

## **Reflective Activity: “This I Believe” Essay**

### **Activity Description**

I ask students to write a 400-500 word personal essay that describes their personal philosophy. I share with them excerpts from past student pieces and direct them to read more about the project and see sample essays from the 1950s and now at: <http://thisibelieve.org/>

### **Preparation, Handouts, Resources**

Assigned readings:

M. Schwehn and D. Bass. 2006. “Chapter 7: How Shall I Tell the Story of My Life” in *Leading Lives that Matter*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdsmans Publishing. Pp. 451-485.

M. C. Bateson. 2004. “Chapter 27: Composing a Life Story” in P. Loeb’s *The Impossible Will Take a Little While*. New York: Basic Books. Pp. 207-215.

### **Learning Goals**

I want them to think about how their values have changed and how their values today move toward the people they want to be tomorrow. This is nested in a semester-long reflection about vocation.

### **Challenges/Obstacles**

Its hard to get students to open up and write in this way.

### **Recommendations**

It is bonding for the group and helps me understand some of their foundational experiences. It also gets them to stop and ask themselves what moves them to act in this world.

### **Additional**

I love this activity but I caution folks to not assign it as a one off thing. It would feel awkward placed in a middle of a course. It might help to get to know a student at the beginning of a course or in an advising relationship.

### **Tool Contributor**

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