



This semester Georgia Tech is starting a *This I Believe* series for students, faculty, and staff in conjunction with the new informal discussion program Open Forum*.

This I Believe (<http://thisibelieve.org>), a national project started in the 1950s by journalist Edward R. Murrow and continued today on NPR, invites everyday Americans to write about the core beliefs that guide their daily lives. Beyond reflecting on and developing one's own beliefs, *This I Believe* encourages "people to begin the . . . difficult task of developing respect for beliefs different from their own." Example essays include: "I Believe in the Power to Forget", "I Believe in Laughter", and "I Believe in Being Cool to the Pizza Delivery Dude".

To kick this off, we will be not only asking interested ENGL 1101 and 1102 instructors to add this project to their courses this spring but also inviting all Tech students, faculty, and staff to write their own *This I Believe* essay. Furthermore, for the students who opt in, we will be holding a contest for the *This I Believe* essays (see more below). We hope you will consider writing your own belief statement!

Throughout the Spring 2011 semester, Open Forum will be hosting a *This I Believe* contest in which students are invited to submit their own statement of personal belief. For the contest, we will be looking for essays of 350-500 words maximum. The contest deadline is **March 15, 2011**. Winners of the contest will get to read their *This I Believe* essay at a public Open Forum event and have it featured on our website. Please see below for more information on Open Forum.

If you have questions about the Georgia Tech *This I Believe* project, please contact Lindsay Anglin at lindsay.anglin@provost.gatech.edu or Dana Hartley at dana.hartley@carnegie.gatech.edu.

*Open Forum (<http://gtopenforum.gatech.edu/>), which is a weekly program on campus that promotes informal, intellectual discussion, began this fall with a series of discussion topics ranging from service and diversity to cheating and leadership. The line-up also included *This I Believe* presentations where guests, including Dean John Stein, SGA President Corey Boone, and Dr. Greg Nobles, shared their core beliefs and guiding principles by which they live. To see these and other presentations, go to <http://smartech.gatech.edu/handle/1853/34316>.



***This I Believe* Essay – Writing Guidelines**

For participants in the Georgia Tech *This I Believe* project, please use the essay writing guidelines created for the international project, as stated on the “This I Believe” website:

“We invite you to contribute to this project by writing and submitting your own statement of personal belief. We understand how challenging this is—it requires such intimacy that no one else can do it for you. To guide you through this process, we offer these suggestions:

Tell a story: Be specific. Take your belief out of the ether and ground it in the events of your life. Consider moments when 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 between 350 and 500 words. That’s about three minutes when read aloud at your natural pace.

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 one core belief, because three minutes is a very 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.”¹

¹ <http://thisibelieve.org/guidelines/>



***This I Believe* Contest**

For those students interested in participating, Open Forum is hosting a *This I Believe* contest during the Spring 2011 semester. In a short essay (350-500 words) students will reflect on the values and beliefs that drive them. We encourage students to avoid writing an opinion piece on a public issue and to look beyond religion and politics in writing their essays. The essay should tell a story that ties to the forming of their core beliefs and the guiding principles by which they live.

Deadline: March 15, 2010

Submission: Please submit your essay on the Georgia Tech *This I Believe* website at <http://www.thisibelieve.gatech.edu>. All contest entries must be in written form and must adhere to the following guidelines:

- Limit your essay to approximately 500 words.
- Tell a story that illustrates how your personal belief was shaped.
- Refrain from writing a political/religious opinion piece or an editorial on a current event.
- Please no hate speech or discriminatory language in your essay.
- Tell us what you *do* believe, not what you don't believe.
- Read and follow our essay-writing guidelines.
- Proofread your essay carefully before submitting it.

For examples of essays, please see the *This I Believe* website at <http://thisibelieve.org/>.

Contest winners will be invited to present their essays at a *This I Believe* public event at the end of the spring semester. All finalists in the contest (from which the winners will be chosen) will have their essays published online in written, oral, and/or video format. However, if desired, contest participants will be given the option to opt out of both presenting their essays and having them published online when they submit their essays online.

Contact: Lindsay Anglin at lindsay.anglin@provost.gatech.edu
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