

# MERCER STREET

2018 - 2019

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EXPOSITORY WRITING PROGRAM  
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCE

# MERCER STREET

To the Class of 2022:

**W**elcome to New York University!

An NYU education begins, in part, with writing. This practice reflects the University's longstanding commitment to the centrality of written inquiry to undergraduate education.

It's a bit of a cliché to say that reading and writing are connected, but in 2018 it seems important to say it nonetheless. As information circulates more and more quickly—moving ever farther from its origin—we have to read critically and for context: *Who was the author? What were they trying to achieve? What is their evidence?* This is all the more urgent when we take up what we read, re-posting it or relying on it for insight or opinions of our own.

Over the course of the next four years, you have a wide range of courses open to you; alphabetically, they range from accounting to history to mechanical engineering to woodwind studies. No matter what field you choose, during your time here you will find yourself using writing to think, analyze, investigate, and create. And no matter what path or career you choose after you graduate (that of a scholar, educator, health practitioner, entrepreneur, artist, performer, lawyer, engineer, or activist), you will find yourself using writing for those purposes and others: to propose, to investigate, to analyze, and to represent yourself and your work. Recent research shows that work in the twenty-first century involves more writing than ever before, regardless of the specific occupation. This writing ranges across genres (email, proposals, essays, reports, and more), and encompasses prose that is creative, technical, reflective, and persuasive. It's writing that seeks to make an impact on its readers, that seeks not only to make audiences see the questions and challenges that face us today in new ways but also to help them imagine new possibilities and perspectives.

The essays collected in this volume represent some of the best work written for Expository Writing Program courses over the course of 2017-18; most were written by first-year students. These essays are smart, moving, funny, analytic, imaginative, and—like us all, and like all written work—incomplete. They open up questions, problems, and puzzles that are not entirely solvable. The faculty of EWP hope that you will both enjoy and learn from them.

Take heart! College is a time to challenge yourself and to nurture your mind both in and out of the classroom. Your most surprising encounters—your most creative or insightful moments—may happen when you least expect them. Be interested. That is always the best way to begin.

With all best wishes,

Dara Rossman Regaignon  
Director of the Expository Writing Program  
Associate Professor of English

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Each year, the appearance of a new *Mercer Street* allows us to say “the collection of essays you now hold in your hands . . .” But now we can say this only figuratively, since the present edition is coming to you entirely digitally. We hope that the new format will make for easier navigation and more expeditious connection-making through the links you will find throughout the book.

For example, in several independently written essays, we find topics and themes of contemporary relevance. The digital *Mercer Street* makes it easier to locate them. Cases in point are several essays that investigate the explosive issue of sexual misconduct during the past year. In the arts, other students have questioned the status of “the real” in media that thrive on illusion or deception. In his fine essay, “In Thinking of Evil,” about the moral responsibilities of the citizen, Jesse Schanzer invites his readers to look to the multigenerational depth of their own experience. It encourages us to articulate our personal history in unlikely, non-literal places. It shows us how to connect and coordinate these findings.

It all adds up to being able to write confidently and nimbly with a variety of sources: the facts, the evidence. The book you're not actually holding in your hands is a gift that last year's class has left to you. As you move ahead with your own writing, you will feel a deepening respect for the masterful work your predecessors have given you.

Stephen Donatelli  
Editor  
Director of Writing in the Disciplines

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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