

## Four Writing/Reading Projects

### An Overview

#### Three Scenes: Creative Nonfiction (Essay #1)

The purpose of this project is to help you learn more about yourself as a writer, see how creative writing techniques can enhance your essays, and see where intensive revision can lead. You will be asked to write an essay that explores three scenes from your life experience, and then try out different revision techniques to push your essay in new (and hopefully useful) directions. Be prepared to take risks and write a lot in the first few weeks of this class.

#### Having Your Say - “My Turn” or “This I Believe” (Essay #2)

In each issue of *Newsweek*, there is a feature called "My Turn" where a person writes about an issue important to them. Sometimes the writer is famous, a familiar name, and other times the writer is just somebody out in the world with something to say. The issues range from serious to seriously funny but they always have some personal connection to the writer. For some examples, see:

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/11884162/site/newsweek/>

From 1951-1955, Edward R. Murrow hosted *This I Believe*, a weekly radio program that reached 39 million listeners. On this broadcast, Americans from all walks of life read five-minute essays about their personal philosophy of life. They shared insights about individual values that shaped their daily actions. The radio series was a phenomenal success and spread throughout the world via radio, newspapers, and books. Fifty years later, National Public Radio and Dan Gediman, a Louisville radio producer, began inviting Americans of all ages and perspectives to examine their belief systems and then write a 350-500 word personal essay. NPR's *This I Believe* began airing nationally in April 2005. Anyone who wishes to can submit their essay via the project website, [www.npr.org/thisibelieve](http://www.npr.org/thisibelieve), for review and possible broadcast on NPR. For some examples, see:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4538138>

For this second project, we will look at how writers try to persuade and/or influence people in writing—especially in texts like a “My Turn” or a “This I Believe” essay. Then, you will be asked to either write a "My Turn" essay about something you feel strongly about and that you think others should know about too or create a “This I Believe” essay that explores a core belief that guides your daily life.

### Language Communities (Essay #3)

For this project, we will watch some videos and read some articles about language in general and about how we use different varieties of language (and sometimes different languages altogether) in different situations. With the class and individually, you will reflect on the different language communities (sometimes called discourse communities) that you are a part of. Then, you will be asked to write an essay exploring the relationships between language and identity in your own life.

### I-Search Project (Essay #4)

Outside of the English 121 classroom, people do research because they want to know about something, or they have questions they want to answer. Also, the information they're looking for benefits them in some way—helps them invest their money, fix their car, or teach more effectively. For this project, you will develop a research question related to one of three topics:

- A career/profession you are thinking of going into
- An academic major or area of study that you are thinking of pursuing
- If the first two topics do not appeal to you, you can explore a topic of your choice that has been approved by the instructor.

Unlike many traditional research projects, you will begin this one by writing about what you know about your topic before you have done any research. This information will help you develop an effective question about your topic and then you will explore different sources of information (texts, the Internet, people, etc.) to find answers to this question. The final research essay you write will be as much about the research process you went through (its successes and failures!) as it is about the information you discovered and it will be part of a larger Research Portfolio that you will have created.