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M/W: 12 – 1.15pm
Room 330, One Bow Street

American Money

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Money is famously difficult to talk about: too awkward, too divisive, too complicated, too abstract, too personal. In this course, we look at how contemporary American writers, philosophers and filmmakers have chosen to talk about money, and how these conversations involve questions of class, justice, work, race and gender. In the first unit of the course, students will watch the 2015 film *The Big Short* and read a sociological analysis of Wall Street culture in order to explore how the film portrays the values and practices of the financial industry. Unit Two focuses on arguments made by contemporary philosophers and journalists about how individuals and governments should spend their money in order to reflect their values and create a just and healthy world: readings will include Ta-Nehisi Coates’s article “The Case for Reparations”, Silvia Federici’s manifesto “Wages Against Housework” and excerpts from Michael Sandel’s *What Money Can’t Buy*. We will ask questions such as: What is money? How do we decide what monetary value to place upon love, or a nation’s racist history, or body parts—and is there anything that should not have a price put on it? How does money interact with race, class and gender in the United States, and how does it mediate our personal relationships? The final unit of the course presents students with a selection of recent films that raise questions about the relationship between money, work and gender. Focusing on one of the suggested films, students will undertake their own research to make an original argument in conversation with the work of other scholars.

Schedule of assignments

The course is divided into three units. In addition to all assigned reading/viewing and any class preparation (e.g. reading excerpts, providing feedback for workshop, etc.), each unit will require you to complete:

1-2 response papers
An essay draft
1 essay revision (i.e. your final paper for that unit)

Unit breakdown

Unit 1: Representing Wall Street

In this unit, we'll watch the film *The Big Short* (2015), which tells the story of the 2008 financial crash through the experience of several individuals who saw it coming. Through close analysis of the film and through the development of analytical questions or problems, you will write a paper that makes an argument about the film's depiction of Wall Street and the financial industry. Your argument may be inspired by or engage with anthropologist Karen Ho's study of Wall Street culture, which we will discuss in class together.

Unit 2: What is money good for?

In the second unit, we will read three argumentative, non-fiction texts that make a case for how money should be used in order to express or enact our values (Michael Sandel's "What Money Shouldn't Buy", Ta-Nehisi Coates's article "The Case for Reparations" and Silvia Federici's manifesto "Wages Against Housework"). All three texts grapple with the question of what happens when you do or don't put a price on things. The assignment for this unit asks you to write a comparative analysis on two of these three texts, in order to evaluate the reasons for and potential outcomes of putting a price on experiences, labour or goods not typically assigned a monetary value.

Unit 3: Money, work and gender

In our final unit, you will choose from a selection of films that engage with the relationship between money, work and gender. Together, we will read two critical texts that can help us to interpret these films/TV shows: Karl Marx's theory of alienation and Arlie Russell Hochschild's work on emotional labour. You'll develop a research topic about your chosen film and engage in research using the resources of Harvard Library: you might choose to examine how historically or sociologically accurate the work is, how it has been received by audiences, or what theories about work, race and gender can tell us about your chosen film's depiction of money. Whatever your topic, you will learn how to use multiple sources in an essay and enter into conversation with the work of other scholars.

Grade breakdown

Unit 1 Final Paper: 20%

Unit 2 Final Paper: 25%

Unit 3 Annotated bibliography and prospectus 10%

Unit 3 Final Paper: 35%

The remaining 10% of your grade reflects your thoughtful completion of response papers, your cover letters, your participation in class discussion and in workshops, and your preparation for class and for your draft conferences. Please note that your essay drafts are not graded.

Policy on Electronic Submissions

You will submit your work electronically through our Canvas site. You must submit your work in a format that allows me to make marginal comments on it (i.e. not a PDF!). Microsoft Word is

my preference, but Google Docs or similar are OK too. It is also your responsibility to ensure that the file you are sending is not corrupted or damaged.

NB Harvard makes the full Microsoft Office suite available to you for free, so it's worth downloading if you don't already have it!

Conferences

When you turn in a draft of your assignment essay for Unit 1 and Unit 3, you'll set up an appointment to meet with me in a 20-30-minute one-on-one conference, in which we'll discuss how to revise your draft. I'll send you comments on the draft before our meeting, and I'll ask you to 1) read those comments and 2) come prepared with some specific ideas or questions for revising your draft. I encourage you to take notes during our conference; no matter how memorable the ideas and plans you generate in conference seem at the time, it is all too easy for them to fly out of your head once the meeting is over.

How to sign up for a conference on Canvas:

- Go to the course site on Canvas
- Click "Calendar" on the left
- Click "Find appointment" on the right side (under appointments)
- Select our course
- Click on the date and time you want to reserve and then click "Reserve." I'll know that's your spot!

Please note that there is no conference in Unit 2. Instead, I will provide more substantial written comments on your draft assignment. You can also make an appointment to talk with me about your draft in office hours if you would like further feedback.

Office hours

My office hours are Monday 2-4pm. The first hour is open (i.e. you can just show up); during the second hour, you can book a slot with me in the same way that you sign up for a conference (see above). If you can't make my regular office hours, email me and we can find another time!

There are no office hours during conference weeks.

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 in every 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.

Accessibility and Accommodations

It is important to me that all students can succeed in this class, whatever success means to you. Each of you learns differently, and if there are aspects of this course that prevent or impede your learning or your participation, please come and talk to me and we can work together to develop reasonable accommodations and strategies. You can also make an appointment with the Academic Resource Center, which works with all students to devise ways of working and studying that enable individuals to achieve their potential.

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. (To be eligible for such accommodations, you will also need to have provided documentation to the Accessible Education Office ahead of time; let me know if you are unfamiliar with that process

and I can help you navigate it.) The Accessible Education Office works closely with Expos courses, and we will develop a plan that is appropriate for your needs. It is your responsibility to consult with me as the need for those accommodations arises.

Accessible Education Office:
Smith Campus Center, 1350 Massachusetts Avenue, Suite 470
(617) 496-8707
aeo@fas.harvard.edu

Academic Resource Center:
1414 Massachusetts Avenue, Floor 3A
academicresourcecenter@harvard.edu

Course Librarian

The librarian for our class is Odile Harter, and her email address is oharter@fas.harvard.edu. She will be able to help you with any questions you have about using Harvard Library. In Unit 3, she will be an invaluable resource as you begin your research project. You can also ask me any library-related questions!

Writing Center

The Writing Center is a wonderful place to get help with writing in general, or with a particular assignment – or both! You can talk to the Center’s tutors at any stage of the writing process, from generating ideas to fine-tuning a revision. The link to schedule an appointment is here: <https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/schedule-appointment>
NB Appointments tend to fill up near finals, so it’s worth booking a slot early if you think you might want one.

Policy on Collaboration

In this course, you should expect to develop and refine your ideas in conversation with other students (inside or outside of class) 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, “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 for or with other students is expressly forbidden.

Academic Honesty

Throughout the semester we’ll work on the proper use of sources, including how to cite sources and how to avoid plagiarism. You should always feel free to ask me questions about this

material. All the work that you submit for this course must be your own, and that work should not make use of outside sources unless that is explicitly part of the assignment. Any student submitting plagiarized work is eligible to fail the course and to be subject to disciplinary action by the Administrative Board.

Stay in touch!

Like last semester, this one is going to be challenging in many ways. Questions and circumstances may arise that neither of us could have predicted, and that are not answered or accounted for in this syllabus. I am always available as a sounding board, a first reader, or a resource for navigating life at Harvard. If something is interfering with your ability to participate in class, to complete your assignments on time, or to engage fully in workshop and with your peers, please tell me as soon as you can so that we can figure out a plan.