

**ENGL 1301 COMP. I**  
**ESSAY #1 – PERSONAL ESSAY**  
**“Personal Essay – Credo Assignment”**

**DUE DATES**

<b>PERSONAL ESSAY – Credo Assignment</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Hardcopy at the beginning of class</b>	<b>TurnItIn.Com by 9 pm CST</b>
<b>Rough Draft</b>	<b>10/2/13</b>	✓	✓
<b>Peer Review Workshop Worksheet</b>	<b>10/9/13</b>	✓	
<b>Peer Critiqued Drafts</b>	<b>10/9/13</b>	✓	
<b>Marked Draft by a Writing Tutor</b>	<b>10/9/13</b>	✓	
<b>Final Draft</b>	<b>10/9/13</b>		✓

**DESCRIPTION**

“This I Believe is an international organization engaging people in writing and sharing essays describing the core values that guide their daily lives. Over 100,000 of these essays, written by people from all walks of life, are archived here on our website, heard on public radio, chronicled through our books, and featured in weekly podcasts. The project is based on the popular 1950s radio series of the same name hosted by Edward R. Murrow.” (quoted from <http://thisibelieve.org>)

**RATIONALE**

For our first writing assignment, you will write a personal essay exploring a personal belief or credo (Latin for “I Believe”) similar to the “This I Believe” essays and personal philosophies. “Published writers often speak of the Personal Essay genre with profound respect for the authenticity, vulnerability, and poignancy that comes from allowing readers into their lives. As readers and writers, if we believe in certain shared strands of meaning that hold all of humanity together, these commonalities are often articulated through the stories of our lives. After all, though our individual narratives vary widely, the themes are often the same: romance, family, growing up, nature, spirituality, neighbors, home, war, and death, for example. These common experiences often create a sense of community, and the personal essay can yield moments of profound clarity as the writer and the reader share complex understanding through local turns of phrase” (quoted from *This I Believe* College Curriculum, p. 5). The personal essay is a starting place for students to begin writing with what they know and move outward toward academic, research composition.

**DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS FOR A PERSONAL ESSAY**

- 1) **Authentic Voice** – voice is a difficult feature to discuss in writing, but readers can describe the stance a writer is taking as they react to a given style, dialogue, and point of view; they must choose whether to believe or identify.
- 2) **Narrative Coherence** – the business of telling stories well includes vivid description, controlled and appropriate pacing, subtle transitions, lively dialogue, and rich character development. A personal essay generally relates a story and lessons learned; thus, if the storytelling fails, the whole essay usually fails.
- 3) **Communal Relevance** – The personal essay argues, in a way, that the beauty associated with being a human can often best be expressed through the sharing of stories. Thus, there often appear two distinct sections of a personal essay: narrative and comment. Sometimes they are neatly divided, with an immediate lapsing into a story with brief comments at the end, but such segmenting is not always the case. Other writers will choose to comment along the way, interspersing authorial intrusions into the narrative to call attention to pertinent ideas.

**PROCESS—PREWRITING**

- 1) To begin, spend some time reflecting on creeds that have shaped political, social, or religious movements you’re interested in. Spend 15-20 minutes researching statements that have galvanized a group of people or shaped a movement. Make a list or brainstorm belief statements (i.e., “I believe in music.” OR “I believe in the power of words.”)

- 2) Compose a personal credo statement that distills your unique approach to life into a short statement of no more than 250 words. Aim for focus—choose concrete language and find something that helps understand your past, present, future.
- 3) Visit [www.thisibelieve.org](http://www.thisibelieve.org) and search the essay database for submissions from your city or state *or* for essays on a theme of interest to you.
- 4) Skim quickly through the opening paragraphs of several of these essay and print copies of 3 you'd like to read.
- 5) Read through each essay the first time listening for the author's unique voice. What experiences have shaped the lives of each? How does each respond, physically or emotionally, to these experiences?
- 6) Without attempting to indicate your agreement or disagreement with the essay, write a 1–2 paragraph summary of the author's core belief and the way this belief has shaped life in the past or present. Each summary should be scrupulously accurate in recording the philosophy that guides the life and choices of each author.
- 7) Bring the essays and your summaries to class and be ready to discuss the original ways these writers responded to the assignment. How do they establish their own unique voice through each essay? We will discuss your reactions and responses in class.

### **PROCESS—ROUGH DRAFT (500 WORDS)**

- 1) For this exercise to be meaningful, you must make it wholly your own. This short statement isn't all you believe; it's simply a way to introduce others to some things you value.
- 2) You may begin with an overt "I believe" statement.
- 3) Consider moments when a belief was formed, 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.
- 4) If you cannot name your belief in one sentence, you may need to refocus to one core belief.
- 5) Say what you do believe, not what you don't believe. Avoid statements of religious dogma, preaching, or editorializing.
- 6) Make your essay about you; speak in the first person. Avoid speaking in the editorial "we." 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.
- 7) Print a hardcopy of the draft and bring to class on **October 2, 2013**. **Submit the attachment with the following title filename: firstname.lastnameRD\_Essay1.docx (.doc) to TurnItIn.Com on October 2, 2013 by 9 pm CST.**
- 8) Make an appointment with a Writing Center tutor or Askonline.com tutor and have your draft reviewed. Get the tutor's signature, date of session, and discussion areas concerning steps toward revising your essay.

### **PROCESS—IN-CLASS WORKSHOP AND REVISION/PEER-CRITIQUED DRAFTS**

- 1) Bring 3 copies of the draft. Without these, you will be asked to leave and receive a zero for this assignment.
- 2) You will be assigned in groups of 3 to give and receive feedback and suggestions on revising your essay. You will complete a "Peer Review Workshop Worksheet" to show evidence of participation.
- 3) If you haven't made an appointment with a Writing Center tutor, see step 8 in "Process—Rough Draft."

### **PROCESS—FINAL DRAFT (500 WORDS)**

- 1) Final draft must be **typed** in black ink on white paper. Follow guidelines in the "Manuscript Format" posted on the Learning Web. Include Word Count.
- 2) Submit the final draft via TurnItIn.com before the due date. **Use this filename: firstname.lastnameFD\_Essay1.docx (.doc).** The due date is: **October, 9, 2013 by 9 pm CST**.
- 3) **No hardcopies of the final draft will be accepted in class.**
- 4) Submit the following documents on the due date at the *beginning of class*:
  - Peer-critiqued drafts
  - Marked draft from a writing tutor
  - Completed "Peer Review Workshop Worksheet"
- 5) **No late work accepted for major papers.**

### **REFERENCE**

Please visit <http://thisibelieve.org> for more information or to hear a sample podcast of featured essays and personal philosophies of remarkable men and women.

**RUBRIC ASSESSMENT** – guidelines posted on the Learning Web.