

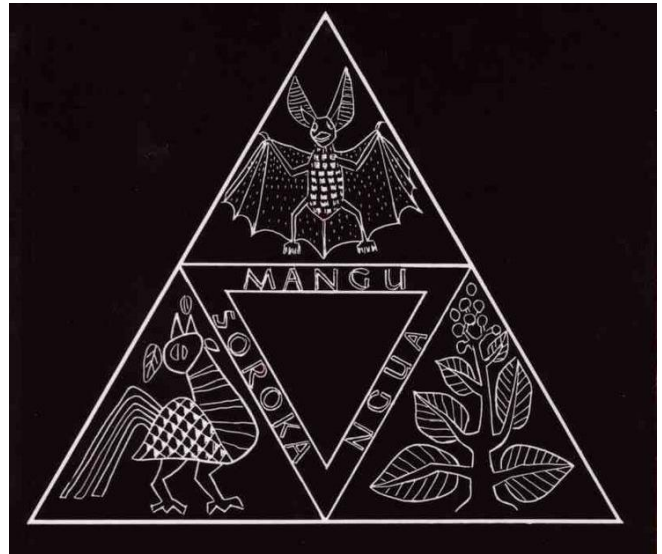
# EXPOS 20: Expository Writing

## Section 204: Rationality and the Supernatural

### Spring 2024

**PRECEPTOR:** Doug Bafford  
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**OFFICE HOURS:** Tuesdays 3:00-4:00 PM,  
Thursdays 10:30-11:30 AM, and by appointment  
on Tuesdays and Thursdays  
**OFFICE LOCATION:** One Bow Street, Room 225  
**MAILBOX:** One Bow Street, Suite 250

**CLASS MEETING TIMES AND LOCATION:**  
Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:00-10:15 AM,  
Location TBD



### Course Description:

An intensive seminar that aims to improve each student’s ability to discover and reason about evidence through the medium of essays. Each section focuses on a particular theme or topic, described on the [Expos Website](#). All sections give students practice in formulating questions, analyzing both primary and secondary sources and properly acknowledging them, supporting arguments with strong and detailed evidence, and shaping clear, lively essays. All sections emphasize revision.

### Section Description:

Is it irrational to believe in malevolent spirits? Why are certain rituals invoking supernatural forces deemed more prestigious than others? Despite their prevalence across the globe, including in high-tech, industrialized countries, belief systems centered around unconventional cosmologies—such as witchcraft, magic, and specters—are often marginalized and suppressed as backward, unmodern, or even dangerous. What drives people to believe in such notions that can seem, from a scientific or “rational” perspective, to be illogical? This course will guide us through systems of thought and practice at the margins of mainstream Euro-American cosmological and religious models. We will explore how cultural anxieties over witches, demons, aliens, and other unseen (yet sometimes nonetheless palpable) forces operate according to their own internal logic yet simultaneously reflect historical and societal dynamics that tell us about more than the practitioners themselves.

The first unit begins with reading classic works on African beliefs and rituals that Europeans labeled as witchcraft or magic, where our analytic emphasis is focused on uncovering the hidden assumptions guiding writing about culturally unfamiliar phenomena, especially the power (and potential distortion) of taken-for-granted worldviews. The second unit continues to explore magical thinking, albeit with the assistance of contemporary theoretical toolkits, including that of anthropologist Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, to explain the social effects and meanings of ritual. Finally, our scope expands in the final unit to develop skills in humanistic and social scientific research into the dynamics of alternative belief systems, from UFOs to flat-earthers. While seemingly exemplars of the irrational, these case studies taken together reveal conflicts over social authority, subjective experience, and our deepest values. We will examine multidisciplinary conventions, including those in anthropology, history, and scientific fields, with an aim to write in critical and nuanced ways about religious and cultural systems deeply unfamiliar to most people living in industrialized contexts dominated by mainline Abrahamic faiths.

### **Prerequisites:**

This course is open to first-year students as a means to fulfill the College's general education requirement in expository writing. No prior knowledge about the section topic is expected.

### **Required Materials:**

There are no books or published materials you must purchase for this course. You will need to bring to class something with which to write, and you will need to compose the written work completed outside of class on a computer with internet access and word processing software, all of which can be found in the Harvard Library system or provided by the College. All required and supplementary readings will be accessible online via the course Canvas site, which can be accessed at <https://canvas.harvard.edu>.

### **Course Expectations:**

By the end of this course, you will have

- written three essays of different kinds and lengths
- written “response” papers as part of each of the course’s three units, recognizing that this genre of writing will be an important part of coursework at Harvard and will take a variety of forms
- decoded response paper assignments in courses outside of Expos
- learned the concepts in “Elements of Academic Argument,” having used the handout in prompts, comments, and exercises
- discovered your own thesis and formulated your own animating analytical question or problem
- written essays that require a close reading of a text and that require you to assess the validity of an extended argument
- written one research paper for which you must locate on your own and responsibly incorporate into your paper sources (primary and secondary) from the physical and online collections of the Harvard Libraries
- been formally introduced to the fundamentals of the research process as it relates to writing undergraduate papers at Harvard, including how to formulate and revise a good research question

- had several occasions throughout the course to consider the transferability of Expos skills as well as the differences in writing among disciplines regarding the kinds of questions asked, what counts as evidence, what “close reading” means and in what fields the term is not employed, other modes of analysis, use of sources, style of argument, and style of prose, and
- been apprised of and practiced basic principles of clear writing style.

### **Assignments:**

In addition to smaller weekly activities and in-class exercises, you will complete three major assignments over the course of the semester: a close reading essay, a lens essay, and a research essay. The first essay, which will be the focus of Unit I, asks you to critically analyze a single theoretical text in the study of African religious systems written by Robin Horton. You will dissect the author’s argumentation and consider the assumptions he makes about social scientific inquiry and the nature of supernatural beliefs. While you should include some recap of the author’s main argument, your primary focus should be on the means by which he arrives at his conclusions. In your selection of the logical moves Horton makes, you can choose whether to take a more relatively “critical” or “supportive” stance; however, your main argument should not be reduced to whether you “agree” with his claims or not. Instead, regardless of your opinion of his perspective, try to construct your thesis around the architecture of the author’s argument (where the evidence comes from, what kinds of explanations it foregrounds/occludes, etc.). The essay you submit should be no longer than five double-spaced pages, so conciseness will be key.

The second paper builds on the skills you develop in your close reading of a single text, but this time you will introduce a theoretical lens to gain a new perspective on an existing ethnographic depiction. Choosing between chapters detailing witchcraft systems in Central Africa and Western Europe, you will compose an essay of approximately six to seven double-spaced pages that borrows the frameworks proposed by anthropologist Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah to provide new insights into the dynamics of one of two case studies on witchcraft we have explored. Your essay will consider what value Tambiah’s perspective brings to this particular expression of witchcraft. Your main goal is to answer the following question: How does Tambiah’s notion of “participation” shift how we might view the “function” of witchcraft? The work we do collaboratively to develop writing for this assignment will give you the tools needed to bring a creative use of theoretical texts to bear on your own unique thinking.

Finally, the third assignment will help you develop the skills of academic research you will use throughout your time at Harvard. You will conduct secondary research using library resources (and possibly supplemented with first-hand primary observation) to address a “problem” related to a heterodox belief system or community of your choice. This problem is directly related to the “stakes” of your argument in this project and can be an intellectual problem (such as a scholarly debate, popular misconception, seeming contradiction, etc.) or a practical one (such as how to prevent religious intolerance or violence). You will answer this question, or at least address its complexities, by synthesizing data from multiple sources: primarily peer-reviewed social scientific and humanistic writings, supplemented with those from other disciplines or primary sources if relevant to your project, although this is not a requirement for the assignment. More details and submission guidelines for each of these written assignments are posted to Canvas and will be discussed in class well in advance of their due dates.

All written assignments prepared outside of class—response papers, drafts, and final versions—should be fully documented with consistent use the Chicago Manual of Style (author-date version); we will conduct in-class exercises to practice how to use this citation system starting in Unit I and continuing

throughout the semester. The most important point is that you give clear references to outside texts and ideas you have borrowed, even if the texts have been assigned in class. Resources to help you learn good citation practices are available online at the [Harvard Guide to Using Sources](#) and in person at the Writing Center in the Barker Center, Room 19.

You should strive to submit all assignments by the due dates listed in their prompts and on Canvas. Keeping abreast of submissions will make it easier for you to manage the workload over the course of the semester rather than postponing it for later, when you're likely to be even busier. For all formal papers, please try to think of a creative title (not the name of the assignment, like "Unit II Essay"). Of particular importance, make sure you set the font to Times New Roman size 12, the line spacing to double, eliminate extra space between paragraphs, place the *current* date in your standard heading (not the date on which you began the assignment), and include a reference list if you are relying on other people's ideas and data. You are strongly recommended to visit the Writing Center to improve the quality of your academic writing. You can [visit their website](#) to schedule a free appointment, to which you should bring a copy of the assignment and your current draft. Note that all work you submit is for public readership. If you would prefer anything you submit to remain private, let me know separately as you submit it; however, I hope we will develop a culture of mutual critique and inspection throughout the course.

## **The Writing Process:**

The writing process we will develop in this course is divided into several discrete steps. One of the main goals over the semester is to refine your approach to writing, which will involve both strengthening the aspects that have been most useful for you in past scholarly work and adopting new techniques borrowed from instructional staff, classmates, and the authors whose work we read. We will focus extensive attention on the *metacognitive* dimensions of this process—that is, an explicit reflection on how our thinking works—but the writing process also involves the submission of tangible products to be submitted according to the course schedule listed below. Here is a preview of what each of the major components entails, some of which you will repeat in other courses, while others are unique to Expos and serve as support and training you will not find elsewhere in the same format:

### **Response Paper(s)**

For each of the three main assignments, you will produce either one or two "papers" that serve as a warm-up exercise to generate ideas, gauge how you are preparing for the full-length paper, and offer feedback early in the writing process. The length and amount of time you spend on these assignments will vary, from a couple paragraphs to an intensive literature review requiring significant consultation of library resources. In all cases, we will introduce the aims and expectations of these exercises in class, and much of our time in class will be to prepare for and work through issues raised in their production.

### **Draft Cover Letter**

Attached to your first draft of each essay is a short letter, professionally written and formatted, that introduces the key ideas you introduce in the paper and the problems you are still struggling to address. The purpose of this letter is to invite critical reflection on your own writing process: what went well in the draft and what you plan to focus on in your revisions. It also serves as an entryway to the questions and points to be raised in class conversations, workshops, and conferences.

## **Draft**

You will then compose an initial *full draft* of your paper. It should meet all the requirements for the assignment (length, sources, citations, etc.). Incompleteness at this stage will provide less material for the editorial process, and you will receive better feedback if you compose this assignment as though you were submitting it for a grade. (It will also reduce the amount of extra work you have to complete in the coming weeks.) While you will not receive a letter grade at this stage, you will have extensive written feedback, which we can clarify and expand on during conferences and office hour meetings.

## **Workshops and Conferences**

We will spend a portion of some class meetings workshoping several of your drafts. Each student (and I) will have his or her work shared with the class at some point in the semester (a draft of one of the three major assignments or response papers), and on days when we are conducting workshops, you will be expected to have read and annotated the assigned drafts as the primary task before coming to class. With these examples, we will suggest ways to structure the ideas more clearly, eliminate confusion readers may face, and anticipate potential weaknesses in the argumentation. This constructive feedback will be invaluable for the author, as well as provide inspiration for others to incorporate into their own writing. Additionally, while you may meet with me anytime during office hours or by appointment, you must sign up for a formal “conference” meeting after you receive feedback on your drafts of the Unit I and Unit III essays. These twenty-minute conversations will step through your plans for revision and offer an opportunity to ask questions about the feedback and your writing. (Please come with questions!) You should also plan to take notes during these sessions.

## **Revision Cover Letter**

Once you have finished your revisions, you will compose a new cover letter to accompany your revised draft. Rather than a duplication of your draft cover letter, this document should focus on *how* you have responded to the feedback, classwork, and conversations about your writing. While it does not have to be lengthy, it should specifically lay out how the new version differs from what you previously submitted and how it addresses the criticism you received.

## **Revision**

The final step in the writing process we develop in this course is the revised essay, for which you will receive written feedback and a letter grade. While revision is an inherently iterative process, and you are encouraged to incorporate what you learn in the first two assignments in the third, there are no revisions beyond this step in this course, as our fast-paced schedule does not allow the units to extend indefinitely. Thus, make all the revisions you plan to before submitting, and let me know if you are unclear about what you are doing.

## **Readings:**

As in other courses in the humanities and social sciences, you are expected to come to class having carefully read the assigned materials, including drafts penned by fellow students. Due to our relatively small class size, I expect everyone to contribute something (even if it is small) to discussion at each meeting. If you have not closely read the materials for the day, it will be noticeable, and your engagement grade will be affected. Since many of our readings will be available electronically on Canvas, some

students find it helpful to print them out to annotate while they read and to refer to during class. While you are not *required* to print out all the readings, if you do not have them in front of you during class, I expect you to have taken notes on some of the important passages, and I may call on you to answer questions about them. Nevertheless, I want you to see the readings for this course not as a burden but as a chance to connect with ideas and ways of knowing that may be unfamiliar to you, even if approaching these themes may be difficult at first.

### **Engagement and Collegiality:**

A critically important component of your success in this course can be framed as “engagement and collegiality,” a unique metric for this course that includes elements that sometimes go under the heading of attendance, participation, and/or in-class assignments. Here it encapsulates how seriously you have engaged with the course material and with your classmates during class sessions, not only in formal written submissions. It is much broader than what can be measured in a single assignment with a specific due date. Your mental presence at and participation in each session is a crucial component of this course and your engagement grade. I will assess how thoroughly you have taken advantage of opportunities to speak up, come to office hours, ask thoughtful questions, and respond to your colleagues with meaningful contributions. You cannot earn an A for this component simply by showing up; you must earn it through consistent, careful, thoughtful, and eager engagement in seminar discussions.

At the same time, productive discussion does not exclude taking risks; feel free to try new ideas without fear of being wrong. One of the most important skills we will cultivate this semester is making a habit of bold moves in your thinking. Practically speaking, boldness entails suggesting alternative ideas that you may not be entirely sure about, exposing them to scrutiny along with your own cherished positions and assumptions. In all assignments, you are encouraged to think imaginatively and not always worry about having the “correct” position or interpretation. While you should always strive to support your arguments with good evidence, there is value in testing out explanations that may at first seem counterintuitive or speculative.

### **Tips for Success:**

1. Arrive on time having read and annotated the assigned materials. The content you are expected to learn will come both from reading and activities completed outside of class time and additional material brought out during seminar discussions.
2. Avoid distractions from electronic devices. This course demands your full presence, undistracted by concerns outside the room, and your time in class won’t be worthwhile unless you commit yourself to paying attention to what we are doing. If you are relying on a device during class time for notetaking, you should aim to access only those programs that are immediately relevant to course topics so as not to distract yourself. As a common courtesy, this simple step will also avoid disrupting those around you who will inevitably watch your screens from the periphery.
3. Always have in front of you something with which to write notes. You are free to use whatever medium you prefer, but try to jot down not just what I have to say in class but what your classmates share in discussion.
4. Allow for an atmosphere of respectful academic discourse. This course covers potentially controversial social topics on which many people (including me) have strong opinions. Try your best to debate respectfully and sympathetically, even when you disagree with your classmates or

with me. We want to allow everyone to express his or her perspective in a supportive yet academically critical setting. You may find it helpful to think of our job as to debate *ideas*, not other people.

5. Ask questions about anything (terms, concepts, history, etc.) you do not know or are unsure of. Even if it seems like a silly question, chances are that other people have the same uncertainty, and you will help others by asking it. Asking provocative questions about the world and our place in it is one of the key goals of the course.
6. If you have concerns with anything in the course, please see me as soon as possible. Troubles that build over the course of the semester become more difficult to address; it will be much easier to deal with them as early on as possible. I am always available to find a solution that works best for you, regardless of what issues come up.
7. Regularly scheduled office hours are available on a first-come, first-served basis. I will meet with everyone who shows up during my office hours (listed at the top of the syllabus, unless modified by prior email announcement) in order of arrival. If your schedule is limited and you can only meet at a specific time, email me in advance to reserve a spot. You can also send an email to arrange a time outside of my regularly scheduled hours if they don't work for you. I am on campus virtually the entire day on Tuesdays and Thursdays, so I would prefer to meet sometime then, depending on your own schedules. Conferences will be arranged on a sign-up basis with a different schedule posted to Canvas.

### **Religious Observances:**

Any student who faces a conflict between the requirements of the course and the observance of his or her religious faith should contact me as early in the semester as possible. In such event, I will provide reasonable and fair accommodations that do not unduly disadvantage you and allow you to keep abreast of any missed course material.

### **Writing Program Policies:**

The following policies have been adopted by the Harvard College Writing Program as a whole and are not unique to this section (or authored by me):

#### **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. You are expected to notify me ahead of time about those absences unless circumstances make that impossible. If you miss a third class for unexcused reasons, I will ask you to meet with me to discuss your plan for catching up with any missed work, as well as issues that may be affecting your attendance or that might require attention or support from your advisers or from other College resources. If you miss a fourth class, your Resident Dean will be notified 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.

### **Completeness 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 Disability Access Office ahead of time. Please let me know if you are unfamiliar with that process.) The Disability Access 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.

### **Electronic Submissions**

As you send or upload electronic submissions document, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have saved the document in a form compatible with Microsoft Word. 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

### **Deadlines and Extensions**

Expos is a course that builds sequentially: the class exercises and response papers prepare you for the draft; your work in the draft lays the foundation for a strong revision; the skills and strategies you learn in Unit I remain essential in the new challenges of Unit II. Because of this sequential work, keeping up with the course deadlines is necessary to your continued learning. For this reason, I grant extensions only in



exceptional circumstances. As a first-year student, part of what you are learning is how to manage your time, to balance your academic and extracurricular responsibilities, and to build habits of working that allow you to complete long and complex assignments independently. These are challenges that every student in the class faces this semester. However, situations can arise that go beyond these typical first-year challenges. If you find yourself dealing with medical issues, family emergencies, or extraordinary situations that genuinely interfere with your work, please let me know. I won't need to know personal details, but we can meet to make a plan to help you move forward in a reasonable way in light of the circumstances you are facing. In these situations I also urge you to reach out to your Resident Dean, your proctor, or your adviser so that you have the necessary support in all of your courses.

### **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.

### **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 practice 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 other writers and thinkers, 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. Your 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.

In addition to acknowledging how other writers have contributed to your work, doing your work with integrity means developing ideas that are wholly and genuinely yours. For this reason, students are prohibited from using ChatGPT or other generative AI tools for any stage of the writing process in Expos. The reasons for this policy in Expos are important: you discover your ideas in the messy process of drafting and revising them. Engaging with that writing process develops your ability to think clearly, organize that thinking, find appropriate evidence, pursue deeper nuances in and counterarguments to your claims and the evidence you use to present them, and work through alternative positions and evidence. To outsource any of that process to AI robs you of the practice with these skills that will strengthen your thinking; turning to AI essentially means you are giving up *your voice* in an essay, accepting instead an average and generic answer (which is what generative AI produces). In your Expos course, submitting

work as yours that you did not develop or create on your own is a violation of the Harvard College Honor Code.

While the product of an Expos class may be the papers that you write, the broader goal is to strive to become better *thinkers*. The ability to participate independently in important discussions, the confidence to add your voice to challenging topics, the precision of mind to understand when a speaker is credible and should be taken seriously and when that isn't the case—these are all skills you develop through that rigorous thinking process that writing fosters. Allowing generative AI to take the place of that thinking shortchanges your development as a writer, a thinker, and a creative participant in developing ideas. In our class, your classmates and I are eager to hear what *you* have to say.

### **Sharing**

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.

### **Feedback and Conferences**

Feedback is central to Expos. As spelled out in each assignment, you will receive either 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 Argument 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.)

### **Grading:**

You will be evaluated based on the quality of your writing, the degree of improvement throughout the semester, and the value of your participation in our community of inquiry. Your overall course grade will be based on the following calculation:

Unit I Essay: Critiquing Assumptions .....	30%
Unit II Essay: Thinking with Lenses.....	30%
Unit III Essay: Researching a Problem .....	30%
Engagement and Collegiality .....	10%

Your work will be evaluated according to the following scale, as set by the College:

- A..... Excellent (for extraordinary distinction)
- A-
- B+
- B..... Good (for work indicating full engagement)
- B-
- C+
- C..... Satisfactory (for adequate work lacking in some ways)
- C-
- D+
- D..... Unsatisfactory (for work meeting minimal standards)
- D-
- E..... Unworthy of course credit

### **Course Schedule:**

<i>Weekly Theme</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>Reading Due by Start of Class Meeting</i>	<i>Writing Due by Midnight to Canvas</i>
<b>Week 1: Prologue</b>	Tuesday, January 23	None	
	Thursday, January 25	Syllabus  Gordon Harvey, “Elements of Academic Argument”	

<b><u>UNIT I: Critiquing Assumptions</u></b>			
<b>Week 2: Explanation</b>	Tuesday, January 30	Robin Horton, “African Traditional Thought and Western Science. Part I. From Tradition to Science”	
	Thursday, February 1	Robin Horton, “African Traditional Thought and Western Science. Part II. The ‘Closed’ and ‘Open’ Predicaments”	
	Friday, February 2		Unit I Response Paper
<b>Week 3: Epistemologies</b>	Tuesday, February 6	E.E. Evans-Pritchard, <i>Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande</i>	
	Thursday, February 8	Douglas Bafford, “The Allure of Heavenly Mother, from South Korea to South Africa: Epistemological Authority at the World Mission Society Church of God” (Student 0 Draft)	
	Friday, February 9		Unit I Draft
<b>Week 4: Insecurity</b>	Tuesday, February 13	Adam Ashforth, “On Living in a World with Witches: Everyday Epistemology and Spiritual Insecurity in a Modern African City (Soweto)”	
	Thursday, February 15	Student 1 Draft  Student 2 Draft	
<b>Week 5: Interpretation</b>	Tuesday, February 20	Tanya Luhmann, <i>Persuasions of the Witch’s Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England</i>  Student 3 Draft	

	Thursday, February 22	Student 4 Draft  Student 5 Draft	
	Friday, February 23		Unit I Revision
<b><u>UNIT II: Thinking with Lenses</u></b>			
<b>Week 6: Participation</b>	Tuesday, February 27	Stanley Tambiah, <i>Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality</i>	
	Thursday, February 29	Douglas J. Falen, <i>African Science: Witchcraft, Vodun, and Healing in Southern Benin</i>	
	Friday, March 1		Unit II Response Paper
<b>Week 7: Fear</b>	Tuesday, March 5	Luise White, <i>Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa</i>	
	Thursday, March 7	Nicky Falkof, “‘Satan Has Come to Rietfontein’: Race in South Africa’s Satanic Panic”	
	Friday, March 8		Unit II Draft
<b>Week 8: Adjudication</b>	Tuesday, March 19	Peter Geschiere, “Witchcraft and the Limits of the Law: Cameroon and South Africa”	
	Thursday, March 21	Student 6 Draft  Student 7 Draft	
<b>Week 9: Counterarguments</b>	Tuesday, March 26	Francis B. Nyamnjoh, “Delusions of Development and the Enrichment of Witchcraft Discourses in Cameroon”  Student 8 Draft	
	Thursday, March 28	Student 9 Draft  Student 10 Draft	

	Friday, March 29		Unit II Revision
<b><u>UNIT III: Researching a Problem</u></b>			
<b>Week 10: Sources</b>	Tuesday, April 2	Harvard Guide to Using Sources ("Why Use Sources" and "Using Sources")	
	Thursday, April 4	Robert McCauley, <i>Why Religion Is Natural and Science Is Not</i>	
	Friday, April 5		Unit III First Response Paper (Research Proposal)
<b>Week 11: Belief</b>	Tuesday, April 9	Charles A. Ziegler and Benson Saler, <i>UFO Crash at Roswell: The Genesis of a Modern Myth</i>  Student 11 Draft	
	Thursday, April 11	Eirik Saethre, "Close Encounters: UFO Beliefs in a Remote Australian Aboriginal Community"  Student 12 Draft	
	Friday, April 12		Unit III Second Response Paper (Annotated Bibliography)
<b>Week 12: Cosmology</b>	Tuesday, April 16	Michael Herzfeld, "Cosmologies"	
	Thursday, April 18	Christine Garwood, <i>Flat Earth: The History of an Infamous Idea</i>  Student 13 Draft	
	Friday, April 19		Unit III Draft
<b>Week 13: Narration</b>	Tuesday, April 23	Student 14 Draft  Student 15 Draft	

<b>Exam Week: Epilogue</b>	Friday, May 10		Unit III Revision
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**\*\*\* NB: This schedule and syllabus are subject to change as we move through the semester. \*\*\***

*Source for Image on First Page: Cover of E.E. Evans-Pritchard's Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande, London: Clarendon Press.*