Pomona College Essay Brainstorm

Prompt 2: Through the Summer Undergraduate Research Program, Pomona provides students up to $4,000 to conduct research with a Pomona professor on any topic in the arts and humanities, social sciences, or natural sciences. Imagine you received one of these grants. What would you research and why is this topic important to you? How would you know if you had been successful in your research?

Prompt 1: Pomona's Critical Inquiry course is required of all first-year students, and is designed to be highly interdisciplinary and engaging. Recent class titles include: ''The Politics of Classical Art,'' ''Seeing Science,'' and ''The Theatre and Environmental Activism.'' Imagine you were hired to design and teach a Critical Inquiry course. Describe the title of the class, its contents, and why you chose it.

Brainstorm:

* Prompt 1:
  + The Physics of Volleyball
  + The Physics of Swimming
  + Cognitive Science
  + The brain activity behind team sports
  + The process of learning to read
  + How children learn
  + The Philosophy of human existence
  + The Meaning of Life, the Universe, and Everything (aka The impact of books on children’s learning/the impact of books on popular culture views and focuses)
  + The neuroscience of personality
  + Impacts of social media on mental health and intelligence?
  + Eras of children’s stories and the changes that occurred (what caused them, and why?)
  + Bellwether theory… the study of trends and books?
  + FML-internet lingo (l33t speak) and the linguistic implications
* Prompt 2:

Topics of Interest:

* Language
  + Internet (2)
    - Text/Internet speak
    - How the language came to be, similarities with other languages, whether it is learned in a similar way (morphemes? Etc.) Is internet language a single language or are there different dialects? Is it more a method of communication than a language? Is it causing changes in the English language? Negative consequences? Are there rules?
      * For example: Eric said: "you are joking af” which is clearly grammatically incorrect
    - Important to me because I think languages are interesting and it is interesting how this relates to how people think, and how it develops in the mind
      * How do people represent this language in their mind, and is it significantly different from other languages?
    - I would know if I was successful when I see effects in people’s brains from MRIs or social science studies, when I am able to make meaningful connections between languages, or when I can see a trend in the learning process and usage. The ability to create a reasonable and helpful theory on the topic and learn much more about the way it works would be success for me.
* Books
  + The Meaning of Life, the Universe and Everything (1)
    - The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy
    - (aka Philosophy and Literature…the eternal question of books and their effects on our lives)
    - Discuss the impact of books on popular culture (focuses)
    - Go through trends through the ages and the books that followed or preceded
      * Figure out which came first (the chicken or the egg, the book or the trend)
    - Science fiction books continue throughout time, but with more realistic topics? Or more crazy dreaming because many previous sci-fi books almost came true/
    - Look from a literary perspective and a social science perspective (anthropological-studying people)
    - The history of series
      * Classic books vs. new books
      * What makes a book a classic?
      * What makes them continue being popular and stand the test of time?
    - Do books cover those essential questions of the universe or merely create them (/add to them) by their subject matter?
      * Books explain the maybes of life and cause people to wonder about the truth
      * Their calls to action or moral questions really just cause people to question themselves, but don’t provide answers
    - I chose this because I love reading and am fascinated by books, while at the same time, I wonder about philosophy, how people think, and how this connects to society and how the world works. I wanted a class that would make people think about everyday ideas as well as big new ideas. Something meta, so students would have to think about what they do personally on these topics. And I wanted a chance for people to read a lot of different books and explore important bits of all of them from different perspectives.

Have you ever read a book and been instantly filled with thousands of mindblowing questions? And you just wanted to rant about for days on end and figure out the meaning?

Reading books is an inherently philosophical experience. Books reflect the big questions of life, and the small. They resonate with me and amaze me. I want to share that with you.

My class, The Meaning of Life, the Universe and Everything, covers the philosophical questions, answers and examples brought up in books. We will look into the effects these topics have on readers and society, and what truth can be found in them. Some philosophical topics are brought up for the first time in books, while others are covered in books after their birth. Which came first, the chicken or the egg?

One could argue that books are considered classics and stand the test of time when they cover common human problems, and these all tend to be about philosophy.

The title of the class comes from the book *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, a science fiction book in which the main characters find a supercomputer designed to answer the question of life, the universe and everything. (The answer given is 42). This is somewhat satirical, but the question is a real topic that you can find in all books, and we will search for it in literature.

We will go over that book, along with *1984,* which covers the topic of solipsism among many others.

If a book ever made you rethink your entire world and be in a state of shock for an extended period of time, then you understand my motivation for this class. I want to share this experience with the rest of you...