



Everyday Feminisms

Literature, Theory, Pop Culture

COURSE SITES



CANVAS



These days, scholar Sarah Banet-Weiser notes in her 2018 study *Empowered: Popular Feminism and Popular Misogyny*, “it feels as if everywhere you turn there is an expression of feminism – on a T-shirt, in a movie, in the lyrics of a pop song, in an inspirational Instagram post, in an award ceremony” (1). Yet if its ubiquity has grown in the last half decade or so, bolstered by activist movements that have gained traction on and offline, feminism is neither a new phenomenon nor a singular one. Indeed, the idea of feminism continues to evolve as activists, academics, and regular women alike contemplate and debate what it means, what it does, and where it meets its limits. In this course, you’ll study a small but illustrative range of responses to these lines of inquiry, encountering modes of feminist expression that extend across various genres and considering how they might relate to your everyday lives. In doing so, you’ll probe ideas and ask questions about intersectionality, objectification, embodiment, and power that have long been central to, and often contested within, feminist thinking. We’ll start the course with literature, and you’ll analyze feminist short stories by contemporary authors. Next, you’ll engage a critical debate in feminist theory. Finally, you’ll pursue independently designed research essays and related group capstone projects that return to Banet-Weiser’s discussion of “popular feminism” (and its detractors) to interrogate how pop culture – markets and communicates feminism to a public audience. **No prior feminist knowledge is required to take this class & all genders are welcome!**

DR. ALEXANDRA GOLD

she/her

- **Class Times:** Tu/Th 10:30am & 12pm
- **Office:** 1 Bow Street, Suite 250, Room 212
- **Office Hours:** Thursdays 3-5pm (in-person)
OR
by Zoom appointment (other days)
- **Class Mascot:** Zorro the Aussie → → →



Course Writing Goals

- recognize that writing is *thinking*, and that good writing (and thinking) are processes
- develop thesis-based, evidence-driven analytical arguments with stakes
- analyze various genres of text, including visual media and challenging feminist theory!
- plan, draft, and revise your own written work and assess that of your peers'
- learn how to effectively use a variety of sources and to responsibly avoid plagiarism
- practice organizing complex ideas in a clear, progressive, and persuasive manner
- cultivate writing style by carefully considering sentence- and word-level decisions

Unit 1 focuses on three literary short stories by contemporary authors Roxane Gay, Carmen Maria Machado, and Jenny Zhang. You'll write text-based analytical arguments that raise and respond to the questions these stories raise about women's embodiment, sexuality, power, and more, and consider how they speak to [intersectionality](#): the connections between gender, race, sexuality, class, age, ability and other axes of oppression.



** DIFFICULT MATERIAL **

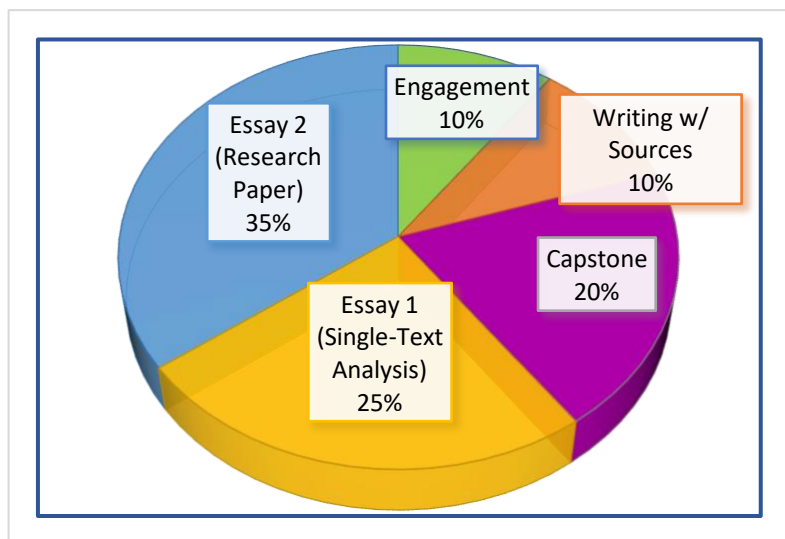
Our readings occasionally cover distressing material, especially around sexual and racial violence. If this is or becomes a concern for you for, please speak with me at any point to come up with an alternative plan. I want to this class to be a welcome environment for all!

Unit 2 starts with feminist theory, focusing on Laura Mulvey's articulation of the "male gaze" and bell hooks' intersectional response to it. You'll consider how scholars build their own arguments and respond to others, and then you'll have the chance to do the same in a short two-paragraph assignment. Engaging scholarly sources in this way also helps prepare to you to write final essays, which you'll independently design and research. Your final papers will return to Banet-Weiser's idea of "popular feminism," focusing on how feminism and intersectionality plays out (or fails to) in contemporary television, music, film, art, and even social media.



Unit 3 (Capstone) asks you to "re-mediate" your research essays, making the knowledge you've produced accessible to a larger, public audience. The two-part capstone project asks you to **work in groups** to curate a social media platform that highlights aspects of your research. **A final, additional class meeting during reading period will be held for your groups to present your work.**

ASSIGNMENTS



Your Writing (70%)

Major Essays 1&2 (60%) This course requires **two major essays** — a single-text analysis (25%) and a research paper (35%) — each with **one preliminary draft**. Drafts do not receive grades, but they receive significant audio-visual feedback. We'll also meet to discuss your drafts in **individual or group conferences**. The revised, final version of each paper is graded and receives written comments.

Engaging Sources (10%) Between essays, you'll complete a **short (two paragraph) writing assignment** that asks you to engage with the feminist theory you've read. This assignment allows you to develop your ability to work with academic sources in advance of your research paper.

Group Capstone (20%)

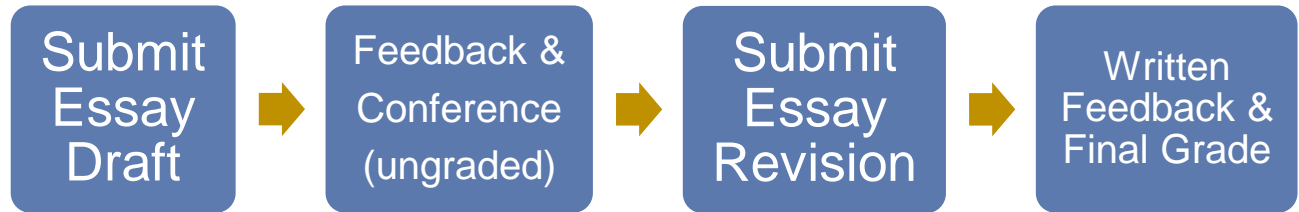
In lieu of a third major essay, you'll complete a **2-part group capstone assignment**. This is a hands-on opportunity to think about how to communicate with a broader audience by translating the written research you've done for your final essay into a different, interactive media genre. In **Part 1**, you'll produce a social media "re-mediation" of your research projects, creatively synthesizing what you've learned in a new public-facing format. In **Part 2**, you'll then give a brief group presentation on your project. **NOTE: The capstone, including one additional class meeting, will be completed over Reading Days & Final Exam period.**

Engagement (10%)

Participating in discussions as an active listener and contributor can clarify your understanding of an assigned text and consider others' perspectives. This requires showing up to classes prepared as well as contributing to small and large group activities, including draft and peer review workshops: opportunities to share works-in-progress and to refine your revision skills by collaborating on fellow students' work. **! know some students struggle to participate in discussion, but there are many ways to participate in and engage with the class community.** I'm happy to discuss individual strategies.

Response Papers are crucial facet of the Expos curriculum. Your timely, thorough completion of them will count toward your overall course engagement. These can allow you to be an active class participant and prepare you to successfully write your essays. In each major essay unit, you'll complete one or two ungraded response exercises, some of which will be turned in for comments from me and some of which will be used for in-class activities like peer review. The better you complete these, the easier the writing process will be!

Check out some recent capstone work [here](#), [here](#), & [here](#)



A / A-

Essays are excellent (*not* perfect) and complete, with a fully realized beginning, middle and end. They skillfully express an argumentative thesis and adeptly handle the core “Elements of Academic Writing.” “A-” essays do this to a less successful degree, with notable shortcomings in one or more Elements.

B+ / B / B-

Essays are strong and succeed in many ways but present a few key “Elements” that need significant work. While these essays offer an engaging and intelligent discussion, certain aspects don't yet live up to their full potential. “B+” essays might, for instance, offer a partial thesis and some good work with evidence, but need substantial development in both areas and/or present shortcomings in others.

C+ / C / C-

Essays possess potential but are flawed in their current form, with several areas that require substantial improvement. These essays require significant, further revision in all or most “Elements.”

This schema overlaps with other Expos courses and the Harvard Grading Policy.

Essay Feedback & Revision

Feedback is central to Expos. All writers benefit from having an attentive reader respond to their work: identifying strengths; noting questions and reactions to help you develop your ideas further; and offering clear assessment of your revised work. (Feedback also comes in other forms, such as peer review or class workshop.) **The goal of feedback is that you learn to incorporate strong writing principles into your own thinking and your revision, so that eventually you are making more independent decisions in your essays.** To that end, and for equity reasons, I will only respond to full essay drafts *once* and allow each student *one* post conference follow-up to discuss more targeted questions or concerns. After that, you are welcome and encouraged to draw on resources like the Writing Center as you develop your skills. Everyone gets substantial time for revision because your revisions *should be substantial*. Real revision requires real time; **revising a final paper the day it's due isn't a strong revision strategy.**



GRADING

<i>Grading IS</i>	<i>Grading IS NOT</i>
<p>A specific metric</p> <p>A measure of how successfully you've met the criteria for a specific writing & thinking task.</p>	<p>The rule</p> <p>A measure of self-worth, intellectual potential, or a determinant of your future. It is not a measure of effort <i>per se</i> (though sustained effort can pay off).</p>
<p>Additive</p> <p>You <i>earn</i> points based on how well you've mastered each assignment's core skills through the writing and revision processes.</p>	<p>Deductive</p> <p>You don't <i>lose</i> points from a singular, idealized paper. Each student strives toward their own "ideal" paper based on their drafting/revision processes.</p>
<p>More stringent with each assignment</p> <p>The skills you learn in essay 1 should be implemented and improved upon in essay 2, etc. Assignments are designed to increase in complexity, but the core skills will ideally improve through practice.</p>	<p>Always linear</p> <p>Writing is not always an even process. Some assignment types may be more familiar or exciting to you than others. Some weeks/months may be more challenging personally or academically than others.</p>
<p>A reflection of original work</p> <p>Original work derives from your own voice and insights to engage and educate readers. It may be informed by appropriate sources of collaboration: class discussion, the writing center, and responsible use of sources; it is free of plagiarism.</p>	<p>A reflection of perfection/failure</p> <p>No paper is perfect, even those by the best writers. No paper is a failure, unless it is not turned in or it is plagiarized, which might incur disciplinary action. Each draft and revision are steps in a writing and research process that will continue beyond this class.</p>
<p>Criteria-Based</p> <p>The core Elements central to each essay are noted on the assignment sheet; grades indicate how well you meet them. While content and quality of ideas is of course important, this is ultimately a writing class.</p>	<p>Consistent Across Disciplines</p> <p>Different courses, profs, TAs, etc. may have different approaches to grading. Expos courses may prioritize writing criteria that other courses and disciplines do not. Check with your course head or syllabus.</p>

** GRADE CHANGE PROTOCOL **

Because you are accountable for your own work, you determine the grade it receives. If, however, you feel that an earned grade is unfair, you may write a letter responding to my feedback within 1 week of receiving comments, making one *strong argument* for a different grade backed by supporting evidence from your own work. The letter does not guarantee a new grade, but well-supported arguments will be carefully considered.

NOTE: Grade grubbing in office hours and otherwise is both inappropriate and unlikely to result in a better grade.



canvas

All major course documents and assignments are available on and will be turned in via Canvas. Please use only .doc or .docx file formats for submitted work. If you need Word software, it is [freely available here](#). It is your responsibility to ensure that your files are not corrupted or damaged. **I expect that you will turn in all assignments on time.** I strongly advise you to back up all work to a cloud software like [Google Drive](#) or [Dropbox](#).

Additional Support

[Mental Health \(CAHMS\)](#)

[Office for Gender Equity](#)

[Office of BGLTQ+ Life](#)

[Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)

Early & Frequent Communication is Key!

Slack and Canvas will be primary communication hubs for this course, and you are responsible for checking Slack regularly. If you should need to get in touch with me, please send me a DM on Slack or come to office hours to discuss questions or brainstorm ideas. I try to answer all correspondence in a timely manner during **normal weekday hours (9am-5pm)**. If you have a question that might benefit the whole class and that has not already been answered elsewhere, feel free to post it to Slack. **If you have an especially complex, lengthy, or specific questions it's best to set up a quick meeting. I am also happy to arrange meetings outside of regular office hours.** These meetings will likely take place via Zoom. Except in extenuating circumstances, all conversations are confidential.



As a first-year student, you're learning how to manage your time, balance your responsibilities, and build habits of working that allow you to complete long and complex assignments independently. Even so, I recognize that life happens. Each student is therefore allowed **two 'freebie' extensions** to use at any point in the semester, except on the final capstone or on assignments whose late submission would compromise your ability to participate in a class activity (i.e. peer review) or your peers' ability to complete their work (i.e. group draft conference). **If you find yourself dealing with extenuating circumstances such as medical or family emergencies that require additional extensions, please let me know as soon as possible to devise a plan.**

