Expos 230 and 231
Segregation and Boston Schools: The Fight for Equality

Over sixty years after the Supreme Court ruled that “separate but equal” schools are unconstitutional, segregation is on the rise. Today, despite widespread evidence that integrated education increases student learning and reduces prejudice, American public schools are increasingly divided by class and race. In this course, we investigate attempts to achieve educational equality in Boston, focusing on the decision to use busing to desegregate the public schools in the 1970s and the wave of violent opposition that followed. Throughout the semester, we undertake “engaged scholarship,” combining academic learning and community engagement by collaborating with Bostonians directly affected by these historical events – we partner with history teachers and students at a high school in the Boston Public Schools (BPS) system – and by focusing on communication with diverse audiences through writing, speaking, and visual presentation.

To ground our understanding of the complex issues we wrestle with in the course, we begin with a journalist’s Pulitzer Prize winning account of school integration in the 1970s, contrasting the perspectives of black and white families. We next examine historical debates on the causes of the “antibusing” movement and pedagogical debates about how to teach controversial and contested historical topics. For the final project, we have the opportunity to further investigate these subjects and other current challenges around educational equity facing BPS. In thoughtful collaboration with our community partners and through research, we design lesson plans for a high school history course and prepare arguments for why the various plans might be effective. We not only delve into the remarkable written and visual materials in Harvard’s libraries but also conduct conversations with teachers and students at the Snowden International School and representatives from Facing History and Ourselves. The class culminates in a “Civics Fair” in which students present their lesson plans and engage with our partners at the Snowden School and other community members.
These three assignments introduce first-year students to the fundamental elements of academic writing in preparation for their future courses at Harvard. They teach students how to:

• pose an analytical question or problem that will make a paper’s argument necessary;
• craft a thesis that is arguable, not self-evident or descriptive;
• substantiate the thesis with thoughtfully analyzed evidence;
• anticipate and respond to objections to an argument;
• structure an argument logically;
• use primary and secondary sources responsibly, including how to avoid plagiarizing.
• locate and evaluate sources in both the physical and online resources of Harvard’s libraries;
• understand the roles that their sources will play in their papers;
• integrate and properly cite their sources.¹

Additional Meeting Times

The “Engaged Scholarship” components of this course include three required meetings outside class time that have been scheduled: a panel discussion held on Harvard’s campus with a teacher from the Snowden School and a representative from Facing History and Ourselves (March 6 from 7:00-8:30 PM); a visit to Snowden (select ONE of the following three options: April 5 7:00-9:15AM; April 6 10:00AM – 12:15PM; OR April 6 11:30AM-1:45PM); and a “civics fair” on May 1 from 10:30AM-1:30PM.

Texts

Course pack available at Gnomon Copy

Final Grades

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revision of Essay 1</th>
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<td>Revision of Essay 2</td>
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<td>Revision of Essay 3</td>
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<td>Poster Presentation of Lesson Plan</td>
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Participation encompasses active participation in class discussions, pre- and post-draft assignments, drafts, cover letters, and workshop letters to your peers. If you neglect to submit these written assignments, you will not receive credit towards your participation grade.

Please note that I expect your revisions to be free of grammatical, spelling, and formatting errors. I am happy to explain any technical issues that seem confusing or obscure. Failure to meet these expectations may result in a lowered final grade.

¹ For more information on the goals of Expos, see http://writingprogram.fas.harvard.edu/pages/expos-20-0.
Overview of Submission Deadlines

**Essay One**
- **Tuesday February 6** – Three Analytical Questions Due at 11:59 PM
- **Sunday February 11** – Pre-Draft Introduction of Essay One Due at 11:59 PM
- **Friday February 16** – Draft of Essay One Due at 11:59 PM
- **Sunday Feb 25** – Revision of Essay One Due at 11:59 PM

**Essay Two**
- **Sunday March 4** – Response Paper for Essay Two Due at 11:59 PM
- **Sunday March 18** – Draft of Essay Two Due at 11:59 PM
- **Tuesday March 27** – Revision of Essay Two Due at 11:59 PM

**Essay Three**
- **Sunday April 8** – Teaching Group Proposals Due at 11:59 PM
- **Sunday April 15** – Annotated Bibliographies Due at 11:59 PM
- **Sunday April 22** – Draft of Essay Three Due at 11:59 PM
- **Tuesday May 1** – Civics Fair (Poster Presentations Due) 10:30-1:30
- **Monday May 7** – Revisions of Essay Three Due at 11:59 PM

Extensions and Late Papers

I will be happy to grant each of you ONE extension of 24 hours on a pre-draft, response paper, or draft. After you have used this extension, I will not be able to offer feedback on late assignments. The deadlines for revisions, however, are firm. I will deduct 1/3 of a grade for every 24 hours that the revisions of essays one and two are late (an A would become an A-, an A- a B+, etc.).

Synopsis of Assignments

**Essay One: “Common Ground”**

**A Close Reading (5-6 pages; 1500-1900 words)**

**Assignment:**

In explaining his approach to chronicling the lives of three families in *Common Ground*, J. Anthony Lukas writes, “At first, I thought I read clear moral imperatives in the geometry of their intersecting lives, but the more time I spent with them, the harder it became to assign easy labels of guilt or virtue. The realities of urban America, when seen through the lives of actual city dwellers, proved far more complicated than I had imagined.”

Offer an argument that explains the importance of one or more short passages from *Common Ground* in understanding Lukas’s overall assessment of the book. Your evidence should derive directly from the passages you select, and your analysis should be based on your close reading of these selections.

**Readings:**

Goals:

For this unit, you will develop strategies for responding to a common type of academic writing: close reading. Variations of this assignment are common in a number of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. *For this essay, it is not necessary to conduct outside research or make use of any additional texts beyond the assigned reading.* One of the central purposes of this assignment is to construct an argument solely through a close reading of the assigned text. Close reading enables students to focus on the details of a defined body of evidence. It requires more than mere description; it asks you to locate and analyze evidence in the text in support of your own original interpretation and also to address alternative interpretations of the text (counterargument). The ability to analyze texts in this manner will be an important building block for a variety of future reading and writing assignments.

One of the biggest challenges with this type of assignment is articulating an analytical question that your thesis can answer with an arguable claim. You need to explain to your readers why your interpretation of Lukas shows us something important about his work. Does something strike you as interesting, counterintuitive, or puzzling about *Common Ground*? What needs to be sorted out or explained? It is crucial that your analytical problem speak to a genuine puzzle (not one with an easy answer) that (1) can be adequately addressed in a five- to six-page essay and (2) can be addressed using only textual evidence.

**Essay Two: Conflicting Accounts of Desegregation and “Busing” in Boston**

Intervene in a Debate (6-8 pages; 1800-2500 words)

Assignment:

The role of racial, ethnic, class, and gender identities in the opposition to busing/desegregation in Boston continues to be a subject of historical debate. For this essay, you will read four interpretations of this topic. Your assignment is to “identify, compare, and evaluate” the arguments of two to four of these interpretations.

*The Meaning of “Intervene in a Debate”:*

A wide variety of courses in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences include assignments that ask students to read and assess scholarly debates. A key purpose of such assignments is to help you to understand scholarship as an ongoing conversation and then to write to include yourself in that conversation. Such assignments are often called literature reviews. For our assignment, “intervening in a debate” takes the form of a historiographic essay. According to one guide to historical writing,

A historiographic essay is one in which the writer, acting as a historian, studies the approaches to a topic that other historians have taken. When you write a historiographic
essay, you identify, compare, and evaluate the viewpoints of two or more historians writing on the same subject…. [A] historiographic essay focuses attention not on a historical event itself but rather on how historians have interpreted that event.²

Readings:


Audience:

As with essay one, you should write for an audience outside of our class. In other words, your paper should make sense to someone who has not read any of the books or articles and is not familiar with the assignment. For essay one, this was an imagined audience, but for essay two, it may be real. I will select two or three of the strongest revisions, and the sophomores at Snowden will read them as an introduction to studying this period in Boston’s history just before we visit on April 5 and 6. During our visit, we will use the essays to frame our discussion of the “busing” controversies and their legacy today and also to talk with the sophomores about writing essays in college.

Goals:

For this assignment, we will continue to work on the goals of essay one: closely reading texts; articulating a clear and arguable thesis with genuine stakes; supporting that thesis with an unfolding argument based on an analysis of textual evidence; orienting readers unfamiliar with your subject matter and sources; responding to counterarguments.

Yet essay two also encompasses new challenges, asking you to consider multiple sources simultaneously. It is therefore a more complicated assignment, and, as a result, not only will we need to revisit the elements emphasized in essay one, we will also now focus on considering and responding to a debate among scholars. To accomplish this goal, you will continue using the

skills of close reading and comparative analysis, but now they are building blocks for this larger purpose.

Essay Three: Teaching about Segregation and Boston Schools
Applied Research Paper (8-10 pages; 2,400 to 3,100 words)

Assignment:

Working with your teaching group, craft a lesson plan to supplement and expand on the lesson plans on “Education and Civil Rights: School Desegregation in Boston” from Facing History and Ourselves. You may select a historical or more contemporary topic. Include the following components with your lesson: Rationale (80-120 words); Objectives (3-4 of each of the following: Answer These Guiding Questions, Define These Key Terms, Practice These Skills); Materials (2-4); Handouts (1-2 written assignments); and Lesson Plan (2-3 pages). Present this lesson plan in the form of a poster presentation and accompanying packet of materials.

Working independently, write a persuasive essay (8-10 pages) that offers an argument for 1.) the rationale for your teaching group’s lesson plan, 2.) its effectiveness in achieving your learning outcomes, and 3.) the value of your learning outcomes (not necessarily in that order). Please include the lesson plan itself in appendix form with the essay.

You may make use of any of the course materials for both components of this assignment (lesson plan and persuasive essay): Common Ground, the historiographical debates, the readings on pedagogy, the sources on Snowden High, and the discussions with the teachers and students from Snowden High and the representative from Facing History and Ourselves. In addition, you must also independently locate at least half of the materials you assign as part of your lesson plan and at least two to four secondary sources (journal articles or academic books) to support the argument of your essay. These secondary sources might be additional readings on pedagogy, historiographical debates on “busing” and the larger civil rights movement, and/or more recent social science studies of education in Boston.

Goals of an Applied Research Paper:

“We only think when we are confronted with problems.” - John Dewey

While the two categories overlap, broadly conceived there are two type of academic research: “basic” and “applied.” Both utilize some form of investigation to gain new knowledge. Yet while “basic” research focuses more on knowledge for its own sake, “applied” research seeks to generate knowledge to solve specific real-world problems. Scholars in diverse disciplines undertake applied research projects, from political scientists writing public policy papers/memos to psychologists applying theoretical models to practice. For this assignment, your task is to create a lesson plan (new knowledge) that addresses a real-world problem (the need to teach high school students about segregation, past and present). Your essay should draw on scholarship on education and history to create a framework that explains the need for your lesson plan as well as its effectiveness and value.

Visual, Oral, and Written Communication with Multiple Audiences:

This assignment provides you with the opportunity to hone your skills in communicating visually, orally, and in writing, and you have a real audience (beyond myself) for your work.

For the lesson plan as presented in the poster presentation, the students and teachers at the Snowden School as well as a few additional community members will be that audience. At our culminating “civics fair,” we will begin by listening to an oral presentation by a group of students from Snowden. Then the students and teachers from Snowden will circulate through our poster presentation fair. You will have designed your lesson plan for high school students, and the “civics fair” is your opportunity to share your work with real students and teachers and get feedback from them. (Note – the revision of the final paper is due after this event, so you may alter the lesson plan and revise your essays to incorporate this feedback.)

For the accompanying essay, teachers from Snowden and other Boston Public Schools may be your audience. Therefore, as with essays one and two, you should write so that your essays make sense to readers unfamiliar with our class and our assignment. After you submit the final essays, I will select the strongest two to four essays from both classes and share them with the teachers, who may adopt the lesson plans or portions of the lesson plans in future courses. Your task is to convince them – and me – that your lesson plans are necessary, effective, and valuable.

Readings:

All materials from essay one and essay two

Journal Articles:


Newspaper articles and websites


“Boston’s Busing and Desegregation: Middle School – Grades 6-8-- Lesson Plans and Curriculum Resources,” Boston Public Schools, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bv-MyP8UITRa_KZcub0ulUg-zTHHdrelcKIdP80Jf4/edit (not in the course pack - please read online)