“We saw all these people behind the fence, looking out, hanging onto the wire, and looking out because they were anxious to know who was coming in. But I will never forget the shocking feeling that human beings were behind this fence like animals. And we were going to also lose our freedom and walk inside of that gate and find ourselves...cooped up there...when the gates were shut, we knew that we had lost something that was very precious. That we were no longer free.”

-Mary Tsukamoto, formerly incarcerated Japanese American

“Through the port-hole I could see the great city receding into the distance, its sky-line of buildings traceable by their rearing heads. It was my beloved city, the metropolis of the New World. It was America, indeed, America repeating the terrible scenes of tsarist Russia! I glanced up—the Statue of Liberty!”

-Emma Goldman

Description

The course aims to answer a series of questions fundamental to an understanding of the nation: What role have the fences and bars of carceral facilities—including jails, prisons, detention centers, and concentration camps—played in American immigration? Furthermore, what role do such places play in the stories Americans tell themselves about immigration? This course examines both the historical and contemporary significance of migrant incarceration, broadly construed, in the U.S.: from the holding and interrogations of new migrants at Ellis Island and Angel Island, to forced encampments of so-labeled ‘enemies’ during various war periods (with some still ongoing), to the present-day detention of undocumented migrants and refugees. Throughout the course, students will consider larger questions having to do with American immigration and the nation’s traditions of
incarceration: What is the nature of the relationship between incarceration and security or safety? How does one shed light on experiences and spaces that are intentionally obscured? Is the incarceration of migrants in America an exceptional practice, or is it the norm? Why are migrants imprisoned/detained/held at all, and what can this tell us about our collective views on both immigration and incarceration, more broadly? In examining these questions, we will look at a variety of representations—from poetry to podcasts, from documentaries, memoirs, and art to ethnographic observations of contemporary detention—and collaboratively formulate a range of written responses.

Rationale

In this course, students will learn about immigrant incarceration and their relation to this topic through focused engagement within written exercises. Immigration is a topic that continues to dominate contemporary political conversation and has indeed always played a significant role in the narratives which define and delimit American identity. Recent government administrative events and policy changes, however, have brought the topic of incarceration or forced separation of migrants to the fore in public discussions. Students in this course will bring different levels of awareness of and/or engagement with these historical, transnational phenomena to in-class discussions, writing exercises, and exploratory essay assignments. Writing is an important mechanism for not only communicating ideas in an informative or persuasive way but also for making sense of our own perceptions of phenomena and the recognized and unrecognized arguments which inform those positions. Throughout the course, students will develop stronger critical reading and writing skills through these practices while also coming to appreciate the unique value of social scientific approaches to knowledge production.

Learning Objectives

The course supports students in developing skills and competency in the following areas:

1) reading critically, identifying main arguments and locating supporting evidence in texts/articles
2) understanding the basic elements of expository writing and argumentation
3) producing one’s own arguments and communicating them in a clear, coherent, and well-supported manner
4) drafting and revising one’s own written work
5) editing others’ work in a constructive and supportive way
Units and Readings

The course will be divided into the following three units: 1) Arrival, 2) Threat, and 3) Liminality. The course begins with Unit 1 in two places at once—Ellis Island and Angel Island—and closely examines some of the striking narratives and poetry associated with them. While these were two similarly constructed spaces of detention for early American migrants, their functional differences were of critical importance. These differences, as we’ll see, lead to necessary questions about the characteristic qualities of immigrant exclusion in the nation. Continuing in Unit 2, we will look at war-time incarceration of groups so-deemed national threats or ‘enemy combatants’, with particular attention to Japanese Americans during World War 2 and Muslim and Arab Americans following the events of 9/11 and the subsequent, and ongoing, ‘War on Terror’. In the final unit, we’ll examine contemporary practices of migrant, and increasingly refugee, detention. We will investigate the rise of mass incarceration and its relationship with the detention of migrants, encampments of refugees, privatized incarceration, and significant movements within recent presidential administrations to separate and exclude migrant families and communities in the Mexico-U.S. borderlands. In the final unit, we will also explore resistance and activist efforts engagement in anti-carcceral and abolitionist work.

All readings, with the exception of two texts, will be provided on Canvas. Readings and other instructive materials on the course subject will range in both discipline and form, from ethnographic texts to memoirs, historical texts, podcasts, and documentaries, among others. Some of the included selections will be from Mark Dow’s American Gulag, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz’s Not a Nation of Immigrants, and Cesar Cuauhtemoc Garcia Hernandez’s Migrating to Prison: America’s Obsession with Locking Up Immigrants. Additionally, we will use a writing text to assist with writing instruction. The two required texts that students must obtain for the course are: Guantanamo Kid: The True Story of Mohammed El-Gharani, by Jerome Tubiana and Alexandre Franc, and The Sentences That Create Us: Crafting a Writer's Life in Prison, edited by Caits Meissner. Both of these books are available at The Coop, but you may obtain them however you prefer.

Essays

Essays will engage with distinct written forms and will explore the significance of relevant themes—such as exclusion, identity, and belonging. In the assignment for Unit 1, students will be asked to reflect on a question that concerns the historical response to new migrant arrivals in America, the contemporary threats inherent in global pandemic, and migrant incarceration. This piece will ultimately take the form of an op ed essay. The essay assignment for Unit 2 will take shape as a comparison of texts. This assignment will ask students to compare textual representations of the war-time incarceration discussed within that unit, deploying Tubiana and Franc’s graphic text for comparison. The final assignment for Unit 3, a formal research essay, will ask students to reflect upon the varied positions of ‘liminality’ in which migrants reside. This final assignment will involve additional steps to completion, including a topic proposal and annotated bibliography of sources.
Additional Assignments and Guidelines

Students will produce a combination of informal reading comments—hereafter referred to as reading journals—response papers, and formal essays. The writing assignments will serve as responses to the readings, primarily, but they can also respond to contemporary issues students find relevant to bring into the course discussion or reflect on in their essays. For each class, **students will be expected to submit a brief, informal journal response to that day’s reading/s, which you will upload to Canvas at least 24 hours before our class meeting time.** You can approach these two ways. One, you can either write an independent response to the reading/s, reflecting on whatever aspect you’d like. You can pose questions, offer critique, reflect on your favorite or least favorite aspect of the reading/s, compare it to things going on in the world, etc. OR two, you can make your journal a response to another student’s journal post (as long as you’re not just reiterating what they’re saying).

Just to clarify, these are very informal. Do not stress about your writing in these journals. **The only structural parameter for this journal activity is that it is at least a paragraph (3-5 sentences min.) in length.** You are certainly allowed to write more than that, if you desire. These are going to be used, in some aspect, in our in-class discussions, so make sure they are uploaded on Canvas at least a full day before we meet.

Students will write one “response paper”—which will also be brief, though longer than the reading comments—per unit. These papers are more like writing exercises, and they will respond to the reading while focusing on prepping you for your essay. More details on these will be provided closer to their deadlines.

The length expectations for the three formal essays are as follows:

- Essay 1: 700-900 words
- Essay 2: 6-8 pages
- Essay 3: 8-10 pages

More specific details (including prompts and expectations) for essays will be shared periodically throughout the semester. All formal written assignments must be submitted on the date as designated in the calendar. If there are any issues with submitting by the due date, students must speak with me about those issues prior to the due date. All formal essay assignments must have the following:

1) 12-point, standard font
2) Double-spaced, with 1-inch margins
3) Numbered pages
4) Cover letter (will give details about this later)
5) Essay title on the first page of writing (no additional information about the course, etc.)
Grading

Grading for the course is comprised of participation, below referred to as “engagement”, and formal written assignments (including all revisions and drafts). Engagement consists of the following: in-class discussion participation, submission of journal responses in preparation for class; responding to peers’ drafts in peer review and workshop; and participation in conferences. **Note:** late penalties may be imposed upon assignments turned in after individual deadlines.

Grade distribution:

Essay 1: 20%
Essay 2: 25%
Annotated Bibliography for Essay 3: 10%
Essay 3: 35%
Engagement: 10%

Class Structure

We will meet twice a week, Monday and Wednesday, for 75 minutes. Each class meeting will involve a combination of discussion of the readings due for that day and writing lessons and exercises. Our reading discussions will rely heavily on reading journals submitted prior to our class meeting, so these are critically important parts of full in-class participation. Throughout the semester, as you’ll see on the calendar, we’ll have some days which are irregular, meaning we won’t be meeting in class. We will have some ‘field trips’ and on conference weeks, those 1:1 meetings will take the place of our normal class meetings. These special days will be outlined on the calendar (which will be shared/updated throughout the semester).

Conferences

With respect to conferences (1:1 meetings with me), students will be **required** to meet with me **at least three times throughout the semester**, once at the beginning of the semester and during Units 1 and 3. These conferences are important opportunities to discuss/workshop writing assignments, exchange feedback, and check in with one another about any other issues or concerns. We will schedule these meeting times online (and I’ll let you know when). The default for these meetings will be via Zoom, but we may be able to meet in-person later in the semester.
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.

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 Canvas. As you send or upload each
document, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have saved the document in a form compatible
with Word. The name of the file should both reference the essay number (1, 2, or 3) and
include your last name (example: Essay2Routon). 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
for developing 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 in Units 1 and 3. Conferences are important opportunities for thinking together about questions in your argument and strategies for revision; during conference week, I am meeting with all 15/30 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. I appreciate your understanding!
Helpful Resources

While we will discuss ways to improve your writing throughout the entire course, there are also many online resources to help beyond the class. Here are just a few:

- Harvard Writing Center: tutors and online resources available
- Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL)
- Academic Phrasebank
- Harvard Exposé
- Harvard Library Zotero Guide
- Chicago Manual of Style Online
- APA Style Guide/Tips
- MLA Style Guide/Tips
- Grammar Girl
- Guide to Grammar and Writing