

Dear Precollege participant,

I am writing this letter to welcome you to the Writing Workshop, offered as part of NYU's Precollege Program, and to give you an overview of what you can expect in your writing section. We believe the work that you will do in this course will be both exciting and challenging, and we know from the responses we have received from students taking the course last summer that it will help you both in your remaining time in high school and as you apply to college. This course is provided as a service to you, a way for you to work at the college level on your writing in small classes with outstanding teachers. Although you will not receive college credit or a letter grade for the course (it's a Pass/Fail course), we believe that it is a chance for you to work on your reading and writing in a supportive way, a chance for you to take some risk without the pressure of achieving a certain grade. If you attend the classes, complete all the assignments, and hand in the final essay, you will receive a Pass for the course.

During the five weeks the class meets, you will write one essay based on your reading of a collection of one writer's essays. Attached to this letter is a list of essayists from whom you can make your choice. You will need to obtain a copy of one of these collections, read the essays, (more specific reading guidelines below) and bring it to the first class with you.

We call this assignment "The Secret-is-in-the-Texts" essay. Your primary reading task will be getting to know the writer's work so that you can make an interpretive claim about it. Your aim in the essay will be to reveal what you believe to be the central facet of the professional writer's imagination, that writer's informing preoccupation as you see it. You might find this preoccupation in the content, in the style; it may be expressed only incidentally--and what you can see might not have been the conscious intention of the writer, but when you point it out, the writer, if he or she were to read your essay, would say, yes, that's there.

I give you this information so you will know where we are headed in the work we will do throughout the five weeks and so that you will have some direction as you browse through the essays in the collection of your choice. In the essay you will write, you will work with only 4-6 of the essays in the collection, so as you read through the collection of essays, mark those essays which seem the strongest to you, the most intriguing, compelling, confusing, perplexing; essays you might want to do more work with. Watch especially to see if there is an essay that seems markedly different from the rest. Come prepared to the first class to discuss why you picked the particular essayist and what intrigues and puzzles you about this essayist. You will have writing assignments and class discussions which will help you do the necessary interpretive work for the essay you will write.

What you need to do between now and then is to get a copy of the essay collection you want to work with. To make your selection, you might want to go to a bookstore or library and browse through the books--or you can go on-line to some place like amazon.com and look at the synopsis of the book, read editorial comments and readers' comments. Most of the books are available in paperback, and at amazon.com, many are available used. This will be your text for the class, and as noted above, we ask that you bring it with you to the first class.

On the last day of class we will ask each of you to submit the essay you have written to your instructor for inclusion in a class publication. We will reproduce these essays and e-mail the collection from each section to all members of the section. We do this to both celebrate and honor the work we have done together.

As I noted above, this course is not graded, nor do you receive college credit. Although you might have concerns about spending time on such a course, and there will be a writing assignment for every class, students who completed the work last summer told us how valuable the course had been in terms of expanding their thinking and developing their reading and writing skills, and in understanding the essay as an art form. In addition, they told us how important it was to participate in a class where they were with other students like themselves who were taking college courses before they had completed high school.

Please note, the Writing Workshop is five weeks long, while the regular summer session course you are taking is six weeks. This allows students to spend their last week concentrating on exams in their selected college course.

If you have questions which you believe cannot wait until the first day of class, you can e-mail me at [darlene.forrest@nyu.edu](mailto:darlene.forrest@nyu.edu).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darlene A. Forrest". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'D' and 'F'.

Darlene A. Forrest  
Director of Faculty Development  
Expository Writing Program

## ESSAY COLLECTIONS 2012

Please select one collection of essays from the following list and read at least four to six essays in the collection, enough to get some sense of this writer's interests and concerns. You will need a hard copy of the book, not an E-reader.

Bring the book to the first class with you. All of these books are available on Amazon.com; some are available used, and many are available in your local bookstore or library. It is important that you buy the book of essays before you arrive, as very few of these collections will be available in either the NYU bookstore or in bookstores in the area.

Andre Aciman -False Papers

Joan Acocella-28 Artists and 2 Saints

James Baldwin-Notes of a Native Son

Joan Didion-Slouching Towards Bethlehem or The White Album

Loren Eiseley -The Star Thrower or other essay collections by Eiseley

E. M. Forster-Two Cheers for Democracy

Jonathan Franzen -Farther Away

Malcolm Gladwell -What the Dog Saw

Adam Gopnik -Through the Children's Gate

Stephen Jay Gould -Bully for Brontosaurus: Reflections in Natural History

Barbara Kingsolver -Small Wonder

Jonathon Lethem -The Disappointment Artist, The Ecstasy of Influence

Salmon Rushdie -Imaginary Homelands

Zadie Smith -Changing My Mind

John Jeremiah Sullivan-Pulphead

Lewis Thomas-The Lives of a Cell or The Medusa and the Snail

Sarah Vowell -The Partly Cloudy Patriot

David Foster Wallace-Consider the Lobster

Jeannette Winterson- Art Objects

Virginia Woolf -The Death of the Moth and Other Essays

