DEAR FALL 2021 STUDENTS: THIS IS THE SPRING 2021 SYLLABUS. I PLAN ON CHANGING VERY LITTLE FOR THIS FALL, SO THIS SHOULD GIVE YOU A GOOD SENSE OF THE TOPICS, READINGS, AND PAPER ASSIGNMENTS.

CLASS AND CULTURE

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Course web site: https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/83117

Course Overview

It is commonplace to note that in the United States many people identify as “middle class” even though our society is marked by deep, persistent, and increasing class inequality. Such self-identification, however, can obscure the complex and often contradictory ways in which we experience social class in our everyday lives. This course explores the cultural dimensions of social class in the U.S. from an ethnographic perspective, focusing on the everyday lives and cultures of ordinary Americans. We will consider questions such as the following. What is it like to be a working class person in a society heavily invested in ideas of individual advancement and meritocracy? How do professionals (the “upper-middle” class) define themselves and how do they view those above and below them in the class structure? What role does elite education play in the creation and reproduction of class inequality? How does social class shape people’s values, political views, and tastes?

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: WORKING CLASS LIFE UNDER NEOLIBERALISM  
(comparative essay 5-6 pages)

The wages of working class Americans peaked in 1973. For the last 50 years, the living standards of the US working class have stagnated or declined. In this unit we will explore the various cultural and political responses of American workers to the sustained erosion of the material conditions of their lives. In order to do so, we will compare two studies of American workers: Michele Lamont’s classic *The Dignity of Working Men*, which explores the identities and cultures of relatively prosperous working class men in 1990s New Jersey and Jennifer Silva’s *We're Still Here: Pain and Politics in the Heart of America*, which examines the lives and worldviews of working people in the contemporary deindustrialized Midwest.

*Focal Writing Skills*: Devising questions and arguable theses; using evidence; integrating sources.

ESSAY II: EDUCATION, CLASS FORMATION, AND CLASS REPRODUCTION

(research paper, 10 pages)

Education has long been regarded as an important arena of class formation and reproduction. In this unit we will explore the role of educational institutions in shaping class inequality and the worldviews of members of the professional and upper classes. The unit will culminate in an original research paper analyzing primary evidence. In order to develop their research projects, student will read selections from Armstrong and Hamilton’s *Paying for the Party*, which analyzes class reproduction at a large midwestern public university, as well as Shamus Kahn’s *Privilege*, which explores life at an elite New England boarding school.

*Focal Writing Skills*: Problematizing arguments; presentation of evidence and analysis; argument structure; counterargument; devising research questions; research.

ESSAY III: CAPSTONE PROJECT

(format to be determined)

After completing their research papers, students will participate in a capstone project designed to share their research findings in a vivid and engaging way. The format of the project is yet to be determined, but will likely take the form of a conference presentation, video presentation, or podcast.
Course Readings

All of the course readings will be posted on the course website. Will be reading most of *Paying for the Party* 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revision of Essay 1</th>
<th>35%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revision of Essay 2</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision of Essay 3 (capstone)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation and exercises</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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, 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.

Expectations about Zoom

The work we do together in class--the exercises, the discussions, the workshopping of 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 we are meeting virtually, we will be treating our time together as if we were in a physical classroom together: we will listen to each other attentively and respectfully; we will each contribute our own ideas and learn from the ideas of others; we will each do our best to be working somewhere private and without distractions. Please turn off other programs or apps not related to our work in class. Since most of our class time will be spent in discussion, workshop, or small-group work, it will be important to be able to engage with each other; please plan on having your camera on during class, and use a virtual background if necessary to help with privacy. (Please contact me with any questions or concerns about these expectations.) In one of our early classes this semester, we will review a more detailed handout about Zoom, how we will use it, and some best practices to make our work there happen as smoothly as possible.
## Schedule of Topics and Assignments

### UNIT I: Working Class Life Under Neoliberalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Writing focus</th>
<th>Read</th>
<th>Due in class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 28</td>
<td>What is social class?</td>
<td>Questions and problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
February 4

**Topic:** Working class life in post-industrial America  
**Writing focus:** Evidence and analysis

**Read:**  

February 9

**Topic:** Working class life in post-industrial America

**Read:**  

**Due by 11 PM:** response paper 1

February 11

**Writing focus:** Introductions

**Read:**  
- sample introductions [to be emailed].  

February 16

**Writing focus:** Using sources

**Read:**  
- the following (entire) sections of the *Harvard Guide to Using Sources* website: “Why Use Sources?” and “Using Sources”  
  [https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu](https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu)  
UNIT 2: Education, Class Formation, and Class Reproduction

**February 18**  
**Topic:** Education and class reproduction  
**Writing focus:** Reading critically  

**Read:**  

**Sunday, February 21 Due by 11 PM:** draft of paper 1

**February 23**  
**Writing focus:** DRAFT WORKSHOP  

**Due in class:** 2 copies of your reader letters

**February 25**  
**Topic:** Mobility, credentials, and social closure  
**Writing focus:** Problematizing  

**Read:**  

**March 2**  
**Topic:** Education and class trajectories  
**Writing focus:** Summarizing  

**Read:**  
March 4

March 7 Due by 11 PM: revision of paper 1

March 9
Topic: Education and social mobility
Writing focus: Developing research questions

Read:

March 11
Topic: Elites in “Meritocratic Capitalism”
Writing focus: Developing research questions continued

Read:

March 16 – no class

March 18
Topic: Elites and inequality
Writing focus: Developing research questions continued

Read:

Due: research proposal
March 23
Writing focus: RESEARCH PROPOSAL WORKSHOP

March 25
Topic: Elites and meritocracy

Read:

March 30
Topic: Elite habitus

Read:

April 1
Writing focus: LIBRARY RESEARCH WORKSHOP

April 4 Due by 11 PM: Draft of research paper

April 6
DRAFT WORKSHOP

April 8
Writing focus: TBD
Unit 3: Capstone Project

April 13
Writing focus: Capstone project TBD
Read:

April 15 – no class

April 18: Due by 11 PM: Revision of research paper

April 20
Writing focus: Capstone project TBD

April 22
Topic: Q and A; course evaluation day

April 27
Topic: Concluding thoughts

Date TBD Capstone Project due