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## Expository Writing 20: Terrorism or Freedom Fighter?

### COURSE OVERVIEW

“One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” is a common saying that you might have heard, but what does it really mean? How does the international community define terrorism? Does everyone agree on a definition? What causes terrorism? Is religion to blame? How can terrorism be successfully addressed via policy? This course will investigate terrorism through a variety of methods (quantitative and qualitative) and disciplines. We will begin by discussing a specific case – the Vietnam War – to see how it affects your thoughts on the definition of terrorism (from a Security Council Resolution). We’ll consider primary sources, including a speech by Martin Luther King Jr. and a documentary from the 1960s with original war footage. Then, we will compare various theories that seek to explain the motivations of terrorists and terrorist organizations. Drawing on ideas from political science, sociology, and psychology, we will weigh in on the debate over whether terrorists are motivated by their “hearts” versus their “brains” using the case of the Islamic State (ISIS) to guide our analysis. Finally, we will apply what we have learned in the previous units to a specific case (that you choose) to make an argument about the categorization of, international response to, and motivations of a violent political organization. Here, you will derive specific policy recommendations based on your argument and findings. It’s your chance to think through precisely how your research might impact the world around you.

Some of our writing goals will change unit by unit, as you take on the distinct challenges of several important versions of the academic essay. Other goals will remain our focus throughout the whole of the course: developing your critical thinking skills, learning how to give good feedback, understanding what to do with feedback, building on your capacity to be persuasive, and practicing good public speaking. With these goals in mind, we begin with these important premises:

**Writing is a process.** You will take notes on your reading; write and revise response papers; write drafts of your essays; and fully revise those essays. This continued process of drafting and revision is the primary work of this class, and is the main way your writing grows stronger. It’s worth noting that while inspiration is the moment we all hope for in our writing, it comes most readily when that inspiration is earned – in other words, when you have dedicated *sustained effort to that process* of reading, thinking, questioning, drafting and revising.

**Writing is thinking.** That evolving writing process also allows you to develop your thinking with greater depth and meaning. Writing is one of the best ways to *figure out* your ideas. . . and so you should expect your ideas and arguments to evolve during the writing process. When you hand in a draft, you should not think that you are ‘done’ with the paper. The draft is part of a step to a final product, and the more work you put in, the more I will be able to help you.

**Writing is a conversation.** When you write, you are often in conversation with the sources you are writing about. You are likewise in conversation with your audience. You will express your ideas in your response papers, drafts and revisions, and your audience from this course will be responding to those ideas, telling you what their strengths are and where they can grow stronger. In addition to the feedback you get from your classmates, you will have individual conferences with me about each essay (these conferences are a required part of the course), and you will receive extensive written feedback from me throughout the semester.

In addition, throughout the semester, we will pay attention to the writing you will do (and are doing) **Beyond Expos**. We will explore common principles of academic writing – such as thesis, evidence, analysis and argument – which will be part of much of the writing you do at Harvard. Different occasions and disciplines also call for different approaches and conventions, and so we will also examine some of the ways those conventions have different inflections – or even very different appearances – in different disciplines.

The course is structured in the following units:

**Unit 1: “Vietnam, the United States, and the Definition of Terrorism.”** We usually think of terrorists as non-state actors, but some have argued that even states might fit the bill. Non-state actors are individuals or organizations that have significant political influence within a state or across states but are not formally affiliated or tied to a particular state. It ‘makes sense’ to think about a terrorist organization in this way because we think of terrorism as illegitimate. Nonetheless, the search for an agreed definition usually stumbles on the issue of identity – who is a terrorist? In this unit, we will flip the script on how most people think about terrorism. Your task is to analyze one definition of terrorism against a problematizing case (the Vietnam War) and present an argument about the definition’s validity in light of this. Your first essay will give you the opportunity to engage in one of the most essential skills in academic writing: posing an analytical question or ‘puzzle’ and engaging in a close analysis of multiple primary sources that argues for an answer.

Required Reading and Viewing Material

- *Beyond Vietnam*, a speech by Martin Luther King Jr.
- Selections from the 1949 Geneva Convention, UNSC Resolution 1566, and other informational news pieces.
- *In the Year of the Pig* (1968), a documentary featuring original Vietnam war footage.

**Unit 2: “The Heart, the Brain, and the Stuff in the Middle: The Case of ISIS.”** In this unit, we’ll read the works of four prominent scholars – James Fearon/David Laitin, Irving Janis, and Mark Juergensmeyer –who argue that violence can be explained in different ways. Fearon/Laitin approaches violence in the most ‘rational’ way by trying to isolate the conditions that facilitate it, which include factors like the strength of the state and the availability of funding. Janis and Juergensmeyer consider more of the ‘non-material’ variables that might motivate violence – beliefs, culture, and group cohesiveness. We will evaluate the adequacy of these three accounts by testing them with evidence drawn from a single, recent case: the Islamic State (ISIS).

#### Required Reading and Viewing Material

- Chapters from *Victims of Groupthink* (1982) by Irving Janis.
- “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War” by James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin in *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (Feb., 2003).
- “Terror Mandated by God” by Mark Juergensmeyer in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Summer 1997).
- “What ISIS Really Wants” by Graeme Wood in *The Atlantic*, March 2015 Issue
- Frontline’s *The Rise of ISIS*, a documentary

**Unit 3: “Operation Full Freedom.”** You become the researcher and producer of information and ideas in this unit. The final assignment is an 8-10 page multi-source essay that addresses the following prompt: *Pick an actor (person, organization, group, or other) that uses violent methods and make a case about whether this actor should be categorized as a terrorist organization or not.* You will also derive policy recommendations based on your analysis of the case you choose.

#### Required Reading and Viewing Material

- “Rewarding Bad Behavior: How Governments Respond to Terrorism in Civil War” by Jakana Thomas in *The American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (October 2014).
- *TEDxHollywood’s* “How Government’s Respond to Terrorism” by Max Abrahms.
- Selections (including interactive documentary) for a case study on Paul Watson and Sea Shepherd (i.e., Whale Wars).

### HOW THE COURSE WORKS

On many class days, some of the texts we turn to will be your own writing: your response papers, drafts, and revised essays will be part of what we read and discuss. All writing you do for this class is public – in other words, it may be chosen as one of the examples for us to consider. If there is ever a particular piece you *don’t* want others to see, please just let me know.

There are no texts that you need to purchase for this class. Everything that is required reading or watching is available on the course website in the unit reading folder. For Unit 3, you will be using online and library sources.

But you will print a great deal for this class, so please plan accordingly.

#### Laptop Policy

Ordinarily, I will ask that you not use laptops in class. There may be a few days when they are necessary, and I will let you know about them ahead of time. In general, you should expect to print any materials that I send you or post on the course website and bring those with you to class.

#### 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:

- **Conferences**: We will have three conferences throughout the semester, in between the first draft and final version of each essay. There is an additional pre-draft conference that is required before you turn in your Unit 3 drafts. These conferences are our chance to work closely on your writing and to focus your work in revision, and are most worthwhile when you are the one to guide them. Please come to each conference prepared – having reviewed your essay and my comments, considered your questions, and begun to think about revision possibilities and strategies. You should plan on taking notes during our discussions. Since the schedule during conference days is so tight, missed conferences may not be rescheduled.
- **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 weekday for questions from you. Please note that I don't check e-mail later than 7:00 p.m. I can answer most questions within 24 hours, except over the weekend.

### **Class Participation**

One of the benefits of Expos is its small class size. That benefit is best realized when every student participates fully in the class; as in any seminar, you learn much more from formulating, articulating, and questioning your own thoughts than from simply listening to what others have to say. Our time together is largely devoted to discussion and small-group work. Therefore, you are responsible for being in class, prepared, and on time, each time we meet. "Being prepared" means that you have given careful thought to the reading and writing assigned for the day, and that you are ready to offer ideas and questions to open our discussion.

### **Grades**

The majority of your grade comes from your three essays, according to the following breakdown: Essay #1 = 20%; Essay #2 = 30%; Essay #3 = 45%. The standard for each essay also becomes more demanding as we progress (since you are building on certain fundamental skills and techniques with each essay). The remaining 5% of your grade represents a serious measure of your completion of response papers, your constructive participation in class discussions and conferences, and the care with which you respond to fellow students' work.

### **Attendance and Lateness**

Because Expos has a shorter semester and fewer class hours than other courses, and because instruction in Expos proceeds by sequential writing activities, your consistent attendance is essential. **It is an official program-wide policy that if you are absent without medical or religious excuse more than twice, you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and failed.** On your second unexcused absence, you will receive a letter warning you of your situation.

You are expected to let me know promptly if you have missed or will miss a class; you remain responsible for the work due that day and for any new work assigned. Apart from religious holidays, only medical absences can be excused. In those circumstances, you should contact me before class (or within 24 hours); you may need to provide a note from UHS or another medical official, or from your Freshman Dean. Absences because of special events, such as athletic meets, debates, conferences, and concerts are not excusable absences. If such an event is very important to you, you may decide to take one of your two allowable unexcused absences, letting me know in advance. If you wish to attend an event that will put you over the two-absence limit, you must directly petition the Director of Expository Writing, who will grant such a petition only in extraordinary circumstances and only when your work in the class has been exemplary.

Class begins promptly at seven minutes past the hour. Three latenesses of more than ten minutes will be counted as an absence.

## **WRITTEN WORK**

### **Submitting Essays**

You will turn in drafts and revisions to the dropbox on the course website. Please be sure to check the unit syllabus for details on when things are due, and pay careful attention to the general guidelines about format, etc. explained there.

When you are uploading documents to Canvas, you are responsible for submitting versions that I can open. (The document must either be in Microsoft Word or be easily compatible; your file should end in .doc or .docx.) 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.

All work you submit to the course is for public readership – in other words, we will use essays and excerpts from the writers in the class (possibly yours!) as some of our texts this semester. If at any point you submit a draft or revision that you would prefer other students not read, please let me know that – but please don't make that request about everything you turn in this semester.

### **Deadlines**

For many class meetings, you will have due a response paper or some other reading or writing exercise to help you develop the essay for that unit. Our work together in class will also often be based on those assignments. For those reasons, it is imperative that you turn your work in on time. Of course, even in the most carefully organized semesters, unexpected circumstances can arise – therefore each student in this section is allowed ONE 24-hour extension on a response paper, draft or revision during the semester. To use that 24-hour extension without penalty, you must: contact me *before* that deadline; submit the late work to Canvas; and be on time with the other work due on that day as well. Otherwise, the work will be counted as late. And beware: taking that one-day extension can mean that you're crunched for time at the beginning of the next unit.

Other than that “wild card” extension, all deadlines in the course are firm. Except in the case of medical or family emergency, I do not grant further extensions. Essay drafts or revisions turned in after the deadline will be penalized a third of a letter-grade on the final essay for each day they are late. If you cannot meet a deadline due to a medical emergency, you must contact me right away, and may be required to produce a note from UHS; in the event of a family emergency, you must contact me right away, and may be required to ask your dean to contact me by e-mail or phone. In addition, please contact me as soon as possible so we can work out an alternative schedule.

### **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 – always at least a week after the draft conference. 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.

### **Completion of Work**

Because this course is a planned sequence of writing, it is an official Writing Program policy that *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 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. The letter will 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 (unless you have documented a medical problem), you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and failed.

### **Policy on Collaboration**

The following kinds of collaboration are permitted in this course: developing or refining ideas in conversation with other students or 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 with other students is expressly forbidden.

### **Academic Honesty**

Throughout the semester we’ll work on the proper use of sources, including how to cite 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 Honor Council.

### **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 (located on the garden level of the Barker 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 <https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/> to make an appointment. Tutors also hold drop-in office hours at other campus locations; see the Writing Center website for details.

### **Submitting Essays**

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, 12pt font, with one-inch margins
- number all pages and paragraphs
- include your name, the course title, my name, the date, the essay number and your essay title on the first page (don't use a title page)
- include your name on each subsequent page
- proofread thoroughly for typographical, grammatical, and punctuation errors. Consistent errors will lower the grades on your essays.
- use the APA in-text citation method to document your sources, and include a correctly formatted list of Works Cited. Consult the *Harvard Guide to Using Sources* for the appropriate citation information.

Please consult the unit calendar for details on what needs to be submitted with each draft and revision, and where each should be turned in (the course website and/or a printed copy in my mailbox at One Bow Street).

### **And a word to the wise:**

*Keep a copy of all your work*, and be sure to avoid computer disaster: 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).