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# WEST FOURTH

SUMMER 2020

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EXPOSITORY WRITING PROGRAM

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCE

# WEST FOURTH

Dear College Writing Workshop Students,

Welcome to New York University!

In this edition of *West Fourth*, you will find four exemplary essays from last summer's Precollege students—an insightful collection that navigates difficult discussions related to race, gender, social justice, mental health, and cancel culture. We encourage you to read the fine work of your predecessors for inspiration, paying close attention to their creativity, research, analysis, and eloquence. Keep in mind: these essays were written in 2019—before COVID-19 put the world on pause; before NYU converted its spring and summer sessions to remote learning; and before George Floyd, Breonna Taylor (and a growing list of far too many others) inspired millions to take action against police brutality and demand that Black Lives Matter.

Here you will encounter work that is smart, exciting, and full of curiosity. While opportunities for improvement still remain in these final drafts, each writer is actively engaging us with the pleasure of discovery.

You will notice that these investigations explore an incredibly diverse body of evidence: the essays of Leslie Jamison, Elizabeth Kolbert, and Wesley Morris; the Netflix series *Orange is the New Black* and an episode of *South Park*; Jordan Peele's psychological thriller *Us*; and several scenes of personal experience. Each essay attempts to break away from simplistic, dualistic thinking; by turning to research, our students recognize a multiplicity of valid perspectives and begin to embrace a more nuanced stance in their writing—one in which some of the claims they read are subject to scrutiny. Rather than beginning with a fixed thesis, they ask compelling questions inspired by the written and visual texts they have studied. These writers strike a balance between humility (feeling overwhelmed by everything that “the experts” have already claimed about a given topic) and overconfidence (assuming they have all the answers). Now, more than ever, we should lean into uncertainty; after all, no one has all the answers right now, and you should be skeptical of those who say they do. We hope that you will learn how to

carefully evaluate evidence that will enable you to develop complex, multi-faceted arguments.

I would like to thank all those who made this year's publication possible: Dean Gene Andrew Jarrett, Denice Martone, Christine Jensch, Kristin Balicki, Shannon Riley, Noelle Marchetta, our team of faculty editors (Bruce Bromley, Joe Vallese, Joshua Weber), our production editor Richard Larson, William Morgan, Joanna Mendoza, and Charis Caputo.

We hope to see your writing published here next year!

Best of luck in your courses,

Zach Udko

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