

Admissions Masterclass Syllabus

Masterclass 1: Three Crucial Concepts. We start with the three most important concepts you need to guide your college process: Intellectual Vitality, Points of Excellence, and Texture. If you master these three competencies, you're on your way towards becoming a compelling applicant. (Time: 35 min.)

Masterclass 2: Admissions Process. We walk through the admission cycle from the point of view of an admission office so you can understand critical insights that will give you an advantage: Should you contact your admission officer? How long does an admission officer spend on your application? Does it matter if you submit your application at the deadline? What happens at committee? Can you do anything to help your admission officer advocate for you? (Time: 30 min.)

Masterclass 3: Activities. Admission officers are skeptical: What you *do* often means more than what you *say*. And with test-optional, activities carry more weight than ever before. But admission offices will never tell you the specific activities they value. Or why one activity might impress them more than another. In this class we explore those specific activities and why you should consider doing them. You might be surprised to hear most are not traditional activities offered by your school. (Time: 45 min.)

Masterclass 4: Common Application Part I. There are many details in the Common App that matter for an admission reader, but you're probably not aware of them. I walk through the Common App to point out any insights that can help your application. Does it matter what you select for Future Plans? How does your parents' professions or education factor into your application? How should you write about your awards? When should you use the Additional Information essay? (Time: 45 min.)

Masterclass 5: Common Application Part II. We finish the Common App by focusing on maybe the most important document in your application: The Activities Page. This might be the single best way to stand out from other applicants. Because most students don't take the time to write carefully about their activities. Their title and descriptions are sloppy, verbose, and usually lack context. For most readers, this is the first time they will encounter your writing. So we want to showcase your intellectual vitality, make your point of excellence clear, and add texture by crafting smart, fun, interesting descriptions. But what if you don't have ten activities? What if you have more than ten? How should you order them? What if you haven't done an activity yet or you just started it? How do you make that tricky calculation about time spent on an activity? How much does that matter? (Time: 40 min.)

Masterclass 6: Writing I. Topics. The Writing Workshop Syllabus describes the content from Masterclass 6, 7, and 8 in more detail. In this first class, I'll teach you how to select winning essay topics. What you write about matters. How do you decide? Why are some topics better than others? What's the biggest mistake students make in their essays? Is there anything you *must* address in your writing? (Time: 35 min.)



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Masterclass 7: Writing II. The Personal Statement, Structure, Strategy.

First, we study three examples of compelling personal essays. Each essay has a different emphasis on intellectual vitality, points of excellence, and texture. We'll take these apart paragraph-by-paragraph (structure) so you can see how you might structure your essays. Most students struggle with finding a balance between writing an essay that's too personal and an essay that sounds like a research paper. I want to use these three essays to show you how to avoid this problem. (Time: 37 min.)

Second, we explore what you should write inside a paragraph (strategy). Our goal is to write something smart, interesting, and engaging. But *how* do you do that? What makes something smart or interesting or engaging? I'll teach you ten techniques to transform any personal topic into compelling writing that's glow-in-the-dark smart. (Time: 48 min.)

Masterclass 8: Writing III. Tactics, Alter Ego, Supplemental Applications.

First, we finish by studying your writing sentence-by-sentence (tactics). We focus on ten tactics you should deploy in all your writing: How to open your first sentence; how to connect with your reader by texturizing your writing; how to close without engaging in overstatement. (Time: 65 min.)

Second, I teach you my capstone strategy: Admissions Alter Ego. We need to offer your speedreading admission officer an easy way to capture who you are in a few words. This is how they will remember you and present you at committee. But you've done so many things and you're interested in more than one subject. We want to stand out as unique, but we don't want to sound one-dimensional. How do we pull this off? I walk through a complete, compelling Stanford application with you to show you how. (Time: 26 min.)

Third, we apply everything we've learned to your supplemental essays. We cover winning examples of The Diversity Essay, The Why Our College Essay, The Why Your Major Essay, The Extracurricular Essay, and Short Answers. (Time: 58 min.)

Masterclass 9: Numbers, Letters of Support, Interviews, "Tips." We stack these topics late in the course because you have the least control over these variables. But we'll talk about strategies for getting the best letters of support, how to handle interviews, and any "tips" you should use to your advantage. We'll also discuss how colleges unweight your GPA, what to do with the test-optional policy, and how to evaluate how competitive you are at a school based on your numbers. (Time 50 min.)

Masterclass 10: FAQs and Capstone Read.

First, we cover our most frequently asked questions of the last decade: Should I apply Early or Regular Decision? Should I take the AP course and risk the B? What about transfer, gap years, post-grad years? Demonstrated interest? Oversubscribed majors? (Time: 41 min.)

Finally, we end by applying everything you've learned: We read through a compelling Northwestern application start to finish. I explain how and why I would assign my ratings—just like I would if I was still working at a school like Stanford. (Time: 40 min.)

