

A Philosophical Challenge...

Socrates advised you to know yourself. Seneca told you to take life as it comes, without self-pity or excessive emotion. Bacon said you should take care to be sure your beliefs are based upon truth. Montaigne cautioned you to question what you really know; Emerson told you to trust yourself. Ayn Rand told you to program your own computer. Hesse asked you to be a seeker of contentment and meaning in life.

It is now time to apply your learning. To that end, and as a culminating activity, write a paper to share in class which explains a central belief you hold as a truth about yourself, about the world, and about what you feel is the best course of life to live. Apply the belief to at least three different areas/instances/topics. Please explain the source and development of the belief, whether it be a reading, a discussion or a private thought provoked by the curriculum. Also, please construct an allegory that serves to better explain your belief.

Or, choose five unrelated beliefs you have developed or have been validated by the readings, activities and discussions during this class. Be sure to clearly state and explain each belief. Be sure to make clear the source of the development or validation.

Or, write journal of original pithy statements on ten of the course's assigned readings.

Or, using the text of readings and remembrances of discussions, trace your journey "out of the cave."

Or, attempt to answer Socrates' favorite question: What is the best course of life to lead? Answer this question with specific references to our readings.

Or, research a topic, be it a virtue, a vice or a statement on the human condition, and write a philosophical essay about it, using the essays of Montaigne and Bacon as models. I will expect research, logic and references to what people said and did around your chosen topic, as well as your own personal experiences with it.

Each paper should reflect wisdom and/or beliefs generated by specific readings and discussions in this class and those readings and discussions should be clearly identified and/or quoted. These options are intended to lead you into a final reflection on the readings, on the class, and on yourself. Of course, we have learned the value of concrete metaphors and allegories to enhance meaning, so consider their use in each of the options above.

Your papers should be ready for sharing on Wednesday, June 10. We will also be sharing the papers on Thursday, June 11 and Friday, June 12. Please plan on being in attendance for each of these days.

Be honest, be sincere, be specific and be legendary. I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Mr. OJ



Mr. O'Leary