in *The Prestige* challenges, complicates, or extends either Nietzsche's or Freud's discussion of truth and lying. How does considering these texts in tandem speak to and potentially refine our understanding of the ethics and morality of deception?

Assignment Three — Catch Them if You Can: A Researched Argument (10-12 pps.)

Identify a particularly striking instance of deception: a hoax, a counterfeit object, or an imposture. Using a variety of primary and secondary sources, make an argument that interprets and assesses the significance of this successful deception. The instance you study could be a real life historical person or case or it could be from a work of fiction or film. As this is a research paper, you are required to situate your argument within an appropriate disciplinary or interdisciplinary discourse.

IMPORTANT DATES

Assignment #1, Response paper 1: Wednesday, February 7, due in class

Assignment #1, Draft (D1): Friday, February 16, noon, Canvas

Assignment #1, Revision (R1): Friday, March 2, 5:00 p.m., Canvas

Assignment #2, Response paper 2: Thursday, March 8, noon, Canvas

Assignment #2, Draft (D2): Sunday, March 18, noon, Canvas

Assignment #2, Revision (R2): Friday, March 30, 5:00 p.m., Canvas

Assignment #3, Proposal (Response paper 3a): Wednesday, April 4, due in class

Assignment #3, Literature Review (Response paper 3b): Sunday, April 15, noon, Canvas

Assignment #3, Draft (D3): Friday, April 20, noon, Canvas

Assignment #3, Revision (R3): Monday, May 7, noon, Canvas

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

Available from the Coop:

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*. (1925) Scribner, 2004.

Available via the Language Resource Center in Lamont Library:

Chicago, dir. Rob Marshall, Miramax Films, 2002.

Quiz Show, dir. Robert Redford, Buena Vista Pictures, 1994.

The Prestige, dir. Christopher Nolan, Buena Vista Pictures, 2006.

On many class days, 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.

ACADEMIC RESOURCES

The Writing Center

Located on the garden level of the Barker Center, the Writing Center offers student writers free one-on-one conferences with experienced fellow writers trained to consult on assignments in any discipline. The Writing Center is one of Harvard's most popular academic resources, and I strongly urge you to sign up for an appointment. To do so, visit the Writing Center's website at <https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/> to make an appointment.

WRITING SEMINAR POLICIES

Conferences

We will have three conferences during the semester to discuss your writing and ideas. The first will be an individual draft conference with me on your initial draft of Assignment #1. The second will be a paired-conference, where you will meet with one other student and me to discuss each other's drafts for Assignment #2. This paired-conference will give you expanded feedback on your draft by having an additional set of eyes read and comment upon your work. It also will familiarize you with reading other students' writing and giving constructive feedback on it, which is a crucial component of the writing seminar. We will build on this experience in the third unit, where we will hold a short individual conference on your research proposal and a longer group draft conference with two other students and me. For these conferences, you don't have to write out full Draft Responses, but you should make copious notes to speak from. (You *do* have to write Draft Responses for our in-class workshops.)

I expect you to be prepared for these conferences. This means you should review your writing before coming in, and you should have specific ideas or questions about how you hope to address the appropriate revisions. In addition, for the group conferences, it means you should read your group mates' drafts and come ready to give detailed feedback on the strengths, weaknesses, and most promising ideas in their papers.

Office Hours

I'm always happy to meet with you outside of class to discuss your writing, reading, progress, or any questions related to our class topic. Every week except conference weeks, I will be available in my office from 12:00-1:00 on Wednesdays. You can arrange to meet with me by appointment. Simply email me or speak to me before or after class to set up a time. Please plan ahead as much as possible, since it's easier for me to help you with an academic issue or to help you develop strategies for time management when you ask *before* the situation becomes desperate!

E-mail

In an effort to hold in-class announcements to a minimum, I will often use e-mail to relay many of the nuts and bolts of the course, which, logistically, is quite complex. I ask that you check your Harvard e-mail regularly. You are responsible for any information that I pass along via this medium.

Laptop Policy

Ordinarily, I will ask that you not use laptops in class. There may be a few days when they 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.

YOUR WRITING

Cover Letters

Each time you turn in a rough or final draft of an essay, you must provide a cover letter (roughly one single-spaced page, addressed to your readers), in which you summarize your argument, let us know what you value about what you've done in this draft (using specific examples), tell us what you think you still need to work on, and (in the case of drafts) let us know what you would like help with. A good way to begin these cover letters is to explain the question driving your exploration, the problem you are attempting to address, and the paper's thesis in different words than those you use in the draft. Think about these letters as an analysis of your own text. In each cover letter, you will be using the vocabulary from Harvard's writing Elements in order to best express your ideas to the members of our seminar.

Response Papers

In addition to the drafts and revisions of your assignments, you'll do preliminary writing that helps you to develop your ideas. Called "response papers," these exercises are often designed to be like drafting a part of your essay, so you should write them as well as you can, knowing you may draw on them as you put your final essay together. Please type, double-space, and use MLA format for academic papers. These response papers will be turned in to me on the date due; often, they will be read by your classmates, and sometimes I will read them and give written feedback on them.

Paper Format

Writing assignments *must be word-processed*. Also, always:

- Use Times 12 or its close equivalent.
- Set your margins at 1" and don't "justify" your right-hand margin.
- Use your word-processing program's automatic pagination function to number your pages.
Tip: your first page will be a cover letter, so set this page number to 0 (in Word, select "Page Numbers" from the "Insert" menu, and click on "Format").
- Proofread your writing for typographical, grammatical, and punctuation errors.
- Avoid computer disaster by regularly saving your work. Get in the habit of saving your work to a file hosting service like Google Drive, which stores your files in a cloud where they're always accessible.

Submission Method

Electronic copies are due on the dates listed above, via our course Canvas site. Simply log on and select our Writing Seminar, then submit your work to the appropriate dropbox folder on the menu, where everyone in our class can access it. Please name your documents by combining your Net ID with the assignment abbreviation (e.g. “R1” for “Revision of Paper #1”). Thus, my draft of Paper #3 would be named ahakim1D3.doc.

You are responsible for submitting your work on time, and being responsible includes leaving enough time to deal with technical or printing difficulties, should they arise.

When you are uploading documents to Canvas, you are responsible for submitting versions that I can open. The document must either be in Microsoft Word or be easily compatible; 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.

To make the most of our time together, we’ll be spreading out the revision process over a few weeks. Your success in this class relies on this process. I will help you organize your time (i.e. avoid leaving everything to the night before your due dates) by offering opportunities for revision during class time. To that end, during the revision process especially, make a habit of bringing the latest draft of your essay to each class period, even if a new draft isn’t officially due.

Course Portfolio

At the end of the semester, you will turn in a hard-copy portfolio of all the writing you did in the course, so please save the copies with comments.

Vignette Presentations

Each student will give one 3-5 minute presentation over the course of the semester (please see the “Vignette Schedule” on Canvas). In this presentation, you will introduce a real-world instance of fraud or imposture that is linked to your proposed major/course of study. (It’s okay if you’re still undecided in this regard – pick a discipline/area that interests you right now.) Your presentation should offer a brief overview of the instance of deception you choose. Handouts or PowerPoint are useful tools for these presentations.

Examples of vignette presentation subjects would be an Economics major presenting on the Bernie Madoff investment scam, a Molecular and Cellular Biology student presenting on researcher Steven Eaton’s falsification of anti-cancer drug results, or an English major presenting on Quentin Rowan’s plagiarizing of other writers’ novels in his own *Assassin of Secrets*.

Note: While vignette presentations *may* help lead you toward your research paper subject for Assignment #3, this is not mandatory. You are free to explore entirely different imposters in your presentation and research assignment.

COURSE POLICIES

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. It is an official program-wide policy that if you are absent without medical or religious excuse more than twice, you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and failed. On your second unexcused absence, you will receive a letter warning you of your situation.

You are expected to let me know promptly if you have missed or will miss a class; you remain responsible for the work due that day and for any new work assigned. Apart from religious holidays, only medical absences can be excused. In those circumstances, you should contact me before class (or within 24 hours); you may need to provide a note from UHS or another medical official, or from your Freshman 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, letting me know in advance. If you wish to attend an event that will put you over the two-absence limit, you must directly petition the Director of Expository Writing, who will grant such a petition only in extraordinary circumstances and only when your work in the class has been exemplary.

Class begins on time. Being late by more than ten minutes will negatively impact your participation grade, and being late three times will be counted as an absence.

Extensions and Late Assignments

All deadlines in this Writing Seminar are firm. There are serious consequences to missing deadlines. 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.

These policies have two concrete benefits for everyone in the class: (1) you may be less likely to fall behind if you know that your actions (and inactions) have real consequences, and (2) you can count on being treated the same as your classmates, which is another way of saying that no one will receive preferential treatment (by, for example, having immunity to overrun a deadline in order to work longer on a piece of writing).

Missed Conferences

Conferences are a vital component of your learning in the course, as important as any class session. If you miss a conference, I'll try to reschedule within the restrictions of my schedule, but please note that I may not always be able to do so.

Final Grades

Most of your final grade comes from the four major assignments. They are weighted more significantly as the semester goes along in order to reward your improvement and acknowledge the assignments' increasing complexity. Here is the grade breakdown:

20%	Assignment #1
30%	Assignment #2
5%	Proposal and Literature Review for Assignment #3
40%	Assignment #3
5%	Class participation, vignette presentations, cover letters and draft responses, response papers

PROGRAM-WIDE POLICIES

Completion of Work

Because this course is a planned sequence of writing, it is an official Writing Program policy that *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). If you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of an essay by the final due date in that essay unit, you will receive a letter reminding you of these requirements. The letter will specify the new date by which you must submit the late work. If you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of the essay by this new date (unless you have documented a medical problem), you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and failed.

Policy on Collaboration

The following kinds of collaboration are permitted in this course: developing or refining ideas in conversation with other students or 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 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 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 that is explicitly part of the assignment. Any student submitting plagiarized work is eligible to fail the course and to be subject to disciplinary action by the Honor Council.