

## **Prose Project**

You need to write an essay which addresses the prompt: "This I believe..."

This concept is based upon a NPR program in which Americans from all walks of life share the personal philosophies and core values which guide their daily lives. The NPR website ([www.npr.org/thisibelieve](http://www.npr.org/thisibelieve)) offers some tips and examples for writing this essay.

**Tell a story:** Be specific. Take your belief out of the ether 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 about 500 words. That's about three to five minutes when read aloud at your natural pace. (For our class purpose, your paper should be about two pages).

**Name your belief:** 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 to five minutes is a short time.

**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:** 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.

In addition to writing this essay, you will present it aloud to the class. As you write it, remember the strategies we have discussed for persuasion, for personality, and for punch. Consider those things which will make it sound strong and be memorable when you present it. You should know your material well enough that you present it not read it.

Accompanying your presentation will be art. You need to provide a piece of art which reflects and compliments the theme or mood of your speech. Before you present your speech to your audience, you need to provide the audience with information about the artist, title, style, history, and personal significance of your chosen artwork. You should look at library prints and anthologies for help. To find your art, use library and internet searches as well as time periods as guides. This artwork must be brought to me a week before so that we can digitize it and broadcast it during your presentation.