Take a moment, then, to consider the beliefs that guide the lives of others, beliefs that may confirm your own, or challenge them, or even open your mind to something new.”

-Jay Allison
WELCOME TO MTSU!

We want to take a moment to welcome you to the Middle Tennessee State University family. Whether or not to attend college is a big decision and narrowing it down to one choice is an even tougher one. We are honored that you chose MTSU to help you reach your career and personal goals.

Our Summer Reading Program choice for 2015 is *This I Believe II*, edited by Jay Allison. *This I Believe II* presents the hearts and minds of a diverse group of people, both past and present, whose beliefs reveal the American spirit at its best. Practical yet reflective, varied yet familiar, human yet universal, the statements of personal conviction collected here are ultimately a testament to that crucial endeavor known simply as listening—and to the insight, empathy, and self-contemplation that can only be achieved through listening. *This I Believe II* teaches without preaching.

Just like the themes in the book, you too will experience moments in your college career that might be challenging, emotional and even historical. As you step on campus, you will meet new people, have new responsibilities and encounter a new way of life. You will go through a period of adjustment, having to balance your classes, studies, work time and social life. The MTSU Administrative and Faculty members are here to support you and ensure you are successful.

Thank you for choosing MTSU and we welcome you!

Sincerely,

Your MTSU Family

MTSU RESOURCES

- Phillips Bookstore (located on first floor of the Student Union Building)
  www.mtsu.edu/phillips

- Website for the Summer Reading Program
  www.mtsu.edu/summerreading

- MT One Stop
  www.mtsu.edu/one-stop

HELPFUL LINKS

- Official Website for the book:
  www.thisibelieve.org/about

- Website of the publisher:
  us.macmillan.com/thisibelieve/JayAllison
MEET THE AUTHOR

Jay Allison is one of public radio’s most honored producers. He has produced hundreds of nationally broadcast documentaries and features for radio and television. His work has earned him the duPont-Columbia and five Peabody Awards, and he was the 1996 recipient of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting’s Edward R. Murrow Award for outstanding contributions to public radio, the industry’s highest honor. He was the curator and producer of This I Believe on NPR and he produces The Moth Radio Hour. Before his career in broadcasting, Jay was a theater director in Washington, D.C. He is also the founder of the public radio stations for Martha’s Vineyard, Nantucket, and Cape Cod where he lives.

“My father, Edward R. Murrow, said that ‘fresh ideas’ from others helped him confront his own challenges. This superb collection of thought-provoking This I Believe essays, both from the new program heard on NPR and from the original 1950s series, provides fresh ideas for all.”

—Casey Murrow, Education Publisher

The cumulative effect of these ‘personal credos’ is inspiring and invigorating.”

- Chicago Tribune

Just like the themes in the book, you too will experience moments in your college career that might be challenging, emotional and even historical.”

- Jay Allison
OPPORTUNITIES TO VISIT WITH AUTHOR JAY ALLISON

We are thrilled to have Jay Allison, editor of *This I Believe II*, visit the campus of Middle Tennessee State University this summer to help us welcome our new students and start off the new academic year.

**Sunday, August 23, 2015 at 2 p.m.**

The Distinguished Lecture Committee has invited Mr. Allison to speak at MTSU’s University Convocation. It is the kick off of the new school year, and all MTSU students, parents, alumni, faculty and staff are invited to attend.

Please join us after Convocation for the President’s Picnic in Walnut Grove.

SEVERAL DEPARTMENTS WILL USE *THIS I BELIEVE II* IN THE CLASSROOM, INCLUDING:

- University 1010
- Journalism
- English
- Education
- Political Science
- Social Work
- Speech & Theatre
- History
- Psychology
- Scholar’s Academy
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Dramatic events such as Hurricane Katrina and the Iraq War are topics in many of these essays. How, if at all, have recent events shaped your beliefs?

2. Belief in mankind is a common theme among Ernesto Haibi, Roald Hoffmann, and many more. What are some of the recurring threads in these essays? What are their differences? How do these essays stand in light of Yinong Young-Xu’s “A Potential for Brutality”? Can these views be reconciled?

3. Tony Hawk, a skateboarder, Yolanda O’Bannon, a secretary, and Dan Tani, an astronaut, write about doing what they love. What does it take to follow one’s own path? What sacrifices are required? What would you be doing, if you could?

4. Several of the essays discuss the role music can play in discovering belief, such as Bela Fleck’s thoughts on figuring out his own way to do things, Yo-Yo Ma’s observations on exploring cultures and traditions, and Joan Tower’s view on the power of music. Why do you think music can be such a powerful tool in determining beliefs?

5. Susan Cooke Kittredge writes, “I believe in mending.” Do we all need mending? She is starting with her pajamas. Where would you start?

6. Laura Shipler Chico discussed the three qualities she’d like her child to have. What three qualities would you choose for a child? How about for yourself or a mate?

7. Robin Baudier and Andy Blowers turned adversity into what Baudier calls “strange blessings.” Is there anything in your own life that could be called a strange blessing?

8. David Buetow believes in his dog. How does looking beyond the human—to animals, things, and places—influence the way we believe or behave?

9. Among the vastly different views on marriage in the world are Corinne Colbert’s belief that her husband is “good enough” and Betsy Chalmers’s perspective of loyalty to an incarcerated spouse. Are there any universal truths about marriage?

10. This book includes essays from students, as well as essays on growing old. What differences or similarities do you find between these age-specific essays, if any?

11. Do you agree with Sister Helen Prejean, that what we do is what we believe? If so, would you want to change anything you do to better match your beliefs? Do you think that most people would be proud to claim their actions as beliefs?
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONT’D)

12. If peace begins with one person, as Ivory Harlow believes, how can each of us contribute? Do any of these essays inspire you to action?

13. What do you believe? What were your greatest influences in shaping those beliefs? How have your beliefs changed throughout your life?

14. Has there been someone in your life who instilled your beliefs in you or inspired you in that way?

15. Is there a time when your core beliefs were shaken or tested, perhaps in ways that were uncomfortable or dangerous?

“The whole collection creates a context in which to ponder your own philosophy. Consider it an invitation from seventy-five essayists to write one of your own.”

-Jay Allison