Reflections on Core
By Jeff Macke

During this semester of core I have learned much through my writing and also through the class. I came in at semester and I had heard things about core, mostly horror stories of unimaginably long reading assignments and the stories about the millions of papers I would have to write. Looking back at the semester, I really would not relay the same aspersions about core to future students. While I did not love everything about the class, I never found myself counting down the minutes in class. Discussions were usually interesting and I enjoyed thinking about the different issues discussed in core. I also found out that I enjoy reading. This fact came as a complete surprise and I am still recovering from that shock. While people complained about the amount of reading we had to do, I found myself reading ahead in certain books. Most of this came from the selections of the books and my interest in their topics. Transferring schools at semester was a challenge for me, but unlike most of the challenges I previously faced, I looked at it more as an opportunity than a problem. For the first time I was looking to learn in class. Instead of just going through the motions, I turned the light on inside my head, and read analytically. One of the things I was interested in reading and learning about was faith, and core did not disappoint. I really enjoyed reading: Luther, Silence, A Grief Observed, and Travelling Mercies. These books helped me to see faith in a broad sense like Luther’s work, and also how individual faith is lived out in the other three books. I liked Travelling Mercies because she was an ordinary person that was looking for and finding God’s grace in our lives. So now I find myself doing weird things while I read, like highlighting and underlining key quotations, even if I am not reading for a class.
Since the basis for the class is reading, and I obviously picked up on that, I was able to get more out of the writing part of the class. I did not find it particularly challenging to write reflections and essays on books that I had read, because I had actually read the books. One of my problems in writing has always been reading and revising my own papers. Before this class and even at the beginning of the semester I always hated looking over papers I had written. I also hated reading peer reviews or teachers comments. I think that I was embarrassed for some reason; I never thought that what I had written was good enough. Throughout this course I have been able to get over that fear. I think the new confidence comes through forcing myself to read comments and take advice from others. I also found that when I read the comments, most of them were positive and that helped me gain confidence, and I was more willing to hear the negative things. While it may not seem like a great feet for some, I am now able to read through my papers and critically think about how to make them better. I found that when I do this, my paper improves tremendously. Now when I read comments or peer reviews I scan through for things that I need to improve on, because I know that is where I will be able to make the paper better. I feel better about my writing when I have read through it and I have seen how it accomplishes the goal I set forth.

The papers I chose for the portfolio are the personal narrative on love, the worker profile, and the grief paper. The personal narrative on love tells the story of how my family dealt with the loss of my aunt and grandmother. Writing that paper was a good way for me to find closure. The deaths occurred at a time that I now reflect upon as the period of unenlightenment, mostly because I was not very mature. Because of this lack of maturity I never was able to come to any conclusions or react in a normal manner. As I was writing the paper I was able to make connections between events and see how the deaths affected my family. It fits in nicely with my
third paper, because that paper is on grief. As you will see in my papers, I did not have a healthy outlet. Writing the paper was a good way to put my thoughts down, and express my feelings. The grief paper reinforces ideas that I express in my personal narrative. The conclusions that I come to in the end of my paper, are similar to things that C.S. Lewis wrote in his book *A Grief Observed*. We both came out of the situation with a stronger faith. The worker profile was also a good way to take a look at my father’s life, and try to capture him in a paper. I learned a lot from the interview and I gained a new respect for him as a father through writing that paper. I like how that paper’s focus was my family, and the personal narrative was also about my family. Maybe it was the move away from home, or maybe it was just plain sentimentality, but I feel like I was able to view the family in a new light.

This semester in core has provided me with a great way to grow as a writer and also as a critical thinker. I think my semester in core is exactly what the program was intended for. They wanted to create an open discussion class that infused students with new ideas and helped to reinforce your personal identity in a time where personal growth is most prevalent. I certainly have gained much from this semester.