

Dr. Richard J. Martin
Society and the Witch
M/W 3:00pm-4:15
Classroom: Memorial 302

Email: rmartin01@fas.harvard.edu
Office: 1 Bow Street #221
Office Hours: By Appointment

EXPOS 20: Society and the Witch Spring 2022 Course Information

Riding broomsticks and dancing in the woods at night, witches are often imagined to be outside society. But in these representations may be keys to understanding social norms, norms that get articulated through the witch's very violation of them. In this seminar, we ask what discourses about witches tell us about the societies that produce them. We begin by examining anthropologists' depictions of witchcraft among people who come to find magic believable: how do we understand others' beliefs in the seemingly irrational idea that magic is real? Closely considering evidence from classic ethnographic accounts, we critically examine other scholars' answers to questions such as this one by thinking across competing approaches to the study of magic. Next, we closely analyze the film *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* and the television sitcom *Bewitched*, bringing these pop-cultural phenomena into conversation with Mary Douglas's treatise on *Purity and Danger* and Pierre Bourdieu's critique of *Masculine Domination*. Using these theories, we examine the aesthetic and cultural significance of imaginative representations of witches. For the research paper, each student chooses their own example of witchcraft on which to conduct independent research. Sample topics include postmodern fairy tales like *Frozen* and *Maleficent*, Broadway musicals like *Into the Woods* and *Wicked*, historical witch-hunts and contemporary occult practices. What unites our diverse inquiries is a common interest in the social significance of this seemingly marginal figure: the witch.

Though our readings focus on witches, this seminar is first and foremost a course in inquiry and argument. It is designed to help you learn strategies for asking analytical questions, conveying critical insights, articulating complex ideas, and mastering academic conventions. We'll always be foregrounding *how* authors communicate ideas, so that *what* we learn about witches will be deeply entwined with our investigations into *why* and *how* we write about them. Indeed, the skills you develop here can be utilized for writing about other topics as well, and in a range of academic disciplines.

Your Expos 20 Seminar plays an important role in helping you make the transition to college-level work and in preparing you for the range of writing challenges you'll encounter during your time at Harvard. Learning to write well is a lifelong process. The more you practice writing, the better you'll get at it. Your writing may go through messy and frustrating phases as you experiment with new strategies and work toward making more sophisticated arguments. Don't let these seeming setbacks discourage you: such growing pains are ultimately worthwhile, as they indicate you are maturing as a writer and as a thinker.

Responsibility for this seminar's success lies in all of our hands. Together we comprise a community of readers and writers. All the work you do in this course is public within the course: we'll be discussing your writing in small groups and full class conversations. I ask that you read critically but respectfully, and that you hold yourselves and each other to high standards as you offer and receive feedback. Be prepared to revise radically, re-imagining everything, from your underlying assumptions to the way you structure an argument, from your evidence and analysis to the statement of your thesis. Helping you learn to invest seriously in the practice of revision as part of the writing process is a key aim of this course.

Likewise, because the writing process is complex, I imagine that each of you comes to this class with specific strengths and struggles. In each assignment, I elaborate course goals common to everyone, but I also want you to think about your own personal goals and how this course can help you achieve them so that, no matter where you are as a writer, we can together get you to places you haven't yet been able to reach.

Required Texts and Materials

Available at the Harvard Coop (as well as through Harvard libraries):

Luhrmann, Tanya. *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft* [Approximate Cost \$30]

Available through various streaming services or on DVD (as well as through Harvard libraries):

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets

Bewitched (students may watch any two episodes from this television series)

[Approximate cost is up to \$25, depending on existing subscriptions]

The Luhrmann book is also available on reserve through Lamont Library, as are videos of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* and *Bewitched: The Complete Series*.

All other required texts are available online through our course website on Canvas. The website is

<https://canvas.harvard.edu>

We'll also be working with the following Writing Program resources:

Harvard Guide to Using Sources, available online at <https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu>

Overview of Assignments

Here is a skeletal outline of the papers you'll be writing in this course. It is intended to give you a sense of the arc of the semester. Detailed assignment sequences, including instructions for response paper assignments, will be distributed at the beginning of each unit.

Essay #1: Use Comparative Analysis to Evaluate an Argument (5 pages)

Bringing two of the authors we've read (E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Tanya Luhmann) into conversation, write an essay in which you critique and refine one author's argument and/or findings, using the second text to help you develop your ideas.

- This unit introduces students to academic writing in the social sciences, focusing on anthropology. Our readings draw primarily on *ethnographies*, studies of individual cultures based on observational field research.
- This assignment requires us to think *comparatively*. We consider cross-cultural differences concerning magical beliefs and practices. Additionally, and more fundamentally, we think across competing paradigms through which each author approaches ethnographic evidence.
- In this unit, we'll use a preliminary writing exercise to cultivate the following skills:
 - Summarizing Sources & Working with Counterevidence

Essay #2: Use a Theoretical Lens to Develop a Close Analysis (7 pages)

Using Pierre Bourdieu or Mary Douglas as a lens, make an argument about the cultural or literary significance of either *Harry Potter* or *Bewitched*. You should show how your argument is different from that of another scholar writing about your primary source, engaging that scholar's work in a text you've selected independently.

- This unit introduces students to academic writing in the humanities, focusing on media and cultural studies. Our *primary sources* are a film and a television sitcom. We develop a vocabulary for interpreting these audiovisual works, building on techniques for literary analysis (*close analysis*).
- This assignment requires us to engage *theoretical* and *secondary sources*. We draw on cultural theory to help us gain otherwise inaccessible insights about our evidence. We then show how our arguments are original in relation to a piece of previous scholarship on the topic.
- In this unit, we'll use preliminary writing exercises to hone the following skills:
 - Analyzing Evidence: Close Analysis & Lens Analysis
 - Representing an Argument Visually

Essay #3: Use Research to Intervene in a Scholarly Conversation (10 pages)

Choose an example of witchcraft relevant to folklore & mythology studies. You might focus on a fairy tale and its reinventions, or another depiction of the witch in art, literature, or music; alternatively, you might consider cultural practices or phenomena surrounding witchcraft, such as spirit possession, witch-hunts, neo-paganism, or shamanism. Make a researched argument in which you critically intervene in the scholarly conversation on your chosen text or phenomenon. Your finished essay should cite approximately ten sources and be approximately ten pages long. You may not write on the same primary source as you did in your unit 2 Essay.

- This unit introduces students to independent research. The assignment, grounded in folklore and mythology studies, enables students to work across the humanities and social sciences. Past projects have drawn on anthropology, art history, gender studies, government, history, literary studies, media studies, musicology, psychology, sociology, and theatre studies. Each student selects primary source material and determines the *disciplines* and *methodologies* that will enable them to ask and answer a research question about it.
- This assignment requires students to conduct *research* by identifying and locating resources available through the university libraries, including *primary sources*, *secondary sources*, *theoretical sources*, and *contextualizing sources*. We highlight how our analysis of primary source evidence makes an original intervention into the scholarly conversation on our topic. While in unit 2, we showed how our ideas were original in relation to *one* piece of previous peer-reviewed scholarship, here we show how our ideas are original in relation to the scholarly conversation *as a whole*. In doing so, we learn to emulate professional scholarship and gain an appreciation for what makes academic writing original, worthwhile and, ultimately, publishable.
- In this unit, we'll use preliminary writing exercises to develop the following skills:
 - Brainstorming
 - Creating an Annotated Bibliography
 - Conducting a Literature Review

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; you should also copy your Resident Dean on that message. In the case of extended illness, you may be required to provide medical 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.

Policy on Late Work

Because our course is designed as a planned sequence of writing, it is essential to complete work on time. Accordingly, late work is typically penalized as follows: late graded papers may be penalized 1/3 a letter grade (e.g. A- to B+) per day, or part thereof, an assignment is late; similarly, though drafts are ungraded, late drafts may result in a similar 1/3 a letter grade penalty on the revision with which the draft is associated. Late response papers may receive a zero toward course citizenship. However, if you need an extension on any assignment, please send me an email with your extension request and the reason for the request. Extension requests should be submitted in advance of the assignment due date. Multiple and longer-term extension requests may require that you are connecting with appropriate support resources, such as your Resident Dean, about the circumstances preventing you from completing your work. If you need an extension, please ask. Especially in these challenging times, it is important that we are in good communication about – and that you are receiving support for – any difficulties you are having in completing your assignments.

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

You will submit your work electronically this semester through our course Canvas site. As you send or upload each document, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have saved the document. 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. *Please note that all documents for writing assignments must be submitted using .doc or .docx file extensions.*

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 or in a separate acknowledgments section. 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.

Policy on Course Materials

The work we do together in class—discussions, exercises, workshopping 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. (Students needing course recordings as an accommodation should contact the [Accessible Education Office](#).) While samples of student work will be circulated within the course (and all work you do may be shared with your classmates), you may not share fellow students’ work with others outside the course without their written permission. As the *Handbook for Students* explains, students may not “post, publish, sell, or otherwise publicly distribute course materials without the written permission of the course instructor. Such materials include, but are not limited to, the following: video or audio recordings, assignments, problem sets, examinations, other students’ work, and answer keys.” Students who violate any of these expectations may be subject to disciplinary action.

Preceptor Feedback/Availability

Feedback is central to Expos. As spelled out in each assignment, you will receive either substantive written feedback, a conference about your draft, or both. Every writer benefits from having an attentive reader respond to their work, and one of my roles as your preceptor is to provide that response: identifying the strengths of a draft; noting questions and reactions to help you develop your ideas further; and offering clear assessment of your revised work. There are educational reasons for the types of feedback I’ll give you: they complement one another throughout the writing process and help you think about receiving feedback from different audiences at different stages of writing. Each form of feedback will help you think about

another way you can ask for and receive feedback in future writing circumstances. (Feedback throughout the course also comes in other forms, such as peer review or principles from workshop that you apply to your own essays.)

There are also educational reasons for the amount and timing of the feedback I as your instructor will offer. The goal of all my feedback is that you learn to incorporate the principles I'm identifying into your *own* thinking and your revision, so that eventually you are making more independent decisions in your essays about what a reader needs to understand or what the most effective structure might be. If I as your instructor were to read a draft multiple times, offering several rounds of feedback, I would then in effect be taking over some of those decisions for you, and you would not be gaining the autonomy as a writer that you need to achieve this semester; that dynamic would shortchange the learning that you can accomplish in the course. I do accept a few thoughtful questions by email about specific instances in your revision-in-progress: a follow-up question about whether a thesis is now clearer, or whether some added sentences of analysis make your explanation of evidence stronger. In those instances, you are taking the important step of identifying what in your writing and thinking is *most* in need of targeted feedback, and you are using the Elements of Academic Arguments to articulate the specific question you have about something you've tried out in the paper. (When you do want additional feedback, the [Writing Center](#) is a very helpful resource. Here too, you will use that resource better when you arrive with specific and targeted questions.)

There are also important reasons that I schedule one draft conference per student for each essay. Conferences are important opportunities for thinking together about questions in your argument and strategies for revision; during conference week I am meeting with all students and attempting to offer the same level of intensive work with everyone. If I were to grant a second full conference to any student, for reasons of equity I would need to offer a second meeting with everyone, and it is not possible to schedule a second round of meetings in an already busy unit.

Communication

The course works best when we treat it as a semester-long conversation about your writing. To make that conversation possible, there are a few important things to remember:

Office Hours: I am happy to meet with you additionally by appointment to discuss writing, reading, or any other issues pertaining to the seminar. Just ask or email and we'll arrange a time to meet.

E-mail: Rather than take up our class time with announcements and administrative arrangements (and there will be many of them), I use e-mail to communicate most of that information. As part of your participation in the course, I ask that you check your Harvard e-mail account daily; you are responsible for the information I post there. Likewise, I make sure to check mine once every day for questions from you.

The 24-Hour Rule: You are welcome to email me questions at any time, but if there are less than 24 hours between the time you send an email and the deadline for an assignment, I cannot guarantee a response to your question before the deadline. You are responsible for turning in your assignment on time regardless, so you'll want to ensure that you ask any questions you may have well in advance of the due date.

Grading of Individual Essays

90% of your final grade comes from the three major writing assignments. They are weighted more significantly as the semester goes along to acknowledge the assignments' increasing length and complexity. For each essay, you will receive the goals of that assignment on the essay handout itself. Since the goals of each unit build on the skills developed in the previous one(s), my interpretation of grading criteria will become more stringent as the semester progresses. Please note that I expect your revisions to be free of grammatical, spelling, and formatting errors; failure to meet these expectations may result in a lowered grade.

To ensure fairness, I evaluate the words on the page before me and do not factor perceptions about the effort that went into completing the assignment. This means I will not grade a weak paper up – or a strong paper down – based on my imagination of a student's capability. Because the essay itself is the only evidence I consider, an essay's grade indicates solely the extent to which the work submitted meets the criteria for a given assignment. Every Preceptor uses similar grading standards to ensure fairness in their evaluation of student work across sections. These standards use as criteria the Elements of Academic Writing.

A paper in the **A-range (A or A-)** demonstrates a mastery of the Elements of Academic Writing. It advances an interesting, arguable thesis; establishes a compelling motive to suggest why the thesis is original or worthwhile; analyzes evidence insightfully and in depth; draws from well-chosen sources, deploying them in a variety of ways; employs a logical and progressive structure; and is written in a graceful and sophisticated style.

A paper in the **B-range (B+, B, B-)** resembles an A-range paper in some ways, but may exhibit a vague, uninteresting, or inconsistently argued thesis; establish a functional but unsubstantial motive; include well-chosen but sometimes unanalyzed and undigested evidence; use sources in a correct but limited fashion; employ a generally logical but somewhat disorganized or undeveloped structure; or be written in a generally clear but inelegant or imprecise style.

A paper in the **C-range (C+, C, C-)** resembles a B-range paper in some ways, but may feature a confusing, descriptive, or obvious thesis; convey a simple motive; present insufficient evidence, or present evidence that is insufficiently analyzed; drop in sources without properly contextualizing or citing them; display an unfocused or simplistic structure; or be written in a generally unclear or technically flawed style.

A paper in the **D-range** resembles a C-range paper in some ways but may lack a thesis and motive; provide little evidence and analysis; draw on sources insufficiently; or display an

incoherent or rambling structure. It does, however, show signs of *attempting* to engage with the sources and skills expected in the assignment, and it is at least *half* the assigned length.

A paper earning a grade of **E** does not fulfill the basic expectations of the assignment. It may be less than half the assigned length or fail to engage with the sources and skills expected in the assignment. For example, in a research paper, the essay may show no signs of research.

Grade Breakdown

Final grades are determined according to the following breakdown:

Essay #1 Revision:	20%
Essay #2 Revision:	30%
Formal Research Proposal & Literature Review:	05%
Essay #3:	40%
Course Citizenship:	05%

As noted in the previous section, 90% of the final grade is determined based on the three major essays. 05% of the final grade is based on the formal research proposal/literature review (criteria discussed in the unit 3 assignment sequence). The remaining 05% is based on **course citizenship**, which is evaluated based on your overall **engagement** in the course. Citizenship includes the following components:

- completion of ungraded response papers
- completion of ungraded drafts
- completion of reflective cover letters
- participation in class discussion
- engagement with peer review exercises
- completion of an end-of-term reflection

Revision

Because of the emphasis this course places on revision, the schedule is designed to allow you as much revision time per essay as possible. Since you'll have a significant span of days in which to revise, the expectations for this aspect of your work in the course are high.

Course Librarian

Every Writing Seminar is paired with a course librarian. Our librarian, Susan Gilroy, will guide us through the research process, helping us navigate Harvard's immense collections, from the open stacks to article databases to rare books and artifacts. In addition to the time we spend

with Sue as a class, you should also feel free to contact her during the research process for individual consultations. She is happy to work with you, and to help you discover how you might access and utilize the many resources available here at Harvard for the purposes of your own scholarly work. Her email address is: Sue Gilroy (sgilroy@fas.harvard.edu)

Writing Center

At any stage of the writing process – brainstorming ideas, drafting or revising – you may want some extra attention on your essays. The Writing Center offers hour-long appointments with trained tutors. I can't stress strongly enough the benefit of the service they provide; regardless of the "strength" or "weakness" of the essay, any piece of writing benefits from further review and a fresh perspective. Visit the Writing Center's web site at <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr> to make an appointment. See the Writing Center website for details.

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 2nd floor of One Bow Street, room 227. For more, see:

<https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/egl-tutor>

Essay Formatting Guidelines

Following the guidelines below will ensure that I can focus on your ideas and your prose when I read your essays, rather than devoting time to issues of formatting, pagination, etc. The guidelines apply both to essay drafts and revisions. Forgetting to check your essays for these matters can result in a lower grade for the essay.

All essays should adhere to the standard format:

- double-space in a reasonable font (Times New Roman 12 or equivalent), with one-inch margins
- number all pages
- include your name, the course title, my name, the date, the essay number and your essay title on the first page
- include your name on each subsequent page
- include an honor code affirmation
- proofread thoroughly for typographical, grammatical, and punctuation errors. Consistent errors will lower the grades on your essays.
- use either Chicago author-date or MLA citation method [as assigned] to document your sources and include a correctly formatted References Section/Works Cited page. Consult the *Harvard Guide to Using Sources* for the appropriate citation information.
- include an acknowledgments footnote or acknowledgments section

Please consult the unit calendar for details on what needs to be submitted with each draft and revision. And a word to the wise:

Avoid Disaster! *Keep a copy of all your work:* you should both regularly save your work and periodically print working drafts as you write (in other words, you should never be in the position of having "finished" an essay or revision with nothing to show for it if your computer crashes).