RRJ activity name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

INCLUDE DON’T INCLUDE

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| --- | --- | --- |
| COLUMN 1 | 1. Direct quotes  2. Paraphrases of important passages  3 . Line numbers and/or page numbers | 1. Examples of terms (highlighted, annotated, identified in text itself)  2. Definitions for unfamiliar words (highlighted, annotated, defined in text itself)  3. No less than 3 key passages; no more than 5 key passages |
| COLUMN 2 | 1. A response for everything found in column 1  2. Questions specific to that passage  3. Connections to other texts  4. Analysis of importance of passage  5. Analysis of terms found in passage | 1. Summary. |

FINAL STEP: At the end of the document, include a brief (3-4 sentence) summary of the text.

*Background: During the relatively sane election year of 2015, Sen. Marco Rubio (FL, R) said the following: “We need more welders and less philosophers.” Apparently the philosophers (or one of them, anyway) took exception to that fact. Of course, by 2016 such a relatively benign and innocent comment made by a political candidate would be largely dismissed because 2016 proved that politics is crazy. Crazy pants.*

"Why I’m a Professor of Philosophy and Religion" by Alan Levinovitz / Slate.com / 12 November 2015 / accessed 13 Nov. 2015

Dear Sen. Marco Rubio,

I’m writing to you instead of grading papers, because the only thing more tedious than grading, as any philosophy and religion professor will tell you, is finishing the dissertation that earned you the privilege.

I’m also writing this instead of working on a ludicrously specialized article that examines Grimms’ fairy tales—actually one 5 fairy tale, *Lucky Hans*; indeed, importantly, *Lucky Hans* can be translated as *Happy Hans* because … screw it, anyone interested can just read the article if it ever comes out—I’m writing this instead of working on an article that only 10 people will see, reviewers included.

So yes, indeed, a lot of academia is useless [nonsense]. (Indeed, I’ve used *indeed* three times already. Academic writing is the best.) You made that clear in the fourth Republican presidential debate when you said that America needs “[more 10 welders and less philosophers](http://www.slate.com/blogs/moneybox/2015/11/11/philosophers_speak_up_after_rubio_debate_jab.html)” and complained that higher education is “outdated” and “doesn’t teach 21st-century skills.” I should just quit and live the good life, like my attorney, doctor, and investment banker classmates from college and graduate school (Stanford and the University of Chicago—what a colossal waste, right?) who defend innocents, save lives, and make tons of money and donate said money to all the causes I’d donate to if I weren’t wasting my education on a low- paying joke of a job. Maybe I should even become a politician, Mr. Rubio—surely our nation needs more of those?**Tru**

**mp on Vaccines**

15 But I won’t quit. I’d never quit. This job is awesome. Investment bankers would be lucky to have it. In fact, after this comes out and goes viral, droves of them will retire, seek jobs as adjunct philosophy professors, and the economy will improve slightly.

A key part of my job is identifying and fighting the stupid wherever it is found.

I won’t quit because my colleagues and I are part of a sacred order, bound to seek out and profess truth, no matter how 20 complicated or unappealing that truth might be. The truth about evolution, for example—and why people like you, Sen. Rubio, seem incapable of believing in it.

I won’t quit because there’s no feeling like the one I get when a student says my class has changed his or her life. It’s as if I’ve performed alchemy or magic: With nothing more than a powerful set of symbols (and a PowerPoint), I can, on occasion, alter the very fabric of people’s reality. It’s like church, but for everyone.

25 Like any sacred order, academia suffers from the standard list of problems: corruption, superficiality, conservatism (of the generic, not political, kind), cumbersome bureaucracy, perpetual underfunding, self-doubt.

But I’m pretty damn sure the self-doubt is unwarranted, even in the case of the ever-beleaguered humanities. Because any student who has had the pleasure of taking a philosophy class knows that debating the merits of the humanities—debating the merits of anything, really—is itself a humanistic endeavor, and we ignore the rigorous study of proper argumentation at 30 our own peril.

Maybe you just don’t care. Having watched the presidential debates, I think it’s safe to say that proper argumentation isn’t the highest value for you and your colleagues. In fact, humanities professors like me work against many of your core values. Explaining the origin and persistence of creationist pseudoscience? Religion and philosophy. Shutting down racists and sexists who explain discrimination with “natural differences”? Anthropology and history. We can’t take all the credit, of 35 course, but the fact that the arc of history seems to bend toward justice is due, at least in part, to the efforts of humanities scholars.

Sen. Rubio, rants like yours about the uselessness of academe can be disheartening. (Same goes for you, President Obama, when you ignore the humanities and call only for more STEM education.) But if there’s anything we academics are able to do, it’s to recognize that these rants are poorly argued and lacking in evidence. Often they are the self-congratulatory 40 blather of those whose success is predicated—in more and less obvious ways—on the existence of higher education, but who in hindsight credit that success solely to innate ability. In short, the rants are stupid, and a key part of my job is identifying and fighting the stupid wherever it is found.

So I won’t quit, even in the face of your derogatory comments. I won’t quit because without the institution for which I stand, history would be twisted and forgotten, arguments would devolve into shouting, and truth would lose its 45 professional evangelists. Since I am certain of all this, I cherish my place in the ivory tower—which, contrary to popular belief, is located smack in the middle of the real world, where it continues its ancient mission of making that world a better, wiser place.

Can you say the same of your own mission, Sen. Rubio?

COLUMN 1 COLUMN 2