Kenneth C. Simpson Essay Prize
2011-2012 Competition
Rules and Deadlines

The Kenneth C. Simpson essay prize is designed to promote serious thought and reflection about the foundations and/or influence of Catholic thought in every field of study. Students who enter their essays will have done serious research into the ways in which Catholic theology, philosophy, and imagination have stimulated intellectual discourse and, in many cases, have furthered the development of a field. Essays may deal with the influence of a particular Catholic individual or group, a line of thought or inquiry, or the intersection of Catholic thought or imagination and the exploration of the unknown.

Rules

1. The Kenneth C. Simpson Essay Prize is open to all Northwestern undergraduate students in any field of study.
2. Essays are expected to be between 5,000 and 6,000 words in length, typed, double-spaced, and with appropriate citations.
3. Essays are to be original and wholly the work of the author and cannot have been published elsewhere.
4. The winning essay becomes the property of the Sheil Catholic Center at Northwestern University and will be bound and kept in the Sheil Library.
5. The winner of the Simpson essay prize is awarded $1,000 and reads the essay in a public lecture on the Northwestern campus.

Deadlines

1. The deadline for submission in this year’s competition is May 1, 2012. The prize winner will be announced on May 15. The public lecture will take place on Tuesday, May 29, at 6:30 pm on campus.
2. Submissions may be made electronically to Mary Deeley, Director of the Christ the Teacher Institute, at m-deeley@northwestern.edu. They may also be dropped off at:

Sheil Catholic Center
2110 Sheridan Road
Evanston, IL 60201

Please address to the attention of Mary Deeley.
Examples of possible titles (I made these up – these aren’t actual papers)

“Catholic Education and the Shaping of American Society in the Late Nineteenth Century”

“The Role of Catholic Social Teaching in the War Protests of the 1960’s”

“The Idea of Relationship as a Key to Looking at the Behavior of Sub-Atomic Particles”

“Recovering a sense of “sin” in Contemporary American Culture”

“Catholic Perspectives on the Possibility of Life on Other Planets”

“The Application of the Scientific Method to the Spiritual life – and vice versa”

Some Steps Toward Writing Your Essay

1. Begin early. The essay is due May 1, 2012, but it is an extra writing assignment of 15-20 pages on top of your regular course work which means you will have to squeeze it in – maybe doing some work over Christmas and Spring break.

2. Think about your major or minor and list all the reasons you are passionate about it.

3. Now begin to think about Catholicism, and everything you know about it up to this point. I suggest using the Nicene Creed as a beginning guide to the way Catholics look at the world:
   a. We believe there is a God with whom we have a familial relationship. that God is greater than anything else and created all things, both those we can see and those we cannot. That creation is good.
   b. We believe that Jesus of Nazareth is God, born of Mary and a human being. He suffered and died for our sake and rose from the dead. He reigns as God now where he calls us to faithfulness and relationship with God
   c. We believe that the Holy Spirit is God who dwells with us still and is in relationship with the Father and the Son. We believe that the Church is blessed as a gathering of God’s people - one, holy, and apostolic; that there are those who have lived the life we are called to, that we have found mercy and forgiveness with God, and that our lives have purpose and meaning. there is a hope to which we are called.

4. How we live Catholic life, how we think about God, and how we use imagination to talk about these things can be found in literature, theologies, music, sermons, the passionate embrace of learning that is the rich tradition of the Catholic Church
over the centuries. Look at these things as well and see what the church might say about some aspect of nuance of your field of study.

5. Ask for help. Do you have the beginnings of a great idea and want to talk it over and get suggestions for where you might begin your research? Contact Mary Deeley (m-deeley@u.northwestern.edu) or Fr. John Kartje (frjohnkartje@gmail.com) or one of the Catholic professors in the religious studies department (Cristie Traina, Robert Orsi, Michelle Molina) or one of the Catholic professors in your department for help in doing your research.

6. Sheil has a small library of resources and a much larger one can be found at the Garrett Library and main libraries of NU

7. It may be helpful to draw up an outline of your proposed essay and bring it in to talk over. I will talk to any student submitting an essay from now until May.