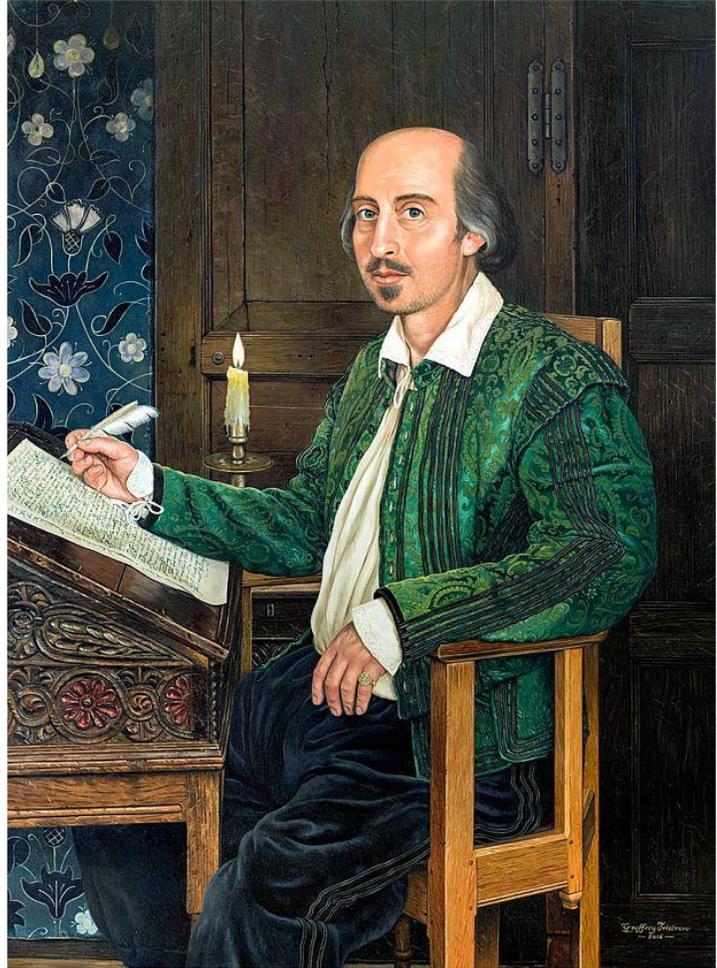
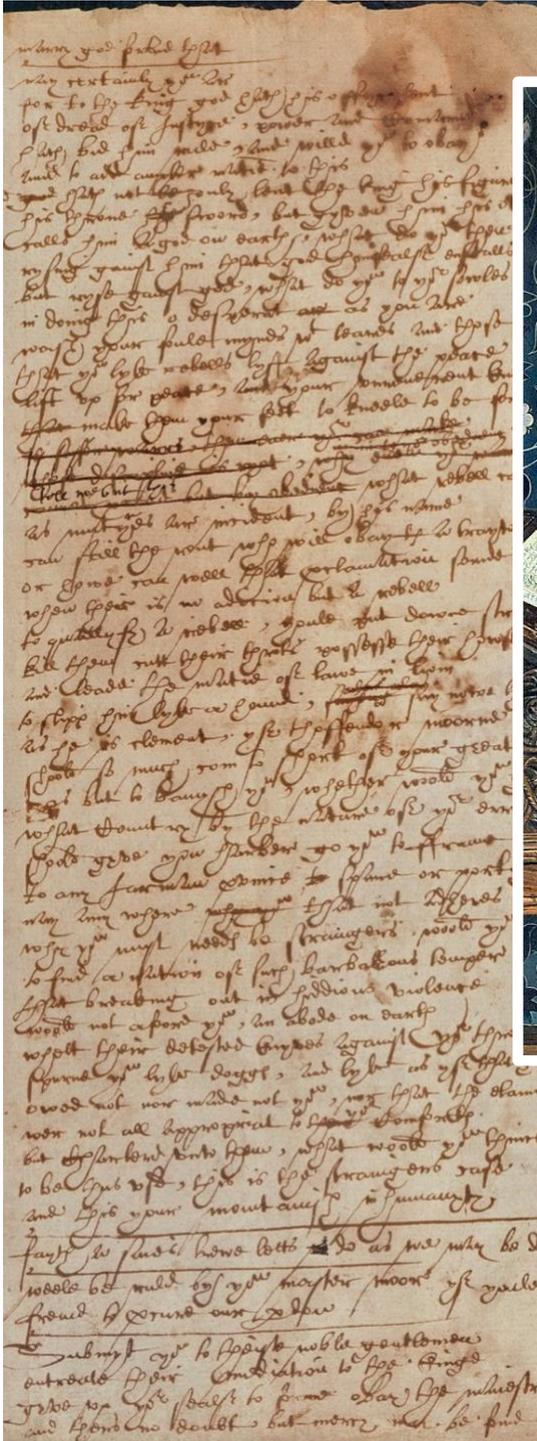


# Why SHAKESPEARE?



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Zoom Office Hours: Mon., 1-2 pm, and Wed., 9-10 am  
Course Location: CGIS Knafel K109  
Course Time: Tues. and Thurs., 9 and 10:30 am  
Course Website: <https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/98862>

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to the demands and conventions of academic reading and writing. It focuses on analyzing texts, building effective arguments, and using evidence and secondary source material. Instruction on the stages of the writing process, from prewriting exercises through rough drafts and revisions, forms a key part of the curriculum. Students applying to the undergraduate program at the Extension School must complete this course, but it is open to any student interested in gaining an understanding of academic writing.



## SECTION DESCRIPTION

Shakespeare, we have been told, is extremely important. You may agree or disagree, but do you know why Shakespeare matters to so many people? Why did England choose Shakespeare as its literary figurehead? Why does every high school in the US assign Shakespeare? Why did the British government decide to pay £1.5 million to have his works translated into Mandarin?

In this section, Shakespeare lovers and haters alike are invited to consider the question of Shakespeare's popularity by looking into the relationship between his methods of artistic creation and the values of the modern world. We'll track the playwright's afterlives throughout time, around the world, across the academic disciplines, into new artistic forms from painting and music to film and social media, from colonizers and NAZIs to civil rights movements and prison theater, and in light of identity categories such as gender, race, sexuality, class, religion, disability, and the intersections among them. We'll practice thinking and writing in different academic disciplines—from literary studies and sociology to economics and computer science—by asking how and why Shakespeare shows up across the concerns and cultures of modern life.

We'll begin with the most famous artwork of the past millennium, *Hamlet*, about a young scholar (like you) who finds the injustice of the world overwhelming (like you?). Then, with an eye on the recent *West Side Story*, we'll ask why the modern world keeps retelling *Romeo and Juliet*. We'll go backward from Shakespeare into history—his source, Arthur Brooks' *Romeus and Juliet*—and forward into versions set in Mexico, America, China, and India, adaptations in ballet and on Twitter, and retellings done with zombies, gnomes, Taylor Swift, and LGBTQ+ life. Finally, we'll ask, "Why Shakespeare?" and entertain answers ranging from the skeptical (Shakespeare is a dead white male that other dead white males have used to promote the values of dead white males) to the euphoric (Shakespeare is universal; Shakespeare invented the human).

## REQUIRED TEXTS

*Harvard Guide to Using Sources*, available online at <http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu>.

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Edited by A.R. Braunmiller. Penguin, 2016. [[Alternate Digital Edition](#)]

Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. Edited by Gordon McMullan. Norton, 2016. [[Alternate Digital Edition](#)]

Course materials available online at our Canvas site.

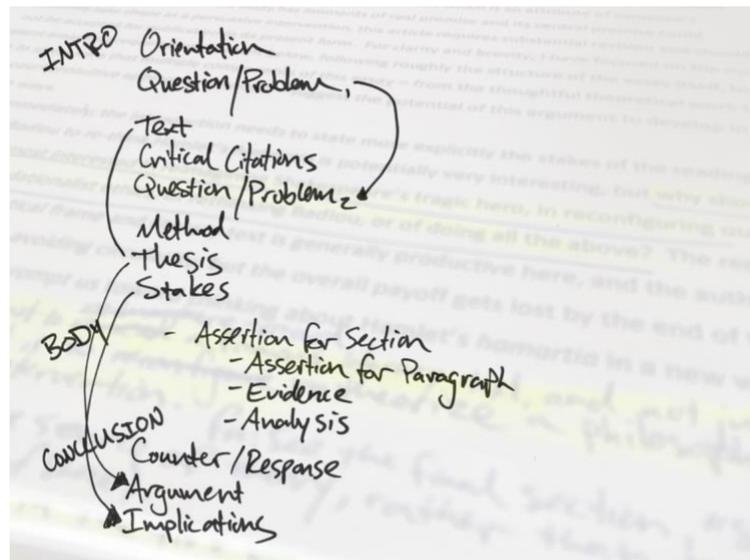
As you can see, the texts you need to purchase for the class are few. You should also have access to a writing handbook when questions of grammar, mechanics, or style arise. If you don't own one already, you might consider:

Hacker, Diana, and Nancy Sommers. *Rules for Writers*. Tenth edition. Macmillan, 2022.

## COURSE ARGUMENT

Certain strategies of interpretation and argument are valuable to your life at Harvard and beyond regardless of the field you choose to pursue. In our course, we'll discuss these strategies using terms such as *thesis* (your main insight or idea about a text or topic) and *what's at stake* (why someone might want to read an essay or need to hear your thesis argued). Insofar as Expos 20, no less that the papers you'll write in it, is an argument, let's ask, first of all, "What's at stake in Expos 20? What's the thesis of Expos 20?"

What's at stake is nothing less than your success at Harvard and in life. You need to know how to write good papers because the paper has emerged as the primary vehicle for scholarly communication. Scholars "talk" to one another through papers, and you'll "talk" to your professors through papers (among other ways). After graduation, you'll continue to "talk" to friends and colleagues through your writing, even if you're not writing formal academic papers, because you'll present your ideas using the skills of interpretation and argument discovered in our course and mastered in later courses.



The thesis of this course, then, is that writing is a prerequisite for the successful pursuit of knowledge. Understood as the study of modes of interpretation and argument, writing is needed

regardless of the discipline or field you plan to pursue because writing equips you with the forms and strategies of thought and speech that you'll use to investigate and discuss material specific to your academic endeavors, whatever they may be. As such, our course will attend to the writing you'll be doing beyond Expos. We'll explore common principles of academic writing – such as *thesis* and *what's at stake* – which will be a part of any of the writing you'll do at Harvard. At the same time, different occasions and disciplines call for different approaches and conventions, so we'll also examine how those conventions have different inflections in different disciplines.

There are three pillars of our course:

- *Writing is Thinking*: While “writing” is traditionally understood as the expression of thought, we'll redefine “writing” as the very thought process itself. Writing is not what you do with thought. Writing is thinking.
- *Writing is a Process*: Both the interpretation that forms the basis of an argument and the presentation of that argument in a paper need to be done in a sequence of steps, each phase building off the prior.
- *We Write Best in Conversation with Others*: In contrast to the cliched image of the solitary writer sitting alone in their candle-lit study and solving all of the world's problems, writing is best done with lots of input from others as ideas develop, are tested out, and strengthened.

#### GRADES

Your grade for this course will come from these four categories, according to this breakdown:

- Unit 1: 30%
  - Response Papers: 5%
  - Essay: 25%
- Unit 2: 30%
  - Response Papers: 5%
  - Essay: 25%
- Unit 3: 30%
  - Response Papers: 5%
  - Essay: 25%
- Enthusiastic Engagement: 10%

The standard for each essay becomes more demanding as we progress (since you are building on certain fundamental skills and techniques with each essay). “Enthusiastic engagement” means attending class, staying in good communication with your teacher, visiting office hours to develop papers, and contributing to discussions and workshops with energy and investment.

## COURSE UNITS

Our course will consist of the following three units, each devoted to a distinct kind of essay that you'll be asked to write at Harvard or elsewhere. A day-by-day calendar is available on the website.



### Unit One: Single-Source Essay (Weeks 1-5)

In Unit 1, you'll write a single-source analysis of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. While it famously portrays ghosts, revenge, and tragedy, *Hamlet* also implicates several areas where you might find your own interests: college, love, gender, misogyny, friendship, theater, philosophy, theology, injustice, comedy, depression, death, self-doubt, mental illness, white privilege, overbearing parents, existential angst, international politics, the classics, the afterlife, the meaning of it all. Certainly done in fields other than literary studies, a single-source essay looks at a single text (or idea, event, or object) to identify, present, and discuss some interesting or problematic aspect of that text (or idea, event, or object) without recourse to any other texts. It will be you and Hamlet. Your job is to explain something about the text and make it matter to your readers. One of our central concerns will be originality: you'll learn some strategies for saying something new about this widely known text by embracing your perspective as a thinker and our moment in history.



### Unit Two: Multi-Source Essay (Weeks 6-10)

Your second assignment is to write a multi-source essay involving *Romeo and Juliet*, a play about love and hate, in conversation with some recent texts. You'll have the option to write a "lens essay" (using a theoretical text to help explain an issue) with Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2013); or a "comparative essay" (looking at two or more related texts created in different contexts) with a series of *Romeo and Juliet* adaptations: Cantinflas's *Romeo y Julieta* (1943), *West Side Story* (1961), Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996), Norman's *Shakespeare in Love* (1998), Swift's "Love Story" (2008), Marion's *Warm Bodies* (2010), The Royal Shakespeare Company's *Such Tweet Sorrow* (2010), Brown's *Private Romeo* (2011), Asbury's *Gnomeo & Juliet* (2011), Bhansali's *Ram-Leela* (2013), Gong's *These Violent Delights* (2020), and Spielberg's *West Side Story* (2022). As we move toward the big question of our course, *Why Shakespeare?*, our central concern in this unit will be the relationship between the past and the present: how can new texts help us analyze old ones, and how can old texts like Shakespeare's plays help us better understand the here and now?



### Unit Three: Research Paper (Weeks 11-15)

Unit 3 will teach you how to write a good research paper, meaning that you engage with other scholars and make your own original contribution to our understanding of an issue. We'll pose the big question of the course: *Why Shakespeare?* You'll learn to make a research question manageable by focusing it, perhaps using your own cultural background or intellectual strengths. Why Shakespeare ... in China? in psychology? in the American Revolution? in Disney films? as commodified kitsch? in post-colonial Africa? in post-#MeToo America? You'll have lots of freedom to select your topic, and be responsible for researching it. But your paper will be, at its core, about the relationship between the way Shakespeare created his art and the values of those who created and/or sustain his reputation. As such, your paper will provide a close reading of both Shakespeare's artistic style (as you understand it from your reading of one of our assigned plays, or one that you seek out on your own) and the values of a specific culture (as you understand it from your independent research), all to articulate why Shakespeare is (or isn't) popular in a given cultural context. In this unit, we'll focus on the responsible use of sources in academic writing, but also how to transfer academic ideas into public writing done for newspapers, magazines, and online venues. You could very well exit the class with a publication to your name.

## SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Week 1	Begin <i>Hamlet</i>
Week 2	Finish <i>Hamlet</i> <i>Response Paper 1.1: Problems and Questions</i> due Tues., Feb. 1 <i>Response Paper 1.2: Evidence and Analysis</i> due Thurs., Feb. 3
Week 3	<i>Response Paper 1.3: Implications</i> due Tues., Feb. 8 <i>Response Paper 1.4: A Basic Outline</i> due Thurs., Feb. 10
Week 4	<i>Essay 1: A Single-Source Essay (Draft)</i> due Sun., Feb. 13 <i>Workshop 1</i> on Tues., Feb. 15 <i>Conferences</i> Feb. 15-18
Week 5	<i>Essay 1: A Single-Source Essay (Revision)</i> due Tues., Feb. 22 Read <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> <i>The Northman</i> Mini-Unit
Week 6	Read Brooke, <i>Romeus and Juliet</i> Read Hutcheon, <i>A Theory of Adaptation</i>
Week 7	Read <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> Adaptation <i>Response Paper 2.1: Comparative Analysis</i> due Tues., March 8 <i>Response Paper 2.2: Text and Context</i> due Thurs., March 10
Week 8	Spring Break
Week 9	<i>Essay 2: A Multi-Source Essay (Draft)</i> due Sun., March 20 <i>Workshop 2</i> on Tues., March 22 <i>Conferences</i> March 22-25
Week 10	<i>Response Paper 2.3: A Detailed Outline</i> due Sun., March 27 <i>Essay 2: A Multi-Source Essay (Revision)</i> due Tues., March 29 Unit 3 Readings
Week 11	<i>Response Paper 3.1: An Empirical Report</i> due Tues., April 5
Week 12	<i>Response Paper 3.2: An Annotated Bibliography</i> due Tues., April 12 <i>Response Paper 3.3: An Abstract</i> due Thurs., April 14
Week 14	<i>Essay 3: A Research Paper (Draft)</i> due Sun., April 17 <i>Workshop 3</i> on Tues., April 19 <i>Conferences</i> April 19-22
Week 15	<i>Essay 3: A Research Paper (Revision)</i> due Sun., May 8

## HOW THE COURSE WORKS

Each unit will consist of some assigned readings, some in-class activities, some response papers, a draft of a paper, a conference with me about that draft, a workshop with the whole class, and a revised paper. 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.

*Class Participation:* One of the benefits of Expos is its small class size. That benefit is best realized when every student participates fully in the class; you learn much more from formulating, articulating, and questioning your own thoughts than from simply listening to what others have to say. Our time together is largely devoted to discussion and small-group work. Therefore, you are responsible for being in class, prepared and on time, each time we meet. Being prepared for class means that you have given careful thought to the reading and writing assignments for our class, and that you are ready to offer ideas and questions to open our discussions about Shakespeare. With that in mind, I hope that each of you is especially attuned over the next few months to the ways in which Shakespeare appears in the media, popular culture, daily discourse, etc. If you encounter a compelling or provocative instance of Shakespeare during the semester, please send me an email with a link and few thoughts on how he is being used. We'll incorporate these encounters into our ongoing attempt to develop and refine our sense of Shakespeare.

*Aphorisms:* Throughout the course, I'll refer you at times to some of my [aphorisms](#), which are short little handouts on writing and other topics. These aphorisms are available on my website, and our Canvas calendar will give links to the aphorisms relevant to each day. These aphorisms are meant to be a resource for you to read and review after topics have been introduced in class, when writing your papers, and hopefully far into your future at Harvard and beyond.

*Response Papers:* For each formal paper in Expos, you'll begin with plenty of material from response papers you've done to get you thinking and writing. Each response paper represents a way to break down the final paper assignment into significant steps: reflecting on the readings, brainstorming ideas, preparing to write, reshaping ideas, etc. Hopefully, you'll find that the thinking you do in these response papers informs the way you approach your essay. You'll also find in some cases that you've produced sentences, or even whole paragraphs, that make their way to your final essay. That is one of the intentions of these preparatory papers. When those happy occurrences strike, make the most of them (you're not plagiarizing yourself). At the same time, don't feel beholden to your early response papers (which means that they trap rather than prompt you). You are likely to see your ideas evolve from the response papers to the actual essays, sometimes resulting in substantial changes in focus or argument. In these instances, the response papers have helped you work through less successful ideas on the way to discovering more successful ideas. Unless otherwise noted, all response papers should be typed and properly formatted (you will be submitting them electronically). Please note, too, that response papers may be due on non-class days as indicated on the calendar.

*Conferences:* In each unit of the course, you will submit (in addition to the response papers) a draft and a revised essay. After you have submitted your draft, we will meet to discuss my feedback, which I will have sent to you beforehand. These conferences are our chance to work

together closely on your writing and to focus your work toward revision, and they are most worthwhile when you are the one guiding them. My job during conferences is to talk through your ideas and clarify my feedback, and I'll be in the best position to do this job when you come to our conference prepared. My job during conference is not to give you a *To Do* list that will translate into an "A" on your revision. That approach would not only undermine the holistic nature of persuasive writing; it would also undermine one of the most important goals of Expos, which is to help you go from writing as a student for "the expert" to writing as the expert for your colleagues, i.e., as a teacher. "Being prepared" includes having reviewed your essay, considered your questions, and begun to think about revision possibilities and strategies before we meet. You should bring a copy of your draft (with my marginal feedback and feedback letter) with you to our conferences, and you should plan on taking notes. Experience has shown that the most effective conferences last about 20 minutes, so the slots for each conference will be a cozy 25 minutes long. Since the schedule during conference weeks is so tight, missed conferences may not be rescheduled.

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

*Revision:* Because of the emphasis this course places on revision, the schedule is designed to allow you as much revision time per essay as possible—at least a week after the draft is due, and at least four days after your draft conference. Since you'll have a significant span of days in which to revise, the expectations for this aspect of your work in the course are high.

*Writing Center:* At any stage of the writing process – brainstorming ideas, reviewing drafts, approaching revisions – you may want some extra attention on your essays. The Writing Center offers appointments with trained tutors. I can't stress strongly enough the benefit of the service they provide; regardless of the "strength" or "weakness" of the essay, any piece of writing benefits from further review and a fresh perspective. Due to the jam-packed nature of the week between drafts and revisions, I will unfortunately not be able to provide feedback for "second drafts" leading up to your final revision; however, by the time you are revising your drafts you will have received a number of stages of feedback and can by all means make appointments with the Writing Center! Visit the Writing Center's Web site at <https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu> to make an appointment.

## POLICIES

*Accessibility:* 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.

*Sexual & Gender-Based Harassment Policy/Resources:* The Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy educational and work environment in which no member of the FAS community is, on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity, excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination in any University program or activity. Gender-based and sexual harassment, including sexual violence, are forms of sex discrimination in that they deny or limit an individual's ability to participate in or benefit from University programs or activities. In order to protect the access of all members of our community to the full range of opportunities and resources provided at Harvard, the FAS has developed the following resources: <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/sexual-gender-based-harassment-policyresources>.

*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.

*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.

*Electronic Submissions:* You will submit your work electronically this semester Canvas. The submission must be in a Microsoft Word format or be easily compatible. If you use word processing software such as Pages, for example, be sure to save your work in a Word-friendly format. I'm not able to do marginal comments on PDFs, so you could miss out on important feedback. It is also your responsibility to ensure that the file you send 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. If your submission is late, please submit it to Canvas and then (to make sure I don't miss it) send me an email letting me know that it's been posted.

*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 cover letter or a footnote at the beginning of a 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 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.

*E-mail:* Rather than take up our class time with announcements and administrative arrangements (and there will be many of them), I will use e-mail and Canvas to communicate much of that information. As part of your participation in the course, I ask that you check your e-mail daily. You are responsible for the information I send you, including the feedback to your drafts and revisions (which are easy enough to overlook on an iPhone). Likewise, I make sure to check my email once every weekday for questions from you. Please note, however, that unless prior

arrangements have been made, you should not assume that I will check e-mail later than 5 pm. I can answer most questions within 24 hours, except over the weekend.

*Extensions:* For many class meetings, you will have a response paper due or some assigned reading or writing that is designed to help you develop the essay for that unit. Our work together in class will often be based on those assignments. For those reasons, it is imperative that you turn your work in on time. Of course, even in the most carefully organized semesters, unexpected circumstances can arise – therefore each student in this section is allowed ONE 24-hour extension on a response paper, draft or revision during the semester. To use that 24-hour extension without penalty, you must: contact me before that deadline; submit the late work to our drop box; email me once you've submitted the essay; and be on time with the other work due on that day as well. Otherwise, the work will be counted as late. And beware: taking that one-day extension can mean that you're crunched for time at the beginning of the next unit. Other than that "wild card" extension, all deadlines in the course are firm. Except in the case of medical or family emergency, I do not grant further extensions. Essay drafts or revisions turned in after the deadline will be penalized a third of a letter-grade on the final essay for each day they are late. If you cannot meet a deadline due to a medical emergency, you should contact me right away, and may be required to produce a note from a doctor; in the event of a family emergency, you should contact me right away so we can work out an alternative schedule.

*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 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.

#### A FINAL NOTE

Please send me a quick email when you have finished reading the syllabus. If you have any questions or concerns about the course, please let me know, and I'll either address them in an email response or in class at the beginning of our next session. Even if you don't have any questions or concerns, please send along an email – just so I know we're on the same page about the upcoming semester.