This semester has definitely changed my outlooks on a lot of things, and it has been a very good experience, especially in the first year of college. I have learned a lot about myself and a lot about the beliefs of others and understanding other people’s views. I have always loved discussion classes, but none have gotten this in depth and personal as this one has. The books that we read definitely affected the class discussions, making them more interesting and bringing up a lot of good arguments.

I think that overall from this course, I have mainly realized that the real identity that most people have is masked by a lot of other things. I personally believe that most of us do not even actually know what our true identity is because we have spent so long hiding it and trying to convince people that we are one thing that we have forgotten what we actually believe. It is so much easier to go along with everyone else than to say what we actually believe if it is going to put us in an awkward position. For example, in Into the Wild, Chris McCandless had a “perfect” life growing up. He was from a wealthy family, had his life figured out. He found that the only way that he could find his real identity was to get away from everyone else. He ran away into the woods, without the material objects that the world tells one that they need or anything else for that matter. He was so tired of living in the “bubble” of his perfect all American life and putting on the show and hiding his identity that he finally had to leave it all behind. I think this is a little bit of an extreme but definitely a good example of what a lot of us want to do sometimes. I know that sometimes I personally am so tired of putting on a show that I just want to quit and be like “Screw it!” (Sorry for the inappropriate wording, but that was the best way to describe it.) I know a lot of people that are very different in a big group than they are when it is just us two, and that just gives yet another example of someone being afraid of their true identity and hiding it from those who would think poorly of their true identity. Every one lies at some point about their beliefs to fit it, and it is just flat out sad that we have to lie to feel comfortable in our society.

I have also learned that every person is entitled his or her own opinions, and that those opinions can rarely be changed. This and trying to fit in may seem a little contradicting, but these opinions are exactly what helps you fit it. For example, in In the Lake of the Woods, we do not actually get an ending; we have to figure it out for ourselves. Some people choose to believe the best in people, while others choose to believe the worst. I chose to believe the worst in John, and the others who chose to believe the worse and I gained up together, and those who chose to believe the best gained up together. No matter how much someone tried to convince the class of the fairytale ending of John and Kathy running away together or the horrid ending of John murdering Kathy, most people still stuck with their own opinions. This of course goes to the semester question “Are humans inherently good or evil?”, and I think that people will do whatever it takes to get what they want, even if it means being evil. No matter what anyone tells me, I will believe that humans are inherently evil. I am entitled to my stubborn opinion, just like everyone else in this world, which is why no one can ever agree on everything.

Lastly, I think that the place of a single human being in society is not that big of deal. Honestly, no one cares about anyone but himself or herself. Sure I personally love my mom and dad, but if they did not come to work one day, hardly anyone would notice, much less care. Like I have already discussed, a person lies to fit into a group, but finding a group of friends who care about you is a lot harder than just finding a group of friends. It takes a special person to accept you AND care about you, especially when you are not putting on a show. In Slapstick, they try to create artificial families so that everyone feels wanted and loved, but it just ends up leaving some people out, and it is not right. I do not want someone to love me or help me because they feel like they have to do so, and if it were not for people feeling like they had to, a lot of people would just be selfish and do whatever was best for them (which I also saw in the Katrina research).

With all of this being said, I think my favorite reading that we had in the class was the Civilization and Its Discontents by Freud (and no, I am not just saying that to suck up and get an A in the class). I really, really enjoyed and agreed with how he looked at society; it is true that everything we do, we actually do to be loved and wanted. That is how any person lives his or her life, to be liked by others. It made me realize how important those around me are and how my life is based on them and their happiness. I like being loved, and being loved makes me happy, but I want to be loved and wanted for the right reasons. I realize that I want people to accept me for me, the longer that I try to hide my true self, the harder it is going to be to hold on to the real me. I feel like every single day that one puts on a show; he or she forgets what you truly believe. It is hard to be whom you want, but in the end it is probably worth it.