Dear potential students: this is a new course and the syllabus remains a bit drafty. I reserve the right to adjust some of the readings between now and the start of class. But the basic topical coverage of the course will not change.

The Ruling Class

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Course web site: link

Course Overview

The United States certainly has an upper class, but does it have a ruling class? And if the U.S. does have a ruling class, how does it rule in a country that is ostensibly a democracy? In this course we will examine the identity, politics, and social role of the American upper class. We’ll begin by considering how scholars have variously conceptualized the upper class: is the upper class defined by money, power, prestige, pedigree or something else? In unit 1, we will address the question of whether the so-called ruling class actually rules: is our putative democracy really under the control of a small group of elites? In unit 2 we’ll turn to the question of elite identities and how the upper (ruling) class is shaped by elite education (at places like Harvard). Finally, in unit 3 we’ll research how elites understand their privileged positions in a society that (at least officially) celebrates ideals of democracy and equality. The course readings are largely drawn from sociology, anthropology, and history. Some of our main texts are Shamus Khan’s Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul’s School and Rachel Sherman’s Uneasy Street: The Anxieties of Affluence.

An equally important goal of the course is to develop your ability to write clear, engaging, and coherent analytical essays of the sort you will be asked to produce frequently at Harvard. With this in mind the class is structured to give you the opportunity to work in a sustained and systematic way on improving your writing. During the semester you will write three essays, each of which tackles a different
aspects of the experience of class and is designed to highlight different writing skills. The thematic units and their associated writing assignments are described below.

Description of Units

ESSAY I: DOES THE UPPER CLASS RULE?
(testing a theory, 4-5 pages)

By many accounts, the United States is a pluralist society. In a pluralist society, political power is dispersed among various social or ideological interest groups (for instance, the elderly, farmers, unions, business owners, etc.). According to pluralism, the rich or upper class does not hold exclusive power, but must compete for influence with other interest groups as part of the political process. Other theoretical traditions — for instance, Marxism — contend that the upper class has a privileged political position and in fact controls the state. For this essay students will write a paper that adjudicates between these two positions: which theoretical perspective — pluralist or Marxist — is more persuasive?

Focal Writing Skills: Introductions, arguable theses, using evidence, integrating sources.

ESSAY II: EDUCATING THE RULING CLASS (A.K.A. RULING CLASS FORMATION)
(review essay, 5-7 pages)

Education has long been regarded as an important arena of class formation and reproduction. In this unit we will explore the role of elite educational institutions in shaping the identities and worldviews of members of the upper classes. Our primary text will be Shamus Kahn’s Privilege, which explores the socialization of elites at an exclusive New England boarding school (St. Paul’s). We will consider questions such: how do schools like St. Paul’s (and Harvard) prepare students for their lives as elites? What kind of elite do such schools produce? How does elite education justify inequality?

Focal Writing Skills: Problematizing arguments, presentation of evidence and analysis, argument structure, counterargument.

ESSAY III: PRIVILEGE IN A DEMOCRACY
(research paper, about 10 pages)

For the research paper students will design their own research project that explores some theme related to the American ruling class. Students will devise their own original research question, collect and/or analyze primary data of some sort, and identify their own secondary sources. As inspiration for their research, student will read selections from Rachel Sherman’s Uneasy Street: The Anxieties of Affluence, which
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explores how wealthy New Yorkers understand their own positions of privilege in an increasingly unequal society.

Course Readings

All of the course readings will be posted on the course website. Will be reading most of Uneasy Street and Privilege, so if you prefer to read paper books you should consider purchasing these texts.

How the Course Works

The main goal for the course is for you to produce an original, compelling, and analytically sound essay for each of the three units of the course. Such essays are not written on the fly; they take time, continual re-working, and critical reflection. The writing requirements outlined below are designed to provide you with the techniques for constructing good essays.

Class time will be split between grappling with the course readings and in-class work directed at improving some aspect of your writing. You should come to class with the relevant readings completed and ready to participate actively in discussion.

Writing and Revising

• Response Papers: Before you compose an initial draft of each essay, you’ll complete one or more response papers that focus on particular writing skills that are important for the relevant essay type. Check the unit assignment packet for specific instructions and due dates, etc.

• Drafts: You will submit a draft of each of the three essays. On each draft you’ll receive detailed comments from the instructor (in writing and in conferences).

• Draft Cover Letters: Every time you hand in a draft, you’ll include a cover letter in which you provide guidance to your reader about the aspects of the essay you are struggling with in addition to whatever other comments or questions you might have. I’ll give you more specific instructions about writing draft cover letters over the course of the semester.

• Draft Workshops: Immediately after each draft is due we’ll have an in-class draft workshop in which we work through two student papers (chosen by the instructor) and offer the writers constructive criticisms and suggestions for improvement. I will email you the essays I have chosen before each workshop. You will be expected to provide
written comments (in the form of a letter) on each draft that we workshop together. I’ll hand out more guidelines on draft workshops later in the semester.

• **Conferences:** After I’ve carefully read your draft, we’ll meet (virtually) for a 15-20 minute conference in which we’ll work together on strategies for revising the essay. You should also plan on taking notes during the conference. Missed conferences may not be rescheduled.

• **Essay Revisions:** You should expect to extensively revise each of your drafts before submitting it for a grade. I will provide written comments on essay revisions. Essay revisions must be submitted over email (not as hard copies), and I will also provide my comments in electronic form.

**OTHER POLICIES**

**Grading**

I will grade only the revisions (that is, the last version) of your essays, not the drafts or response papers (although I may suggest, as an aid to interpreting my evaluations, what sort of grade a draft would receive if I were to grade it). Course grades will be determined as follows:

- Revision of Essay 1: 25%
- Revision of Essay 2: 30%
- Revision of Essay 3: 40%
- Participation and exercises: 5%

Grading will become more stringent as the semester progresses since I expect you develop as a thinker and writer. Please be advised that final grades (that is, grades on revised essays) are indeed final. I will not read or grade a further revision of a revision.

**Harvard College Writing Program Policy on Attendance**

The Writing Program attendance policy is intended to make sure that you get everything you can out of your Expos course. Because Expos has fewer class hours than some 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 in the course.

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. In the case of a medical absence, you may be required to provide a note from UHS or another medical official to confirm that absence as excused; protracted or repeated illness will require such 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.

**Harvard College Writing Program Policy on 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). If you are unable to complete your work on time due to medical or family issues, please contact me before the deadline to discuss both the support you might need as well as a possible new arrangement for your deadline. 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 that 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 make a plan for catching 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 draft of the essay 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.
Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you think you will require some flexibility in deadlines or participation in the course for reasons of a documented disability, please schedule a meeting with me early in the semester so we can discuss appropriate accommodations. (To be eligible for such accommodations, you need to have provided documentation to the Accessible Education Office ahead of time. Please let me know if you are unfamiliar with that process.) The Accessible Education Office works closely with Expos courses, and we will develop a plan that is appropriate for your needs. Please note that it is always your responsibility to consult with me as the need for those accommodations arises.

Policy on Electronic Submissions

As you send or upload electronic submissions document, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have saved the document in a form compatible with Microsoft Word. 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.

Policy on Collaboration

As in many academic situations, our Expos class will be a setting that involves frequent collaboration—we will develop ideas together through class discussion, peer review, and draft workshops. 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). It is a form of academic integrity to acknowledge the impact someone had on your essay; you can 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.

Policy on 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. In each unit, we will work on strategies for working with the ideas of other authors and sources, and how to develop your own ideas in response to them. 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 we become familiar with the expectations of an academic audience, we will also work on strategies to avoid errors in citation and unintentional plagiarism. 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.