June 2017

Dear Syracuse University Project Advance Student:

Welcome to a SUPA year! You are participating in a first year collegiate experience that includes a writing studio course (WRT105) and a course in reading and interpretation (ETS) that freshmen students take as part of their baccalaureate studies at Syracuse University. We hope that you will find this combination of college writing and English courses enjoyable, challenging, and useful. In preparation for the year, we are asking you to read the following book.

The summer reading is *When Breath Becomes Air*, by Paul Kalanithi. At the age of thirty-six, on the verge of completing a decade’s worth of training as a neurosurgeon, Kalanithi was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer. One day he was a doctor treating the dying, and the next he was a patient struggling to live. And just like that, the future he and his wife had imagined evaporated. *When Breath Becomes Air* chronicles Kalanithi’s transformation from a naïve medical student “possessed,” as he wrote, “by the question of what, given that all organisms die, makes a virtuous and meaningful life” into a neurosurgeon at Stanford working in the brain, the most critical place for human identity, and finally into a patient and new father confronting his own mortality.

Paul Kalanithi died in March 2015, while working on the book, yet his words live on as a guide and a gift to us all. “I began to realize that coming face to face with my own mortality, in a sense, had changed nothing and everything,” he wrote. “Seven words from Samuel Beckett began to repeat in my head: ‘I can’t go on. I’ll go on.’” *When Breath Becomes Air* is an unforgettable, life-affirming reflection on the challenge of facing death and on the relationship between doctor and patient, from a brilliant writer who became both.

We hope you will enjoy your summer reading experience. Have a good summer. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely yours,

Douglas Cronk & Nicole Reis
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