

Expos 20: Language, Identity, and Power

Spring 2022

Instructor: Dr. Jessie Schwab

Contact: jfschwab@fas.harvard.edu

Class time: Tues/Thurs, 10:30 AM – 11:45 AM and 12:00 PM – 1:15 PM

Class meeting room:

Section 268 (10:30am): 2 Arrow St, room 408

Section 269 (12pm): 2 Arrow St, room 420

Office hours: Tuesdays, 3-4pm and Wednesdays, 12:30 – 1:30 pm on Zoom

- Note that office hours will not be held on holidays or days when I am holding conferences, so please check the course calendar
- If you are unable to make these times, you can also schedule office hour appointments via email, but these appointments must be scheduled at least 48 hours in advance
- Office hours are subject to change (in-person office hours and conferences may be held later in the semester depending on the state of the pandemic)

Zoom meeting room: harvard.zoom.us/my/jfschwab (meeting ID = jfschwab)

COURSE OVERVIEW AND GOALS

While a variety of animal species can communicate, humans are unique in their use of language. Language enables us to talk about the future and the past, express complicated thoughts, and develop new technologies. But to what extent does the language we use also make us who we are? How do our social and cultural backgrounds inform our use of language, and how does our use of language influence our social relationships? In this course, we will explore the intersections of language, identity, and power from an interdisciplinary perspective. In our first unit, we will test a classic theoretical claim regarding gender differences in communicative interactions by analyzing conversations from the reality television show *Married at First Sight*. In our second unit, we will collect our own data (in the form of conversation recordings or interviews) to further examine the complex interactions between language, identity, and power dynamics. Here you will form an argument regarding the extent to which elements of our daily language use help to reinforce or subvert existing power structures or markers of identity. In our final unit, you will work to communicate your research-based argument to a wider audience by planning and producing a 10-minute podcast, in which you will distill your research findings and weave in additional evidence. Throughout the course, you will also be encouraged to reflect on your own experiences with language, including the ways in which your native language/s, accent/s, and communication style/s influence your identity and relationships.

As we consider these topic-based questions, you'll also be honing your ability to form strong arguments and write clear, engaging, and coherent analytical essays. In Expos 20, our ultimate goal is to help you develop the skills and confidence necessary to critically engage with sources and successfully communicate your ideas (both in this course and throughout your time at Harvard).

The following three points will form the foundation for our work this semester:

- ❖ *Writing is thinking.* The cornerstone of this course is the idea that learning to write is learning to think. Writing is one of the best ways to figure out your ideas, and the evolving writing process allows you to develop your thinking with greater depth and meaning. You will write frequent short assignments to help you develop the ideas you will use in your arguments and in our class discussions. Developing worthwhile ideas also takes time, and you'll want to plan accordingly.
- ❖ *Writing is a process.* For all three of our unit assignments in this course, you will write an initial draft and then a revision. This continued process of drafting and revision is the primary work of this class, and is the main way your writing grows stronger. You will also write response papers to develop your ideas and reflect on the process of developing your ideas and questions.
- ❖ *Writing is a conversation.* When you write, you are participating in a conversation: with your immediate audience (represented by your classmates and me) and with a larger academic community. As you express your ideas in your written work, your audience will be responding to those ideas, telling you what their strengths are and where they can keep developing. In addition to the feedback you get from your classmates, you will have two conferences with me (these conferences are a required part of the course), and you will receive extensive feedback from me throughout the semester.

Also keep in mind that one doesn't "arrive" at being a good writer, but rather continually works to become one. This seminar asks you to be thoughtful and self-reflective about the writing process: to question and evaluate your own work in each assignment and in the course as a whole. Part of assessing that progress will be developing your sense of what you already do well. In addition, the course will challenge you to figure out how you want to grow as a writer, both this semester and beyond.

OVERVIEW OF ASSIGNMENTS

Unit 1: Gender Differences in the Use of Language

For our first unit, we will focus primarily on Pamela Fishman's (1983) theoretical perspective regarding gender differences in communication. Fishman (1983) argues that women tend to put more "work" into conversational interactions than men, which reinforces gendered power dynamics. You will evaluate and test this theory using linguistic evidence from the reality television show *Married at First Sight*. In short, you will be forming an argument about the extent to which gender differences are in fact found in conversation, and if so, to what extent the nature of those differences supports, contradicts, or otherwise complicates Fishman's perspective.

At the end of this Unit, we will also explore an alternative theoretical perspective by Maltz and Borker (1982), who argue that communication between American men and women is essentially "cross-cultural" miscommunication (given sociocultural differences in the rules men and women are taught for engaging in and interpreting conversational strategies). You will get a chance to practice intervening in this scholarly debate as you move toward developing your own research paper.

Unit 2: Interrogating Language, Identity, and Power

Our second unit will first push us to consider additional perspectives, including the intersection of language use with race, culture, and gender identity. You'll then design your own research project, in which you will analyze primary evidence to create an original argument regarding

the extent to which elements of language help reveal, reinforce, or subvert existing power structures, shape relationships, or create identity. You will be asked to conduct outside research, in addition to collecting some of your own raw data. This raw data may come from recording an interaction amongst family/friends/peers (with permission), conducting interviews, or searching the internet.

Sample of selected required reading (subject to change):

- *Negotiating boundaries, crossing borders: The language of Black women's intercultural encounters* (Houston, M. & Scott, K., 2006)
- *Pronouns and possibilities: Transgender language activism and reform* (Zimman, L., 2018)
- *"Suddenly faced with a Chinese Village": The linguistic racialization of Asian Americans* (Lo, A., 2016)
- *Cultural invalidations: Deconstructing the "Acting White" phenomenon among Black and Latinx college students* (Durkee, M. I., Hope, E.C., & Gazley, E.R., 2019)

Unit 3: Capstone assignment

In a final capstone assignment, you will work to communicate your research-based argument to a wider audience in the form of a 10-minute podcast, using a narrative framework to draw listeners in, while distilling research findings and weaving in interviews as evidence. We will first listen to and carefully analyze example podcasts related to the course, including episodes of Code Switch and Hidden Brain. We will then discuss what makes an effective podcast, as well as how we can translate our arguments to this new medium without sacrificing logic or evidence. We will also spend time discussing the editing process and you'll be given access to a repository of podcast-making resources. Finally, you will be provided with the opportunity to share your work with your classmates and to distribute it more widely if you would like to.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

All assigned reading material and podcasts will be linked through Canvas or freely available online. For Unit 1, you will need to obtain a copy of a television episode: Married at First Sight, season 9, episode 4/5 ("Stranger Love in Paradise") (note that this episode is listed as episode 4 on some platforms and 5 on others). You can currently purchase the episode on Amazon or iTunes for \$2-3, and it is also streaming on Hulu and Amazon Prime. If you can't get access to a free copy and paying for it will be difficult, please don't hesitate to get in touch, and I'll help you figure out a way to get access.

RESOURCES TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF

Oftentimes first-year students don't take advantage of the many academic resources on campus because it may feel like admitting defeat. But I want to stress that it is truly *the opposite*. Not only do many, many Harvard students take advantage of these resources, but if anything, seeking them out shows that you are a committed student and a hard worker. In fact, it is often the students who are strongest academically who take the most advantage of these resources!

Writing Center:

The Writing Center offers hour-long appointments with trained Tutors. You can visit them at any stage of the writing process, from coming up with a topic, to honing your argument, structuring your paper, revisions, and more. I can't emphasize 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. You can visit the Writing Center's website at <https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/> to make an appointment.

Academic Resource Center:

This is a fast-paced course with many deadlines to keep up with! And in combination with your other courses, extracurriculars, and work or family commitments, things can start to feel overwhelming. I highly recommend meeting with an Academic Coach early in the semester to help you plan the most effective schedule, avoid procrastinating, and learn what study and work methods work best for you. (The ARC also has Peer Tutoring services which may be helpful for other classes!). You can sign up for 45-minute Academic Coaching appointments; see more details here: <https://academicresourcecenter.harvard.edu/>

Office hours:

Perhaps my number one piece of advice for navigating college is going to professors' office hours! Not only will going to office hours hopefully be beneficial for your learning in that particular course, but getting to know your professors can also lead to opportunities later on in college. For example, you may need to approach a professor at some point to write you a recommendation for a scholarship or graduate school — and not only are professors more likely to say yes if they actually feel like they know you, but they will also write you a much better recommendation! Additionally, professors often give Research Assistant positions to former students who they got to know in class, they might be able to provide you connections to internship opportunities, etc.

So what happens in office hours? For one, we can talk about your writing process or course topics. But we can also meet to talk about navigating college courses and study tips, your extracurricular interests, an interest in possibly pursuing a Psychology or Linguistics concentration, tips for getting involved in research on campus, my own experience as an academic, or any other questions you have as you progress through your academic journey.

To get you more comfortable with the idea of office hours, I will be requiring everyone to **schedule a 20-minute Zoom meeting with me on January 26th, 28th, or 31st**. In this introductory meeting, I hope to start to get to know you, to get a sense of your experiences and interests, and to discuss any questions or concerns you have about the course. We will also briefly discuss your Honor Code reflection (which you can find on my.harvard) and any questions you have about the Honor Code. **By the end of the day on January 25th, please fill out the following Beginning of Class Survey so that I can take a look at your answers ahead of our meeting:** <https://forms.gle/1xQzP1pLbncVPVh79>.

COURSE 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 two formal conferences throughout the semester, in between the first draft and final version of your Unit 1 and Unit 2 essays. These conferences are the heart of expos; they give us a 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, considered your questions, and begun to think about revision possibilities and strategies. You should plan on taking notes during our discussions; please bring a notebook and pen or plan to take notes on your computer. Since the schedule during conference days is so tight, missed conferences may not be rescheduled. Note: In addition to our formal conferences, you are of course very welcome to stop by office hours or schedule an office hours appointment with me about your developing ideas at other points in the semester.
- Canvas – Canvas is our course “hub.” Please follow along with the course “Modules” on Canvas, as well as the Unit calendars. I will also frequently send email announcements and administrative arrangements through the Canvas Inbox or Canvas Announcements. Make sure you update your Canvas preferences to receive notifications of Announcements (and as a general rule in college, you should make sure to check your email at least once a day!)
 - All of your Course Assignments should also be submitted via Canvas. *Please **make sure your submissions are always in .doc, .docx or .pdf form** (e.g., not Google docs!).*
- Email – If you need to get in touch with me outside of class or office hours, you can email me through the Canvas Inbox or at jfschwab@fas.harvard.edu. I make sure to check my email at least once every weekday, but please note that I don’t check e-mail later than 7:00 p.m. I can answer most questions within 24-48 hours, except over the weekend.
 - Please be respectful of my time when asking questions over email. If you have multiple questions – or if your question requires a long answer – please consider coming to office hours or setting up an appointment. Likewise, if you have a logistical question that isn’t urgent, please wait until the following class period or office hours and ask me in person.
 - Also note: if you ask a question that I have already answered on a handout, on Canvas/email, or if I have already covered the information in class, I’ll make a note and it will affect your participation grade. Your best bet is to always ask peers first OR double check everything that is on Canvas before you email me.

GRADING

Please note that all unit grades are based on the final drafts of your papers and capstones, with the following breakdown:

Grade Breakdown:

Unit 1 Paper: 25%

Unit 2 Final Proposal (Response Paper 2.2): 10%

Unit 2 Research Paper: 30%

Unit 3 Capstone: 25%

Engagement: 10%

Note that more details on each of the unit assignments will come at the beginning of each unit, but details on “engagement” are provided below:

Engagement Grade:

Your engagement grade consists of your overall engagement in the course beyond major assignments. This consists of completion and effort on your response papers, the care with which you respond to your classmates’ work, and being prepared for and contributing to class discussion. More specific areas of engagement include: active participation in group activities, responding to peers’ drafts in peer review sessions; doing the reading thoughtfully and participating in discussions; submitting asynchronous assignments; and preparing for and contributing to individual conferences.

Taking an active part in your own learning is an incredibly important part of college (both in terms of what you get out of it and how well you do). Research shows that “active learning” (i.e., students actively participating in and engaging with the course material) promotes students’ learning significantly more than passive listening, even when students *think* (and self-report) that they learn just as much from passive methods (Deslauriers et al., 2019). Not only will you learn and remember more if you actively participate in class, but it was also be much more interesting and fun – for you and for everyone else!

As a shy student myself in college classrooms, I completely empathize with fears of speaking out (e.g., that tightening in your chest when you’ve been called on and worries that you will say something wrong). But I promise that it gets easier over time, and I aim to make our classroom a safe space for testing out your ideas and asking questions. Learning the difficult skill of trusting your own voice and ideas is *highly* important for thriving at Harvard and beyond. If this is something you struggle with and you would like to talk through tips and ideas for working through it, please feel free to chat with me about it in office hours!

COURSE POLICIES

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 Electronic Submissions:

You will submit all major essay assignments 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 Microsoft Word or PDF (your file should end in .doc, .docx., or .pdf) 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.

Also note that all work you submit to the course is for public readership – your peers may be assigned to read your drafts, and we may also 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 reach out to discuss with me.

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; for this class, you will do so in your essay cover letters. 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 Feedback and Conferences:

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 short thoughtful questions by email about specific instances in your revision-in-progress, but I won't be scheduling follow-up conferences with any student (please also keep in mind that I will be meeting with all 30 students during conference week, so I would be unable to have follow-up conferences with everyone). However, when you do want additional feedback, the Writing Center is a very helpful resource, as well as your peers.

Accommodations:

I aim to create a classroom environment that is inclusive of students with diverse learning needs. 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.

Formatting 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-spaced, reasonable font (when in doubt, stick with 12-point Times New Roman), with one-inch margins
- ***Number all pages and paragraphs*** – at the beginning of each paragraph just put a numeral (1 for the beginning of the intro and so on). There's no standard format to this, and this isn't Harvard wide – this is a me thing. I want to be able to discuss essays with you by saying "In paragraph 3, you say that..."
- 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 References. Consult the [Harvard Guide to Using Sources](#) for the appropriate citation information and [Purdue Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#) for help with APA citations and references.

A NOTE ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN OUR CLASSROOM

In an ideal world, academic knowledge and ideas would be objective. However, much of our collective knowledge in academia is historically built on a small subset of privileged voices (and in some cases, research in the academy has been implicitly or explicitly discriminatory).

Integrating a diverse set of experiences and intellectual ideas is important to me, but I acknowledge that there may be both overt and covert biases in the course material due to the lens from which it was written. I hope that we will be able to respectfully discuss issues of bias and representation in the context of the course, but please also feel free to contact me or [submit anonymous feedback](#) if you have any suggestions to improve the quality of the course materials.

(https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfV2I6cGeGnKUM9Z39mdIeSMvpKednpVV6ei8KnrGJ9R0qoKQ/viewform?usp=sf_link)

I would also like to facilitate a learning environment that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, sexuality, gender identity, class, religion, ability, ethnicity, culture, etc.) I hope that we can all come to class open and willing to listen and learn from each other. Additionally, to help ensure that our learning environment is safe and supportive:

- If something was said in class (by anyone) that you felt was disrespectful or discriminatory, please feel free to talk to me about it or leave anonymous feedback. I (like many people) am still in the process of learning about diverse perspectives and identities, as well as what I can do to push back against the racism that exists in higher education.
- If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences either inside or outside of class regarding racism, racial trauma, or other instances of discrimination, oppression, or trauma, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. Remember that you can also [submit anonymous feedback](#). If you prefer to speak with someone outside of the course, your Resident Dean and Counseling and Mental Health Services (CAHMS) are excellent resources (see Support Resources page on Canvas).
- If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official Harvard records, please send me a note to let me know (if you feel comfortable sharing)!

Although I am facilitating this classroom learning environment, I'm also learning alongside you. I would be grateful to hear from you about ways in which I can help better foster an environment that makes everyone feel included and valued.