English 1B **In-class essay #3 Brains and Hard Work**

**What to write:** Write a well-developed essay in which you both refer to the ideas in the passages below and respond with your own views on the subject. You should have a point to make and relate it to the points that the other writers—Daniel Pink and Bill Maxwell--make here.

\* Write for an SJSU audience, as if you were writing this for the *Spartan Daily* as a guest columnist. They won’t have read the pieces you are referring to, so remember to summarize the prompt clearly enough, with enough context. Use a title that will attract the right audience, and put a hook in the introduction, as we discussed.

\*Draw on your own personal experience, observations, and/or reading, to support your thesis and advance the conversation. Try to avoid clichés, especially in your thesis.

\*Remember to use descriptive details, tell stories, use definitions, examples, compare/contrast, etc. Use whichever of the modes you think would be appropriate.

\* Your essay should include both summary and response, but focus on response—what you are adding to the conversation.

\*Aim for AT LEAST 3 pages, if your handwriting is of average size, double spaced (skipping lines), More is better, usually.

**1)** From ***Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*** (a book) by Daniel Pink

Carol Dweck, a psychology professor at Stanford University, [has found in her research that] people can hold two different views of their own intelligence. Those who have an “entity theory” believe that intelligence is just that—an entity. It exists within us, in a finite supply that we cannot increase. Those who subscribe to an “incremental theory” take a different view. They believe that while intelligence may vary slightly from person to person, it is ultimately something that, with effort, we can increase.

To analogize to physical qualities, incremental theorists consider intelligence as something like strength. (Want to get stronger and more muscular? Start pumping iron.) Entity theorists view it as something more like height. (Want to get taller? You’re out of luck.) If you believe intelligence is a fixed quantity, then every educational and professional encounter becomes a measure of how much you have. If you believe intelligence is something you can increase, then the same encounters become opportunities for growth. In one view, intelligence is something you demonstrate; in the other, it’s something you develop. [. . . .]

Since incremental theorists believe that ability is malleable, they see working harder as a way to get better. By contrast . . . the entity theory requires a diet of easy successes. In this schema, if you have to work hard, it means you’re not very good. [. . . .] In a sense, entity theorists want to look like masters without expending the effort to attain mastery.

**Turn the page for the second passage**

2) **from a column by Bill Maxwell, 1994, published in the *Tampa Bay Times***

A student told me last week that he was withdrawing from composition. “I don’t think it’s fair for you to make us write two research papers,” he said. “It’s too much reading and writing.” Based on my twenty years of teaching experience, I’m convinced that this student is typical of millions of others nationwide.

Too many American students, from middle school through college, believe that education should come easy, that is should be fun and should make them feel good about themselves. Besides its naivete, this feel-good movement is dangerous because, by insisting that students feel good at all costs, it institutionalizes mediocrity, while placing students’ individual egos at the center of learning. As such, this come-easy trend debases the main purpose of education.

“It’s not the aim of education to make the student feel good about himself or herself,” writes John Searle, a philosophy professor at UC Berkeley. “[. . . .] Complacency is the very opposite of educational life. The dirty little secret of intellectual life is that first-rate work requires an enormous amount of effort, anxiety, and even desperation.”

**About the authors**:

Daniel H. Pink “is the author of four provocative books about the changing world of work — including [. . .] #1 New York Times bestseller, Drive. His books have been translated into 33 languages. Dan lives in Washington, DC, with his wife and their three children.” (quoted on his web site)

Bill Maxwell Taught English at Kennedy-King College in Chicago for 18 years, and wrote columns for the *Tampa Bay* *Times* from 1994 to 2004, when he left to teach journalism at Stillman College in Alabama. He returned to the *Bay Times* editorial board in August 2006, where he writes now. Before this, he also worked as an investigative journalist, and he served in the Marines.