HARVARD UNIVERSITY
EXPOSITORY WRITING 20
FALL 2018

Work in the Modern World

Monday and Wednesday at 12:00
CGIS South, Room S003

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Course Overview

This course explores the structure and experience of work in the contemporary political economy with an eye toward both its liberating and oppressive potential. How do different forms of work affect our life circumstances, personalities, and connections to each other? In the first unit we will examine jobs—including some professional occupations like physicians and financial analysts—where social class is ambiguous or problematic, leading us to the question of who is a worker. How and to what extent are working class jobs different from professional jobs? In unit two we explore the crucial issue of workers' control over their own labor and the concept of alienation. We examine accounts of deskilling, the separation of mental and manual labor, and the consequences of these processes for workers' experience on the job. To what extent does alienation occur in offices versus factories versus service counters? For the final unit we will critically engage in a debate about the development of "flexible" labor and the ways in which workers' connections to employers, occupations, and locations have become more fluid and transitory. We will explore what flexibility means in a variety of contexts and ask: does flexibility lead to liberation or loss of identity? Does it bring self-fulfillment or insecurity? What does flexibility mean for tech workers in Silicon Valley and bankers on Wall Street? Our texts consist of case studies and ethnographic accounts representing a variety of workplaces along with readings from prominent social theorists who in different ways seek to elucidate the conditions of work under modern capitalism.

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 tackles a different aspect of work in the modern world and is designed to highlight particular writing skills. The thematic units and their associated writing assignments are described below.

UNIT 1: WHO IS A WORKER?
Assignment: Close Reading (5-6 pages)
Writing Focus: Close reading; asking analytical questions; constructing theses and arguments; motive; using evidence; paragraphs.

In the first unit we will take up the questions: Who is a worker and who is a professional? What criteria do we use to classify someone as a worker? What counts as a working class job? And who, then, falls into the middle class? We will discuss and write about people who appear to fall into ambiguous or intermediate class categories in an effort to get some purchase on what such cases can tell us about who is a worker and who is not. In this unit we will read selections from *Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science* by Atul Gawande and *Men and Women of the Corporation* by Rosabeth Moss Kanter. For the paper students will do a close reading of one of these texts in order to answer the question: are doctors—or managers—workers?

UNIT 2: ALIENATION AND CONTROL
Assignment: Test a Theory (6-7 pages)
Writing Focus: Counterargument; analysis of evidence; thesis; structure.

In unit two we will examine Marx's concept of alienation and his ideas about the creative potential for work and its role in human fulfillment and wellbeing. We will read Harry Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital* which explores of the conditions of work under modern capitalism which examines routinization, deskilling, control on the job, and the dynamics of conflict and consent in the workplace. For the paper students will treat either David Halle's *America's Working Man*, an ethnography of chemical workers in New Jersey, or Robin Leidner's *Fast Food, Fast Talk*, which includes an ethnographic account of working at McDonalds, and use one of these texts to critically assess the theory of alienation as found in Marx and Braverman.

UNIT 3: FLEXIBLE LABOR
Assignment: Research Essay & Engaging in a Critical Debate (7-9 pages)
Writing Focus: Research; handling multiple sources and different kinds of evidence; comparing arguments.

Unit three explores the ways in which workers' connections to employers, occupations, and locations have become more fluid and transitory, and we will critically engage in the debate about the social and personal consequences of such "flexible" labor. Students will read a variety of perspectives on the topic and will then devise their own research project that engages in the debate on flexible labor by using a case study of their choosing. Students can choose to examine a particular kind of job or occupation, or a kind of workplace or industry. Alternatively, students could examine a particular company, organization, technology, or employment practice that bears on the flexibility of work. The goal is for students to use primary data to make a meaningful scholarly intervention.

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. *Readings will be available on the course website.*

Writing and Revising

• ***Response Papers*:**
Before you compose an initial draft of each essay, you'll complete one or more assignments that focus on particular writing skills that are important for the relevant essay type.

• ***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. You will receive more specific instructions about writing cover letters.

• ***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 criticism and suggestions for improvement. You will be expected to provide written comments, in the form of a letter, on each draft that we workshop together. You will receive more guidelines on draft workshops.

• ***Conferences:***
After I've carefully read your draft, we'll meet for a 15-20 minute conference in which we'll work together on strategies for revising the essay. You should plan on taking notes during the conference.

• ***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.

Course Policies

• ***Attendance:***
The policy of the Harvard College Writing Program is as follows: If you miss more than one class without the excuse of a religious holiday or illness, you will receive a formal warning letter, copied to your Freshman Dean. If you then miss another class without a legitimate excuse, you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and failed. Please note that absences to participate in athletic or other extracurricular activities are not excusable. If you have to be absent for a religious holiday or other important event, please speak to me *before* the date you will be away.

• ***Deadlines:***
We are on a very tight schedule, so it is imperative that you submit work on time. I will only accept late work if the student contacts me to request an extension *in advance* of the deadline and has a compelling reason. Otherwise late work will receive a significant grade penalty.

• ***Completion of Work:***
The policy of the Harvard College Writing Program is as follows: You must complete all three of the required courses essays (including drafts) in order to pass the course. All work must be completed by the relevant deadline unless you have made *prior* arrangements with me for an extension. If you then miss the extended deadline, you may be excluded from the course.

• ***Grading:***
I will grade only the revisions (that is, the last version) of your essays, not the drafts. Course grades will be determined as follows:

Revision of Essay 1	25%
Revision of Essay 2	35%
Revision of Essay 3	40%

Grading will become more stringent as the semester progresses since I expect you to 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.

Certain course activities will not be graded directly: response papers, drafts, cover letters, in-class discussions, conferences, responses to fellow students' writing. These activities and assignments are nonetheless required since the quality of your work and your level of engagement in these areas will have a direct bearing on how well you will do on the final revisions of your essays.

• ***Collaboration Among Students*:**
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). 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, "You do not need to 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 exercises, drafts, or revisions with other students is expressly forbidden.

• ***Academic Honesty*:**
All work submitted for this course must be your own work. Any outside sources you use must be cited properly. Any student submitting plagiarized work is eligible to fail the course and will be referred to the college's Honor Council for further disciplinary action. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, consult the relevant sections of the *Harvard Guide to Using Sources* and/or speak with the instructor.

• ***Electronic Devices:***
Students are not permitted to use electronic devices—including laptops, tablets, or cell phones—during class.

Resources

• Model essays from *Exposé*: http://www.jhcwp.com
• *Harvard Guide to Using Source*: http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu
• The *Harvard College Writing Center* is available to assist at any stage of the writing process. Students can schedule an appointment with a writing tutor or attend drop-in office hours: https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu.

If you have any problems—understanding the material, attendance, completing assignments, etc.—contact the instructor as soon as possible. If I know about problems ahead of time we will be better able to solve them.