

FINAL ASSIGNMENT: WRITING A “THIS I BELIEVE” ESSAY

UNE’s first year seminar has been grounded in the *This I Believe* collection of essays. We’ve sampled essays by artists, activists, farmers, scientists and others who recount and make sense of the experiences that have led to their beliefs. We’ve also connected some of these works to your own values and beliefs while exploring UNE’s Core Values.

For your final writing assignment, you’ll compose your own “This I Believe” essay that brings together your thinking, reflection, and writing from across the semester.

PURPOSE:

This assignment will help you to:

- Explore your values and goals beyond your major/time at UNE
- Practice communicating effectively with a real audience
- Reflect on how your experiences shape your beliefs
- Connect personal experiences to broader communities (university, local, global)

Research has shown that reminding yourself of your larger goals can help with persistence when engaging with challenging tasks, such as a difficult course or project. The essay may also demonstrate aspects of the following course outcomes.

1. Articulate the opportunities and responsibilities that result from membership in a community with a shared purpose, whether university/local, regional, and/or global.
2. Demonstrate the ability to share ideas, evaluate arguments, and/or pose questions related to the disciplinary/interdisciplinary/interprofessional content, either orally or in writing.

ASSIGNMENT

Assemble and analyze the reading and writing you’ve done this semester and write a 350-500 word *This I Believe* essay. Your essay will be the product of a writing process, which you’ll document in your ePortfolio.

To help you get started, turn the purposes of the assignment into questions you can consider:

- You’ve come to UNE to get a degree, but what’s important to you beyond your specific academic goals? What else do you want to attempt, explore, or accomplish in the next 3-4 years? After that?
- If you could explain your belief to anyone, who would it be and why? Use what you know about this audience to guide your writing decisions, for example, which event(s) or experience you’ll focus on, the tone you’ll take and words you’ll choose.
- How did you develop this belief: a single big event? repeated observation or experience? Journaling or other ongoing personal reflection?
- How has leaving home (or being in conversation with new people) and trying new things given you a new lens for looking at what you’ve always believed?
- Recall those people and groups who have influenced you directly or indirectly as well as the people your actions and behaviors could influence or already might be impacting. Who do

you think might have had experiences similar to yours or who might share your beliefs? How might your beliefs impact others?

The goal is **not** to answer all of the above questions, but to consider them, and use the ideas as possible springboards into your own essay.

Appendix B in your book (p. 272-73) for key elements of the *This I Believe* essay genre will help guide your process.

GRADING:

This project counts for 20 points of your overall grade. You'll earn credit for your *This I Believe* essay by completing the following portions of the project:

Outline _____ 1 _____
 In-class writing draft and reflection _____ 1+1= _____ 2 _____
 Peer review and reflection _____ 2+1= _____ 3 _____
 Final essay _____ 10 _____
 Reflection—project as a whole _____ 2 _____
 TIB ePortfolio page complete and sent on time _____ 2 _____

For the Final essay draft, please see the rubric (below) all FYS courses will use for the project.

Note: We'll be submitting the drafts and peer review as journals as we go. We'll assemble what you are making in class, so don't worry about adding this material until then—JUST MAKE SURE TO POST ON OUR COURSE SITE FOR CREDIT.

KEY DATES

Outline _____ FRIDAY, 11/14 _____
 In-class drafting draft (300 words): _____ TUESDAY, 11/17 _____
 Peer review draft due (400-500) words: _____ FRIDAY, 11/21 _____
 Assembly of material on ePortfolio _____ TUESDAY, 11/25 _____
 Revised final draft due: _____ TUESDAY, 12/2 _____

Criteria for Success:

The final This I Believe essay will be graded based on the following criteria:

Criteria	4	3	2	1
Audience Awareness	Demonstrates excellent understanding of audience. Tone, content and rhetorical	Addresses audience well with some lapses. Tone and rhetorical	Attempts to address audience but inconsistently. Tone	Lacks clear audience awareness. Tone and purpose do not align

	strategies are skillfully matched to intended reader.	strategies are generally appropriate.	or purpose may be unclear at times.	with reader expectations.
Clarity and Organization	Clear and logical structure, well-organized ideas, smooth transitions. Easy to follow, holds reader's attention.	Mostly clear with minor disorganization. Transitions may be abrupt, but meaning is understandable.	Some disorganization or unclear structure. Ideas are clear, understandable, but flow is inconsistent.	Disorganized and difficult to follow. Ideas lack connection, and transitions are weak.
Clarity of Belief & Depth of Reflection	Beliefs and values are clearly articulated, focused, and expressed. Demonstrates strong self-reflection, insight, and connection to relevant examples.	Beliefs and values are generally clear but may lack focus or consistency at times. Strong reflection with relevant examples, though some areas may lack depth or complexity.	Beliefs are vague, broad, or inconsistently presented. Adequate reflection, but analysis is surface-level or examples lack depth.	Belief is unclear, negative in tone, or absent. Minimal reflection and limited or irrelevant examples.
Writing Quality	Polished and clear, free of significant errors. Strong command of grammar and sentence structure.	Mostly clear with minor errors in grammar, spelling, or style.	Noticeable grammar or style issues, but the essay is still understandable.	Frequent grammar errors that impede clarity and readability.
Adherence to Guidelines	Fully adheres to assignment requirements. Effectively presents a <i>This I Believe</i> essay.	Minor deviations from guidelines, but the core elements are present.	Some divergence from the assignment; key elements may be unclear or missing.	Several assignment requirements not followed; partially aligns with guidelines.