

Instructor:

- Ryan MacDonald and Devon Stanley

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Location:

- Paul 135

Hours:

- **Week 1:** Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
 - 9:00 - 10:30
 - **Week 2:** Monday, Tuesday
 - 9:00 - 10:30
 - **Weeks 3 through 6:** Mondays and Wednesdays (No class July 30th)
 - 9:00 - 10:30 **with Devon**, 12:30 - 2:00 **with Ryan**
 - **Ketchup:** In Paul, after lunch
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Hey you! Yes, you! Do you want to impress your friends? Do you want to get into college? Do you want to become so good at writing that you can *brag* about it? Well then come on down to Senior Seminar, the class where you will learn to write the greatest college essay of all time.

In this class, we will read, study, and talk about amazing college essays. You will also write your own essay, engage in peer revision, and pick up some handy writing tips along the way.

CONTENT/GOALS

This summer, our main goal is for each of you to create a high-quality college application essay that answers one of the 2025 - 2026 Common Application essay prompts. This essay is both a personal piece of writing that will highlight your voice and who you are as a person. To achieve this goal we will...

- share our thoughts and ideas in a respectful manner.
- engage in the exciting process of writing, including outlining, drafting, conferencing with peers and mentors, revising (emphasis on this part), and editing.
- reflect on what we believe, as well as our development as Upward Bound students over the course of this summer and prior summers.

VOCABULARY

~Audience

~Purpose

~Voice

~Connotation

~Tone

~Denotation

CLASS CONDUCT & BELIEFS

- In the spirit of Upward Bound, we are here to support and encourage each other.
- Respect is expected from all members of this class at all times.
- We all have a voice that deserves to be heard.
- Learning often requires stepping out of one's comfort zone.
- Mistakes are expected and respected.

NO DISCOUNT/FULL VALUE POLICY

We will adhere to this policy in our classroom. By agreeing to live by this policy, we do not discount one another or ourselves. This policy allows each learner in the classroom the comfort and freedom to make mistakes and explore those mistakes.

HONOR CODE

We will adhere to the honor code in our classroom. By agreeing to this policy we will stand up for the honor of the program and the policies that create a safe, secure, and healthy place for them to live, learn and grow and not leave it to staff to monitor behavior and compliance. Please include the following statement on each piece of work you submit in this class: "I have abided by the Upward Bound Honor Code in this work."

GRADING

Your final grade will be made up of the categories below.

- **Homework (20%)** - Completing your homework is a necessary part of this course. Each assignment is meant to support our work in class, ultimately boosting your class participation. You can find the rubric under assessment tools.
- **Class Participation (40%)** - This course is structured as a seminar (definition: a meeting for discussion/learning). This means we are responsible for the quality of our learning experience. The more you participate and the more committed you are, the better your experience will be. In this course, participation looks like offering your ideas and feedback to your classmates, especially when engaging in peer revisions. It also means constantly seeking out and applying feedback to your own writing.
- **College Essay (30%)** - The only piece of writing that will be assessed for its quality is your college application essay. We will be spending a generous amount of time workshopping this essay. Your commitment to the workshop model and drafting process is a portion of this grade.
- **Roundtable (10%)** - For some of you, this will be your last summer as an Upward Bound summer student. This may be your first year in the program or even your third. However, regardless of the amount of time in this program, it is important to reflect on your experiences. This means looking back on what Upward Bound has taught you and how you have grown from it. To do this, you will have a reflection discussion, called a roundtable, with members of this class, core staff, and me. During this time, you will have the opportunity to read your college essay, share your thoughts on your development as a student and as a person, and answer any questions members of the roundtable may have for you. There will be time allotted in class to prepare for this.

ASSESSMENT TOOLS***Homework Rubric***

Grade	Understanding Concepts	Presentation
A	Work shows <i>mastery</i> ; not only understands but can apply concepts widely.	Presentation shows <i>professionalism and quality</i> .
B	Work shows <i>competence</i> in the area under consideration; few errors of fact of application.	Presentation is solid, but <i>more organization and proofing is required</i> .
C	Work shows <i>basic understanding</i> ; some gaps are in evidence.	Work appears <i>hurried</i> .
D	<i>Work needs some improvement to reach the basic level.</i>	<i>Work is rushed, barely legible.</i>
F	<i>Nothing to assess.</i>	<i>Completely unacceptable.</i>

Participation Rubric

Grade	Description
2	You were fully present, prepared for class, and participated throughout the entire class.
1	You either made a weak effort to participate, you participated only in writing, or you were engaged for only part of class.
0	You did not participate in discussions or activities.

College Essay Rubric

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Making Progress	Beginning Progress
Focus Toward Prompt	The essay is tightly focused and superbly addresses the chosen prompt.	The essay has a focus and addresses the chosen prompt.	The essay's focus is somewhat broad or loose, or it only partially addresses the chosen prompt.	The essay lacks any discernible focus, or it does not address the chosen prompt.
Voice & Message	The writer's voice is unique, poised, and confident, showcasing the student's outstanding potential to be a successful college student.	The writer's voice is clear and has original elements, showcasing a student with qualities that would be desirable by a college.	The writer's voice has some distinction, but it may feel slightly generic. The essay sends a message that the student has a few desirable qualities.	The writer's voice is generic and lacks distinction, or the essay sends a message about the student that is either not positive or lamentable.

Organization	The essay demonstrates highly effective sequencing of ideas through well-developed paragraphs, a gripping introduction, and a very strong conclusion.	The essay's paragraph (idea) development is logical, and it has a good introduction and a thoughtful conclusion.	The essay has a more rudimentary organization of ideas; an introduction and conclusion are present, but are underdeveloped.	Little to no evidence of paragraph structure; illogical organization of ideas; no discernable introductory or conclusory elements.
Creativity & Authenticity	The essay's topic, level of detail, and approach demonstrates highly creative thinking, specificity, and originality that would clearly stand out to an admissions officer.	The essay has some creative elements and enough specificity to feel authentic and original.	The essay attempts to incorporate a few creative elements and details, but the topic and approach may be common.	The essay lacks any originality, uses cliches, or is overly generic and/or predictable.
Flow & Sentence Fluency	All sentences sound natural and are easy-on-the-ear when read aloud. Each sentence is clear and has an obvious emphasis. Word choice is precise.	Most sentences sound natural and are easy-on-the-ear when read aloud, but 1-2 may be awkward or difficult to understand. Word choice is appropriate.	Many sentences sound natural and are easy-on-the-ear when read aloud, but several are stiff or awkward or difficult to understand. Word choice is usually appropriate.	The sentences are difficult to read aloud because they sound awkward, are distractingly repetitive, or are difficult to understand. Word choice is frequently clunky.
Time Management	Essay and drafts have been submitted on time; effective use of class time and conference opportunities with peers and teachers; strong evidence of out-of-class effort.	Essay and drafts are submitted on time; effective use of class time and conference opportunities with teachers and peers; some evidence of out-of-class effort.	Essay and drafts may be occasionally late or feel rushed; use of class time needs improvement; out of class effort appears minimal.	All work is late and/or demonstrates a lack of effort out of class; ineffective or inappropriate use of class time.
Grammar	Grammar is flawless. Where grammatical rules are broken, it is clearly done for rhetorical purposes.	Grammar is mostly correct. Errors, when made, are minor and minimally distracting.	Grammatical errors distract the reader from time to time.	Grammatical errors completely distract from the essay's content.

Roundtable Rubric

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Making Progress	Beginning Progress
Speaking	The student is very articulate and confident; the student answers questions without hesitation.	The student demonstrates some confidence and is able to articulate most ideas; the student answers most questions without hesitation.	The student seems nervous, but is able to articulate most ideas; the student answered some questions without hesitation.	The student seems uncomfortable and is unable to articulate ideas; the student struggled to answer questions.
Preparation	The student came with their essay printed and questions prepared; the student clearly prepared by rehearsing responses.	The student came with their essay printed and questions prepared; the student seemed somewhat practiced in their responses.	The student came with some of their materials; the student may have practiced briefly, but didn't always have prepared responses.	The student did not bring their materials or did not have responses prepared.
Critical Thinking & Growth	The student demonstrates exceptional metacognitive abilities, thinking deeply about their learning at UB.	The student demonstrates adequate metacognitive abilities, regularly thinking deeply about their learning at UB.	The student demonstrates some metacognitive abilities, sometimes thinking deeply about their learning.	The student does not demonstrate metacognitive abilities, lacking deep thinking about their learning.
Respect	The student listened respectfully to peers at all times, often demonstrating eye contact and engagement.	The student listened respectfully to peers most of the time, sometimes demonstrating eye contact and engagement.	The student listened respectfully to peers sometimes, but rarely demonstrated eye contact or engagement.	The student did not listen respectfully to peers.

EXPECTATIONS

The expectations listed below are intended for everyone (including me!). It is by no means a comprehensive list, and we can certainly add to it if necessary.

- Follow the Upward Bound No Discount / Full Value Policy and Honor Code
- Be on time and ready with all required materials and assignments.
- Actively participate during class / ask questions / seek help as soon as you need it.
- Consistently pass in quality assignments that represent your own, original, work.
- Follow all rules, policies, and instructions.
- Try Everything!

2025-2026 Common Application Essay Prompts (250-650 words)

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Reflect on something that someone has done for you that has made you happy or thankful in a surprising way. How has this gratitude affected or motivated you?
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

CLASS SCHEDULE 2025

Class Meeting Number/Date	Class Agenda	Homework
Monday, 06/23 (everyone together, 1st period only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Introductions → Start your “Your Islands of Personality” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Tuesday, 06/24 (everyone together, 1st period only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → “Your Islands of Personality” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Wednesday, 06/25 (everyone together, 1st period only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Read Exemplar Essays → Freewrite for Essay Prompts 1 and 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Thursday, 06/26 (everyone together, 1st period only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Read Exemplar Essays → Freewrite for Essay Prompt 3 and 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Monday, 06/30 (everyone together, 1st period only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → How to Say Nothing → Freewrite for Essay Prompts 5, 6, and 7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look back through your drafts. Choose the three that you think have the most potential and write 1 - 2 sentences explaining why.
Tuesday, 07/01 (everyone together, 1st period only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → “Show Don’t Tell” → Choose the Freewrite that you liked best and turn it into a full rough draft of an essay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish Turning your freewrite into a draft
Monday, 07/07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to Write about Yourself • Peer Revisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose ANOTHER freewrite and turn it into a full rough draft of an essay
Wednesday, 07/09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Beginnings and Endings → Peer revisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pick your favorite of the two drafts and revise
Monday, 07/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Quotation Marks → Revisions and Peer Revisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise
Wednesday, 07/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Commas → Revisions and Peer Revisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise
Monday, 07/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Last day of editing → Revisions and Peer Revisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise
Wednesday, 07/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Roundtables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Monday, 07/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Roundtables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None