FREEWRITING

Instructor: Nathan Nobis

1. Brief Description of in-class writing exercise:
   See below.

2. Context for the exercise:
   Beginning of class, typically

3. Goal(s) of the exercise:
   • Get people thinking
   • Develop ideas for discussion
   • Show statistics that their ideas (or some of them) have been held by many “famous” folks in history and/or at present

4. Common results of the exercise:
   Success!

5. Student responses to the exercise:
   They like it.

Exercises:

ON SINGER’S POND

On the way to class, you walk by a fountain and notice a small child floundering in the water. You notice that the child is about to drown. You notice that you are the only one around who could save the child. You could easily save the child, although this would result in you getting a little wet and dirty and, perhaps, missing your class.

Should you save the child? Why or why not? Explain and defend your answer.

QUICK SURVEY QUESTION

Suppose an innocent person is brutally murdered. (If you do not think this is wrong, assume it is wrong.) Explain why this action is wrong. (Note: I am not asking for the

(Con’t next page)
causes for why you believe it is wrong: I'm not looking for an answer like 'I believe it is wrong because I was raised to believe that it is wrong.' I am asking you to explain what it is about actions of murder that makes them wrong, or to develop a hypothesis about why murder is wrong.)

Answer: I believe murder is wrong because . . .

GOD

Why do some people believe there is a God?
Why do some people believe there is not a God?
What reasons do people give for and against their belief that there is (or isn't) a God?

A SOCRATIC EXERCISE

In Plato's famous dialogue, The Apology, Socrates asserts what is surely one of the most famous words of wisdom in the whole of Western philosophy:

"The unexamined life is not worth living."

Use the rest of this sheet to answer two questions:
• What does this Socratic claim mean?
• Do you think it is true?

After the class has spent five to ten minutes on this assignment, we'll discuss what you have written. Don't worry, you won't have to turn this in.