The Class

The New Student Seminar is a semester-long required course for all new undergraduates enrolled in the Steinhardt School. The seminar is your orientation to the university and our school and will introduce you to the nature of higher education and your program of study. Using the themes raised in the new student reading, you will explore your role as a member of our diverse, global, and inclusive academic community.

The Book

In Outcasts United, New York Times reporter Warren St. John documents the social, political, and economic challenges faced by the town of Clarkson, Georgia when it becomes a home for refugee families in flight from the world's war zones—Liberia, Sudan, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Outcasts is about how soccer helps a group of adolescent refugee boys and their families adapt to American culture and also about the ways in which a community must adapt to the presence of outsiders.

The Theme

Building Bridges Across a Divide, Forging Community

Outcasts United is a collage of stories that offers us a window into others’ lives. We read about Luma, the soccer coach; the Fugees and their families, and the Clarkson Community—and how their histories and individual experiences have shaped their identities and shaped their lives.

By looking at the residents of a southern community, we gain insights into ourselves and our experiences. We learn that as different and as varied as we all may be, the challenge we face is how to build bridges across potential divides and forge community.

This year, we ask new Steinhardt students to think about how family, community, and cultural values have shaped their lives, and how they see and experience other people. We will discuss what it means to belong to a community and how we find tolerance and learn to accept others despite our differences.

Things To Consider

Each one of us is shaped by culture, history, the beliefs we were brought up with, and the character and values of the people who raised us. Each of us interprets and internalizes the messages of our culture and creates from them a sense of self-esteem and vision of who we are in the world and how the world sees us.

As a new student at NYU, you are part of a global network of students who have been raised in different cultures, among different people with both shared and different values. You come together this year with a common goal: to further your education and enlarge your understanding of the world around us.

This year we ask you to consider your journey and to think about how your journey has made you the person you are today. How might you think about who you are and where you feel you belong as you proceed into your academic future?
Questions

1. How has your family prepared you for adulthood? For living in a world that is different from the world in which they grew up? What are the beliefs that have surrounded you as you have grown up? How do you think these beliefs have shaped your identity? How have family, community, and cultural values shaped how you see and experience other people?

2. Have you ever struggled to belong or fit in? What was that like for you? Where do you feel you most belong in the world? Describe this place and your feelings when you are there.

3. Draw a map of your world. Who inhabits the world you have left behind and who is now a part of the new world that you call home?

4. How different are you from those around you? What are some questions you would like to ask someone about how they live or how it feels to live in a different skin?

5. Home is a place where we hope to feel a sense of security and belonging. NYU will be your home for the next several years. Write a letter to your younger self from the perspective of a person who has left home and created a new home. What expectations has this new world fulfilled for you?

6. Write a piece from the perspective of a person fleeing your homeland. Include your thoughts about the political crises, your flight from it – including what you were able to take with you, your journey to safety, and your reactions to the place to which you fled.

7. Soccer is a form of play that requires teamwork and collaboration. How did this activity influence the daily lives of the Fugees? Is there an activity in your life that forces you to collaborate with others in an active way?

The Dean's New Student Convocation
In early October, the entering Class of 2017 will gather together with our dean and distinguished faculty to add a final note to the discussion of our New Student Reading, and reflect on our New Student theme.