

The Invitation

Core 1, Essay #2: In-Class Writing Assignment
Adapted from National Public Radio's program "This I Believe"

This invites you to make a very great contribution: nothing less than a statement of your personal beliefs, of the values which rule your thoughts and actions. Your essay should be about three minutes in length when read loud, written in a style as you yourself speak, and total of no more than 500 words. (Translation for Core 1 class: no more than 2 typed pages, double-spaced using the template that Dr. Lewis will email you right before class.)

We know this is a tough job. What we want is so intimate that no one can write it for you. You must write it yourself, in the language most natural to you. We ask you to write in your own words and then record in your own voice. You may even find that it takes a request like this for you to reveal some of your own beliefs to yourself. If you set them down they may become of untold meaning to others.

We would like you to tell not only what you believe, but how you reached your beliefs, and if they have grown, what made them grow. This necessarily must be highly personal. That is what we anticipate and want.

'This I Believe' Essay-Writing Instructions

...To guide you through this process, we offer these suggestions:

- **Name your belief/ideal:** If you can't name it in a sentence or two, your essay might not be about belief. Also, rather than writing a list, consider focusing on a core belief, because three minutes is a very short time.
- **Tell a story:** Be specific. Take your belief out of the air and ground it in the events of your life. Consider moments when your belief was formed or tested or changed. Think of your own experience, work and family, and tell of the things you know that no one else does. Your story need not be heart-warming or gut-wrenching -- it can even be funny -- but it should be *real*. Make sure your story ties to the essence of your daily life philosophy and the shaping of your beliefs.
- **Be brief:** Your statement should be between 350 and 500 words [about 2 double-spaced typed pages]. That's about three minutes when read aloud at your natural pace.
- **Be positive:** Please avoid preaching or editorializing. Tell us what you do believe, not what you don't believe. Avoid speaking in the editorial "we." Make your essay about you; speak in the first person.
- **Be personal:** This is radio. Write in words and phrases that are comfortable for you to speak. We recommend you read your essay aloud to yourself several times, and each time edit it and simplify it until you find the words, tone and story that truly echo your belief and the way you speak.

You have 1 hour to complete this assignment. Please print out three copies and turn two into Dr. Lewis at the end of the time period. Please bring the third copy to class on Thursday.

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