

**This I Believe Essay (with revisions) (75 points total)**

**Overview:** The ultimate goal of this assignment is to write a clear, organized, and well-crafted personal essay about a belief that you hold strongly and which is related to the issue of sustainability. (Here, as in class, sustainability is defined broadly, including environmental, societal/cultural, and economic sustainability considered at many possible levels, e.g. from personal actions and responsibility to global policies). To accomplish this goal, this project will involve some time to reflect and consider what others have done, feedback from peers and instructors, and thoughtfully planned revisions, rewriting, and editing.

**Learning objectives:** This assignment is designed to address the areas of critical thinking, communication, ethics and social responsibility, and the diversity of human experience.

**Note:** This project will be broken down into several steps, which are outlined below. Pay attention to due dates and the fact that all work will be submitted in hardcopy in class. (This is different than Worldchanging response essays, which will be submitted in digital form to Blackboard directly).

**Steps:**

1. Take time to reflect on the diversity of human beliefs as expressed in different essays on beliefs. Go to <http://www.thisibelieve.org/> and review at least 5 *This I Believe* essays on topics related to sustainability (broadly defined). For each of the 5 essays you review:
  - a. Record the essay title, author, date, and topic category
  - b. Find and record the thesis statement—what does the author believe? This should be quoted from the essay. If the essay does not contain a clear thesis statement, don't count this essay and find another.
2. After reviewing these essays, write a short (paragraph or two) reflection on what these essays tell you about human beliefs on this topic. Where possible, refer to specific illustrative examples from your reviewed essays. Does there appear to be general agreement in how people think about sustainability related issues, or are viewpoints diverse? Do you think human diversity is represented in these essays (different cultures, genders, races, socioeconomic classes, sexual orientation, etc.)?
3. **DUE: Wednesday April 8 in class (10 pts)** Turn in the list of essays you reviewed with their thesis statements and your short reflection. Most of this will be done in mentor session on April 6, but you have until class April 8 to turn it in. Also, come to class Wednesday April 8 with some candidate *This I Believe* sustainability-related essay topics for your own essay.

**(OVER)**

4. Carefully look over the *This I Believe* writing instructions: <http://thisibelieve.org/essaywritingtips.html> and then write your own essay for *This I Believe* following these guidelines (e.g. for word count, style, etc.) Your topic should be something you believe strongly and is connected to the topic of sustainability (broadly defined). Your topic (belief) should be reflected in a clear thesis statement in your essay as well as in the title of your essay. Be sure to focus your essay around your thesis so that you illustrate, support, and/or explain your belief.
5. **DUE: Monday April 13 in class (15 pts version 1; 10 pts for reviews) BRING 3 printed copies of your finished essay** (if your essay is more than one page, try to print on both sides if possible). One copy will be turned in at main session; two copies take to mentor session.
6. In mentor session April 13, peer review two other students' essays and have your essay reviewed by two students. Record in your Writing Log errors you tend to make or specific things you want to work on. (Further instructions provided in mentor session.)
7. **DUE: Monday April 22 in class (15 pts)** Based on feedback from peers, instructor, and your own editing ideas from your Writing Log, formulate and write a revision plan. Here you consider each suggestion or idea and explain your plan for improving your essay. If you plan to ignore a suggestion, justify your decision. (More instructions on revisions plans will be given in class.) Turn in all 3 reviewed copies (2 peer, 1 instructor) with your revision plan.
8. **DUE: Monday April 29 in class (25 pts)** Based on feedback on your revision plan, revise your *This I Believe* essay and turn it in at the start of class. Also submit your essay to the *This I Believe* website. To submit start here with the user agreement (<http://thisibelieve.org/agree.html>).