

Expos 20:



Signs of the Times

We are encouraged to “live in the moment,” we are warned about the dangers of forgetting the past, and yet we tend to spend most of our waking hours working towards the promise of some future reward. Is there a *right* way to think about (and live our lives in) time? How can time be saved or wasted, and do we owe more to the past or to the future? In this course, we’ll explore the concept of “time” from three broad perspectives: from the way we use storytelling to give meaning to sequences of events, to the way we think about the past’s relationship to the present, and, finally, the ways we try (and fail) to maximize our time, or to cheat it.

In **Unit 1**, we’ll explore timing as a plot device, and think in particular about our fascination with *bad* timing as a force that can shape whole lives. Students will engage with short fiction (by Ted Chiang and others) as well as contemporary film and television. In **Unit 2**, we’ll turn our attention to the force that the past exerts over our present world—and the force that the present exerts over our relationship to the past. We’ll question the effects of a justice system that values precedent—or past decisions—in the upholding of new laws (as in the recent *Dobbs v. Jackson* ruling), consider how we can reckon with the crimes of past generations, and try to understand our role in preventing the catastrophes of the future. We’ll end the semester, in **Unit 3**, by returning to Benjamin Franklin’s famous maxim: “Remember that time is money.” In this unit, we’ll examine the ways that time gets treated as a precious commodity or asset—something that can be bought, maximized, or wasted. Students will choose from a range of topics, including but not limited to: productivity apps, AI and the future of work, and the rise of “FOMO,” and embark on an independent research project that explores their topic from an original perspective.

This course is designed to give students the opportunity to make arguments about the topics that matter to them, and to have a say in the kinds of arguments they make. Each unit offers students a range of materials (from short stories, personal essays, court documents, marketing campaigns, and viral media) from which they can choose, and our class conversations will develop collaboratively out of students’ chosen topics.

### MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS & DEADLINES

Below are the draft and revision deadlines for the three papers you will write this semester. **All deadlines are 5pm EST unless otherwise noted.**

### PAPER 1: CLOSE ANALYSIS (3-4 pages)

**Draft:** Friday, February 10

**Revision:** Friday, February 24

### PAPER 2: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS (5-7 pages)

**Draft:** Friday, March 24

**Revision:** Friday, April 7

### PAPER 3: RESEARCH PAPER (8-10 pages)

**Draft:** Monday, April 24 at 10pm

**Revision:** TBA

Prior to each paper draft, students will be asked to submit short, ungraded “pre-draft assignments” (previous assignments have included submitting a draft thesis, a draft introductory paragraph, or list of quotations along with a few sentences of analysis). They are designed to get you started on the writing process early and to let you practice new skills that will help you with your papers. I will provide these deadlines at the start of the semester.

## WRITING GOALS

The most important thing you will work on this semester is your own writing. Our three units will build on each other in their content and in the writing skills you will develop. This course is based on three premises:

**Learning to write is learning to think.** In this course we don’t believe in great ideas that can’t be expressed or put into words. Writing clearly and cogently is how we distill our thoughts and develop our ideas. This also means you should expect your thinking to deepen, grow, and even change course as you engage with the writing process – plan your time accordingly!

**Writing is a conversation.** As we’ll see from the materials we read in our course, we live in a world where people engage each other in written arguments. When you produce your essays, you will also write to an audience – whether it’s your peers, me or even other critics. And your peers and your preceptor will engage you in a conversation, in the form of feedback in workshops and conferences.

**Writing is an ongoing process.** From first-year students up to tenured faculty, every writer at Harvard is constantly drafting, revising, redrafting and revising further. This continued process is the primary work of this class, and is the main way your writing grows stronger. In this course, I will also ask you to reflect on this process by writing cover letters for each essay where you carefully consider your aspirations for your paper and describe any difficulties you’re encountering so far.

## GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

### Accessing Materials

You will not need to purchase any texts for this course. All texts will be circulated in class and made available online. You will occasionally print material for this class, so please plan accordingly. On some class days, 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.

### Additional Course Materials

- Harvard Guide to Using Sources, available online at <http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu>
- Exposé, the magazine of student writing (available online or as handouts in class)

### Grades

The majority of your grade comes from your three essays, according to the following breakdown: Paper 1 = 20%; Paper 2 = 30%; Paper 3 = 35%. 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 15% of your grade represents your completion of all pre-draft assignments and all cover letters, your participation in class discussion and conferences, and the care with which you respond to fellow students' work on peer review exercises (showing up to class and making the occasional comment is not sufficient grounds for an A in participation). Additionally, unexcused absences from class will negatively impact your participation grade (see attendance policy below).

### 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. 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.

### **Harvard College Writing Program Policy on Completion of Work**

Because your Expos course is a planned sequence of writing, you must write all of the assigned essays to pass the course, and you must write them within the schedule of the course (not in the last few days of the semester after you have fallen behind). If you are unable to complete your work on time due to medical or family issues, please contact me before the deadline to discuss both the support you might need as well as a possible new arrangement for your deadline. Communication about your situation is essential so that we can determine how best to help you move forward. If we have not already discussed your situation and you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of an essay by the final due date in that essay unit, you will receive a letter reminding you of these requirements and asking you to meet with me and/or your Resident Dean to make a plan for catching up on your work. The letter will also specify the new date by which you must submit the late work. If you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of the essay by this new date, and if you have not documented a medical problem or been in touch with your Dean about other circumstances, you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and given a failing grade.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you think you will require some flexibility in deadlines or participation in the course for reasons of a documented disability, please schedule a meeting with me early in the semester so we can discuss appropriate accommodations. (To be eligible for such accommodations, you need to have provided documentation to the [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.

### **Policy on 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 1 remain essential in the new challenges of Unit 2. 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.

## Policy on Electronic Submissions

You will submit your work electronically this semester through our Canvas site. 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 (.doc or .docx). Please do not submit PDFs as they are more difficult for me to edit and annotate. It is also your responsibility to ensure that the file you are sending is not corrupted or damaged. If I cannot open or read the file you have sent, the essay will be subject to a late penalty.

## Policy on 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.)

There are also important reasons that I schedule one draft conference per student for each essay. Conferences are important opportunities for thinking together about questions in your argument and strategies for revision; during conference week I am meeting with all 15 students and attempting to offer the same level of intensive work with everyone. If I were to grant a second full conference to any student, for reasons of equity I would need to offer a second meeting with everyone, and it is not possible to schedule a second round of meetings in an already busy unit.

## Policy on Collaboration

As in many academic situations, our Expos class will be a setting that involves frequent collaboration—we will develop ideas together through class discussion, peer review, and draft

workshops. The following kinds of collaboration are permitted in this course: developing or refining ideas in conversation with other students and through peer review of written work (including feedback from Writing Center tutors). It is a form of academic integrity to acknowledge the impact someone had on your essay; you can do this in a footnote at the beginning of the paper. As stated in the *Student Handbook*, “Students need not acknowledge discussion with others of general approaches to the assignment or assistance with proofreading.” However, all work submitted for this course must be your own: in other words, writing response papers, drafts or revisions with other students is expressly forbidden.

### **Policy on Academic Integrity**

One of the essential elements of the Expos curriculum is the work we do on effective source use, appropriate acknowledgement of sources, and expectations for citing sources in academic writing. In each unit, we will work on strategies for working with the ideas of other authors and sources, and for developing your own ideas in response to them. Most forms of academic writing involve building on the ideas of others, contributing ideas of your own, and signaling clearly for readers where each idea comes from. This complex relationship with sources is part of our work through the whole semester, and you should always feel free to ask me questions about this material.

As we become familiar with the expectations of an academic audience, we will also work on strategies to avoid errors in citation and unintentional plagiarism. As with all your courses, the expectation in Expos is that *all the work that you submit for this course must be your own. That work should not make use of outside sources unless such sources are explicitly part of the assignment.* Any student submitting plagiarized work is eligible to fail the course and to be subject to review by the Honor Council, including potential disciplinary action.

### **Policy on Course Materials**

The work we do together in class—discussions, exercises, workshopping essays—is intended for the members of our class. Students are not allowed to record class and are not allowed to post video or audio recordings or transcripts of our class meetings. (Students needing course recordings as an accommodation should contact the [Disability Access 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.