



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

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TO: Students participating in Texts and Ideas: Precollege Workshop

FROM: Professor Vincent Renzi

As the course director for the Texts and Ideas Precollege Workshop, allow me to welcome you to the course and to say how very much we are looking forward to having you with us this summer.

Texts and Ideas is the core humanities course for students in the College of Arts and Science. This special workshop version has been specially designed for student in the Precollege Summer Program. It is offered non-credit and Pass/Fail.

In the *humanities* we study fundamental aspects of our *human condition*—our history, nature, place in the world, and individual and communal identities. Concern for this sort of human self-understanding is at the foundation of higher education in the *liberal arts*—an education that seeks to *free* us from our accidental historical circumstances in order to gain a greater perspective on the possibilities of human existence. In this sense, Texts and Ideas will not only prepare you for the sort of humanistic course work you will encounter in college, but will also begin to help you already now in thinking about what sort of person you want to be and what sort of life you want to lead.

At the same time, study of the humanities will build your ability to read critically, reason soundly, and write effectively. You will encounter some of the seminal texts in the Western humanistic tradition, begin to explore their complexity and enduring influence, and practice the task of writing about them—skills that will serve you well in your later studies, in your future careers, and in your lives as thinking individuals and engaged members of society.

When you get to campus, there will be a coursepack of reading for you to purchase. In the meantime, you can get started with first text for the course: The Book of Genesis. If you don't own a Bible, get a copy of the Hebrew or Christian Scriptures from your local or school library—any translation will do. As you read, think about why this text has been and continues to be of such great importance, both to those within and outside its religious traditions, and also about what it means to encounter this text as a historical artifact and work of literature reflecting enduring aspects of our human experience, rather than as a “holy scripture” within such a tradition.

On behalf of Professors Liza Blake, Veronica Goosey, and myself, let me say again that we look forward to an exciting and engaging course of study together with you this summer. Should you have questions in advance, you can reach me by e-mail at vincent.renzi@nyu.edu.