Syracuse University | Project Advance

SUMMER 2026

Dear Student,

Congratulations on enrolling in Syracuse University's READING AND WRITING for the upcoming 2026-2027 academic year. These courses are designed to transition you into the world of academic inquiry, critical thinking, and sophisticated composition. To hit the ground running this fall, please complete the following summer assignments.

1. REQUIRED TEXT: *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah

All students should purchase, read, and annotate *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood* by Trevor Noah.

- Annotation Task: Please purchase a set of post-it notes and mark 30+ pages with a (QTI) – Question, Thought, or Insight. * Application: We will utilize these text-based notes in class discussions during the first week of the fall semester. Additionally, Noah's memoir will serve as a seminal text throughout the year in our critical readings.

Optional Audiobook Note: You may wish to download the text in audiobook form (perhaps for a long car ride). Trevor Noah brilliantly and hilariously narrates his own story, bringing a unique phonetic layer to his exploration of language and identity.

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2. RECOMMENDED SUPPLEMENT: *Educated* by Tara Westover

While not a required purchase, I highly recommend reading *Educated: A Memoir* by Tara Westover.

Born to survivalists in the mountains of Idaho, Westover was seventeen the first time she set foot in a classroom. Her journey from a secluded, often violent upbringing to earning a PhD from Cambridge University is a staggering look at the transformative power of education. Reading this alongside Noah's work provides a fascinating counterpoint: while Noah navigates the systemic cages of Apartheid, Westover navigates the psychological cages of isolation, misogyny and generational dysfunction.

3. THE 14-DAY FREEWRITE CHALLENGE

To jumpstart your transition into university-level writing, I invite you to participate in a 15-Day Freewrite Challenge.

The Goal: Write one page per day, neatly handwritten for 14 days, in a dedicated journal or notebook. (This notebook can also be used as the one that you will take daily class notes.)

The Incentive: In SUPA READING & WRITING, we focus heavily on the writing process. These journal entries may serve as your first primary source material for our opening formal synthesis paper.

The Prompts: You may write freely, but if you find yourself needing more guidance, consider these prompts based on our summer themes:

1. **Identity**: Noah discusses being "born a crime." In what ways does your own identity conflict with the world's expectations of you?
2. **Language**: Noah views language as a tool for survival. How does your "voice" change depending on who you are with?
3. **Inheritance**: What lessons have you inherited from your family that you are starting to question?
4. **The Outsider:** Describe a time you felt like an outsider in a place you were supposed to belong.
5. **Education vs. Schooling:** Is there a difference between being "schooled" and being truly "educated"?
6. **Memories:** Pick a vivid childhood memory and try to describe it from an objective, third-person perspective.
7. **The Power of Place:** How does living in Clarence, NY, shape your worldview compared to someone in a major city or a different country?
8. **The Concept of Truth**: Have you ever discovered that your "truth" about an event was actually just one version of it?
9. **Humor as a Shield:** How does Noah use humor to tackle trauma? Do you use humor similarly? Describe your own sense of humor. Give examples.
10. **Intellectual Curiosity:** Describe, in great detail, what makes you intellectually curious.
11. **World Event**: What is a major world event right now that holds your attention? Why?
12. **Resilience:** What does "survival" look like in a modern American context?
13. **Materiality:** If you had to leave home tomorrow with only one backpack, what would you take and why?
14. **Reflection**: Looking back on this assignment, reflect on your ability to generate ideas over the last 14 days.