Leigh Anderson, ’19, is a native of Huntington, New York, majoring in Journalism and Cinema Studies with a minor in Spanish at the College of Arts and Science. Along with her interest in human rights, law, and public policy, a debate about immigration in one of her Spanish classes sparked her curiosity about the crisis along the U.S.-Mexico border. She is enthusiastic about political issues, but prides herself on objectivity and considers multiple perspectives before formulating opinions of her own. She is most intrigued by loopholes in our law system that may provide economic protection without staying true to humanitarianism, or vice versa. This curiosity inspired Leigh’s Mercer Street essay “Latin American Immigration and the Drug Crisis.”

Natalie Behrends, ’19, is a Washington, D.C. native majoring in History at the College of Arts and Science. She sees expository writing as a way to communicate the joy she gets from studying the world around her. Writing about the fine line between academia and activism in “Outside the Ivory Tower” pushed her to examine the responsibilities that come along with a scholarly life. As an intern at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, she experienced firsthand how academic interpretation can affect the way that historical narratives stick in public imagination. When not attending NYU or at work in museums, Natalie enjoys traveling and learning as many new languages as possible.

Paula Cantillo, ’19, studies Film and Television at the Tisch School of the Arts. Born in Medellín, Colombia, she moved with her family to the United States in 2000 where they settled in the little suburban town of Jonesboro, Georgia. Her diverse cultural background is a major influence on her writing, as it allows her to keep an open mind and consider things from different and uncommon perspectives. “The Art of Manipulation” was motivated by a desire to push beyond the superficial arguments about the film Her, in order to understand it in a broader, more world-relevant context. Her interest in mythology
and in the role of television in American culture led her to write “The Shadow of the Undead,” finding interest in the “zombie fever” proliferating like wildfire throughout the country. Paula hopes to one day write and produce for television.

Angelica Chong, ’19, originally from Singapore, is a Media, Culture, and Communications major at the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. As someone who has always been interested in historiography, memory, and war, she was excited to write “Hiroshima, Redux.” Through her essay, she learnt to enjoy the process of writing inspired by exploration—writing with curiosity instead of certainty. In her free time, Angelica likes to yell about fictional characters, read science fiction and fantasy, and make fun of Nicholas Cage.

Sophia Chou, ’19, studies Nursing and hails from Hewlett, New York. She displayed an early attachment to science and eventually developed a special interest in health and medicine. After spending time in pharmacies, hospitals, and her high school research lab, she discovered her true passion: nursing. The Spanish film Mar Adentro turned her attention to the subjects of euthanasia and medical ethics. Her essay “Politician-Assisted Compromise” stems from this interest. Sophia can often be found with her nose in a book, a pastime that has assisted her in enjoying the countless hours of research put into her essay.

Lisa Dean, ’18, is a Flute Performance major in the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development’s Music and Performing Arts Professions department. Her essay about remembering trauma and memorializing tragedy, “Scars and Stigmata,” was heavily influenced by Marita Sturken’s Deans Global Honors Seminar course on cultural memory. Lisa values the relationship between personal experiences and broader historical, social, and otherwise academic contexts, and seeks to bring the two together in her writing. Originally from Utah, Lisa chose to attend NYU as a means of escaping the (culturally) barren desert in favor of more hospitable climes.
**Hieu Do, ’19**, originally from Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, is pursuing a dual-degree in Computer Science and Computer Engineering at the Tandon School of Engineering. In addition to his keen interest in STEM, Hieu aspires to strengthen the quality of education in Vietnam. A good education appreciates the achievements of one’s ancestors but also acknowledges shortcomings as a key to improvement. The current teaching of History in Vietnam, however, fails to recognize these shortcomings. Hieu’s essay “Teaching History in Vietnam” expresses his concern to the Minister of Education of Vietnam. Hieu was a Davis Scholar at Westminster School, a boarding high school in Simsbury, CT, where he was the Co-Editor-in-Chief of The Westminster News. He was awarded the Harvard-Radcliffe Book Prize and the Richard K. LeBlond II Honor Award for dedication academics and loyalty at the school.

**Xavier Patrick Dzielski, ’19**, is a Cinema Studies major in the Tisch School of the Arts. Hailing from Buffalo, New York, Xavier comes from a line of proud Irish-Americans. When given the opportunity to explore a film about Irish national identity in Neil Jordan’s *The Crying Game*, Xavier was elated. Writing “Layers” allowed him the opportunity to blend his academic interests and cultural lineage into one curiously rewarding project. In addition to his film studies, Xavier is a competitive Irish dancer.

**Wenxin Gao, ’19**, studies Art History in the College of Arts and Science. She was born in Hefei, China and moved to Singapore as a child. Thanks to encouragement from her teachers, Wenxin grew up writing sci-fi stories and creating her own futuristic worlds. Her essay “The Freedom to Imagine the Past” asserts the right for people of minority experience to tell their stories through fiction, to break free from stereotypes, and to define themselves on their own terms. In her spare time, Wenxin enjoys art, theatre, dance, and sitting by Monet's *Water Lilies* in the MoMA.

**Daniel Getzler, ’19**, is from New York City. Described as the greatest ancient you’ve never heard of, Xenophon—the focal point of his
Freshman Seminar course—was a prominent Athenian military general, student of Socrates, and political commentator during the early 4th century B.C.E. Daniel’s essay discusses the ending to one of Xenophon’s most famous texts, The Cyropaedia, which tells a largely fictional story about the brilliant leadership of Cyrus and the unparalleled success of the Persian empire. In particular, Daniel’s essay, “Cyropaedia 8.8: Xenophon’s Final Chapter,” tries to make sense of Xenophon’s motives for ending his laudatory text about Cyrus with the complete collapse of his empire shortly after his death.

Maria Fernanda Gonzalez, ’18, is majoring in Media Criticism and Sociology at the College of Arts and Science. She is interested in literature, philosophy, and current events, but is enamored with culture. Living in New York City has opened her mind, and she is especially interested in how discourse shapes the way we understand and produce cultural capital. Originally from Costa Rica, her Latin American background has made her passionate about social justice and environmental issues. She enjoys practicing yoga and watching movies, and writing has been her lifelong passion. Maria Fernanda aspires to be an editor, and believes that consciousness and mindfulness can have a positive and tangible impact on the world.

Jaydn Gosselin, ’19, studies Film and Television at the Tisch School of the Arts. In America, he loves the sound of his own voice. Born and raised in Sydney, Australia, he has an accent that lends him the undue admiration of people he meets, even before they get to know him. While learning to craft cinematic art with his own strong voice, he is concerned with finding a way to never drown out the voices of his subjects. With “The Nineteenth Language,” Jaydn examines what happens when well-intentioned people with privilege speak for the dispossessed. Jaydn is a terrible singer, an alright writer, and an advocate for knowing when to shut up and listen.

Lauren Hardman, ’19, is double-majoring in Drama and Dramatic Writing at Tisch School of the Arts. “O’Say Can You Scan: Surveillance in Art, Public, and Self,” was inspired by her own surveillance of “surveillance art,” and her inner hypochondriac. An aspiring
actor and self-described professional people-watcher, she has developed a strong affinity for figuring out why people act the way they do. Through the process of research and writing her essay, Lauren realizes that the greatest potential threat of an all-seeing government isn’t limited to the extinction of privacy as we know it, but a possible erosion of the very freedom of thought.

Ashley Hollkamp, ’19, originally from Fairfield, California, studies Education, Spanish, and Linguistics at the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. As someone with strong interests in gender, sexuality, and identity, working with Boys Don’t Cry in her essay was a natural choice. Grappling with the all too relevant problem of hate crimes, “Fragile Conceptions: Examining Constructions of Gender and Identity” attempts to shed light on the larger cultural implications of a society that sees difference as a threat. Ashley views writing as a way to educate, and she enjoys using it as a tool to further conversations on important social matters (as well as to eloquently express her strong opinions—something she’s much too shy to do in real life).

Allison Kiteley, ’17, of Annapolis, Maryland, is a sociologist at heart but a Math major in reality. She spends most of her time studying intersectional feminist theory and goofing off on the Internet—usually getting into arguments about the former. Despite being a STEM major, she takes issue with the overemphasis on supposedly ‘objective’ thought in American culture, in particular as it is used in self-proclaimed ‘anti-social justice’ movements that deny alternate perspectives. This commitment inspired “The Internet Shrugged.” Allison hopes to continue to write about the Internet and its culture because she feels there is a dearth of scholarship about it.

Nicolas Kugel, ’19, is from the San Francisco Bay Area and studies Politics in the College of Arts and Science. His process in writing his essay “A Postcolonial Revision” could be described as a roller coaster of emotion. He initially struggled with piecing together the different texts he was using and only clearly articulated his arguments and analysis after weeks of revision and a few trips to the Writing Center.
At no point during the process did he feel confident in the quality of his writing or that he was even following the format of an essay that reckons with its sources. In the end, Nicolas’s professor noted that the anxiety of never feeling like his essay was good enough may have made it successful, eventually.

**Isabella Loh**, ’19, originally from Singapore, is a Biochemistry major in the College of Arts and Science. Her essay, “The Blue Death,” uses the resources of fiction and is inspired by a real-life account of the 1918 Spanish influenza by Dorothy Deming, a nurse who worked tirelessly to save lives during the height of the outbreak. As a pre-health student with a passion for history, Isabella used historical documents and secondary sources to piece together her representation of one of the deadliest epidemics in history.

**Paris Martineau**, ’19, is double majoring in Comparative Literature (with an emphasis on French and the visual arts) and Journalism at the College of Arts and Science. Her hometown of Destin, FL is frequently referred to as ‘lower-Lower Alabama’—a fact she tries hard to forget. Paris is the Deputy Opinion Editor at *Washington Square News*. She is proud of the number of belligerent Facebook comments her articles have inspired. She is a CAS Presidential Honors Scholar, and aware of how ridiculous that title sounds. Paris’s essay, “Your Kind-of-Sort-of-Half-Truth is Stranger than Fiction,” has given way to a new research paper titled “How to Make it to 46 and Kill Yourself: The Effect of David Foster Wallace’s Suicide on His Critical Reception.”

**Brett Moody**, ’18, has always been fascinated by the R rating given to explicit films because it implies that stories can change a person’s behavior for the worse. After he met Nonny de la Peña, the famed virtual reality journalist, he recognized that stories can also utilize empathy to change a person’s behavior for the better. For his essay, “School Shootings in Media: A Pathway to Empathy or a Blueprint for Evil?” he examined how media can evoke empathy and translate it into significant prosocial action so that he could apply these insights to his own work as a Film major. In his spare time, Brett works on service
projects, explores nature, plays games, and builds relationships with friends. He lived for several years in Singapore and Houston.

**Chelsea Moore, ’16**, from Berkeley, CA is a Psychology major in the College of Arts and Science. Inspired by her mother, a textile designer and Fashion Institute of Technology graduate, Chelsea took Victoria Olsen’s “Rise of the Visual” Freshman seminar hoping to expand her knowledge of contemporary art and her ability to discuss visual artwork. “White Noise: Overcoming Overstimulation” granted her the opportunity to travel to Beacon, New York to see the work of Robert Irwin and also to see artwork from many other prominent artists. Chelsea is interested in how contemporary artwork reflects human psychology and hopes to continue making connections between artistry and psychology. After Chelsea graduates from NYU, she hopes to return to California to attend culinary school.

**Summer Okoye, ’19**, is a Drama major at the Tisch School of Arts. She calls the peaceful state of Delaware her home. As a first generation American of Nigerian descent who has grown up around multiple cultures, races, and traditions, she is constantly trying to figure out where she fits. However, her most suitable identity is that of an artist. Not only does she love to act, sing, and dance but she has a passion for writing, poetry, drawing, filmmaking, and all forms of art that allow her to tell stories about the human experience from her own unique perspective, accomplished in her essay “The Black Commodity.” Though she cannot predict where her creative passions, inquisitiveness, and musings will take her, Summer intends for her artistic voice to be heard.

**Mae Roney, ’19**, studies at the Tisch School of the Arts and was born and raised in Manhattan. After studying classical violin, viola, and classical voice for many years, she decided to pursue acting and is now a student at the Stella Adler Studio. The arts have been a vital part of her life, and taking Writing Art and the World was a nice marriage of two of her interests: art and writing. With “On Importance: Art as Enlightenment,” Mae received encouragement from Professor Jennifer Cayer to use the writings of other established authors to
explore the various ways in which art helps people to understand their place in the world.

**Spencer Sherk, ’19**, is a single, sometimes lonely male from Connecticut. He’s unsure of what he’s majoring in at the College of Arts and Science, but he is “sure he’ll figure it out soon.” An anchor baby to two Canadian parents, he grew up first in Darien, which his mother didn’t much like, and then in Westport, which his father didn’t much like, but where he first went to public school. In the seventh grade, his parents made the decision to send him to the Hopkins private school in New Haven, CT, thinking it would surely suit him better. Along the way, a mentor told Spencer that his favorite book was *Ulysses*, and so he dedicated his freshman seminar to reading it, and writing “Point of Viewpoint.”

**Sim Yan Ying, ’19**, is a Theatre major in the Tisch School of the Arts hailing from Singapore. She wrote her essay “Velvet Handcuffs” out of a keen desire to understand the relationship between censorship and politics and a belief in the need for greater freedom of artistic expression in her home country. Being in New York has provided her with the distance to perceive with fresher eyes and greater objectivity about the pervasiveness of censorship back home. She aspires to create emotionally truthful and socially relevant works of art that synthesize her experiences across cultures in New York, Singapore, and other parts of the world. Beyond theatre, Yan Ying enjoys dancing, reading, café-hopping, having spontaneous conversations with strangers, and throwing social conventions to the wind.

**Nina Svirsky, ’19**, is a Mathematics major hailing from New York City. She has always been enthused and fascinated by feminism, prompting her essay “Solnit’s Catch-22: In a Nutshell, Female.” One spark for this interest was *Third Wave Magazine*, a small, independent feminist literary magazine she founded with a few friends in her senior year of high school. She is currently developing a second major in Gender and Sexuality Studies, in which she hopes to complete a thesis or research project in the coming years. In addition to these academic pursuits, she is an avid modern dancer taking professional
technique class on a daily basis. During the little free time left in the
day, Nina attempts to delve into as many varied books as possible.

**Minghao Zang, ’16**, whose hometown is Qingdao, China, is a
Business major in Stern School of Business concentrating in Finance
and Accounting. Unlike most Stern students wanting to do invest-
ment banking because of their inherent interest, he is uncertain of
what to do in the future. Perhaps he aspires differently. The struggle
of being who he wants to be is partially reflected in his essay, “A
Struggle of Identity,” which is also based on his own personal experi-
ence. To Minghao, the essay’s goal is not to put readers in any kind
of dilemma about who they should be, but rather to encourage them
to balance their own fish and bear paw in the way they prefer: to be
themselves.

**Denise Zhou, ’19**, grew up in Irvine, California in a messy library,
drowning in paperbacks and school-required reading. She now main-
tains equally messy music and film libraries, bringing artists and gen-
res into organized chaos. Her essay, “Coming of Identities,” brings
more of her values into the same. Moving to New York tested her
sense of identity within the contexts of race and environment; fortu-
nately, she found solace and perspective in expository writing. She is
currently pursuing a Film and Television major, holding closely to her
passion for writing, music, and education. Denise intends to keep an
exceptionally messy library for however long she can get away with.