

The Elie Wiesel Foundation
PRIZE IN ETHICS – 2026 Essay Contest
INFORMATION & GUIDELINES

Awards:

Financial awards will be made to the winners in amounts determined at the sole discretion of The Elie Wiesel Foundation.

In prior years, scholarship awards have been as follows:

- First Prize – \$10,000
- Second Prize – \$5,000
- Third Prize – \$3,000
- Honorable Mentions – \$1,000

All winners also receive a fully funded trip (travel, lodging, and food stipend) to New York City for a full-day Ethics Seminar and the Prize in Ethics Awards Celebration on a date determined by the Foundation.

Attendance at all programming is required to receive the Prize.

Eligibility:

- Open to registered full-time undergraduate students at accredited four-year colleges or universities in the United States during the Spring 2026 semester, who will continue their studies in the Fall 2026 semester.
- Students studying abroad in Spring 2026 or Fall 2026 remain eligible if considered enrolled full-time in a U.S.-accredited institution.

Essay Topic for 2026:

Essay Theme: Silence, Conscience, and Responsibility

Is silence an act of compassion or complicity?

When does silence protect dignity and when does it betray it?

When silence becomes complicit, what is your moral responsibility?

Do we owe the world our voice or does the world sometimes need our silence to heal?

Reflect on a time, in your life or in the world, when silence itself became an ethical choice.

What did that moment teach you about conscience, courage, and responsibility?

Engage us. Enlighten us. Explore the ethics of any question that moves you, whether drawn from the tension between silence and speech, or from any other moral challenge, close to home or across the world. We are eager to learn from you.

What the Readers Look For

- Clear articulation and genuine grappling with an ethical dilemma.
- Adherence to guidelines and careful proofreading.
- Observation of Standard English usage (grammar, punctuation, mechanics).
- Thoughtful, tightly focused essays demonstrating originality and imagination.
- Eloquence of writing style and unity of purpose.

Essays will be judged on:

- The quality of writing,

- The clarity of the ethical problem or issue, and
- The depth of ethical analysis, including reflections on right and wrong, justice and injustice, and the broader moral implications.

Essay Format

- Length: 2,500–3,500 words.
- Essays should raise questions, identify dilemmas, and explore ethical challenges in accordance with the annual prompt.
- May be written in a formal or informal voice, but an individual voice must be evident.
- May take analytical, biographical, historical, literary, philosophical, psychological, sociological, or theological form.
- Must be the original, unpublished work of one student. Papers previously submitted for class are acceptable.
- AI-generated or AI-assisted writing is strictly prohibited.
- Only one essay per student per year.
- Must be written in English, titled, double-spaced, 12-point readable font (e.g., Times New Roman), with 1" margins and numbered pages.
- Submissions are judged anonymously — do not include your name, school, or identifying references on the essay or title page.

The Elie Wiesel Foundation will not tolerate any expression of hatred or discriminatory content, as determined in its sole discretion. Essays containing such content will be disqualified.

Faculty Sponsor (Optional)

Faculty sponsorship is optional but encouraged. Please utilize the following guidelines if your submission is reviewed by a Faculty Sponsor.

- Any interested professor may act as a Faculty Sponsor.
- Work with your Faculty Sponsor on any final edits before submission.
- Upon submitting your entry online, your reported Faculty Sponsor will automatically receive an email link to verify sponsorship.
- If your Faculty Sponsor declines or fails to verify your essay by the deadline, your submission cannot be judged.
- The Faculty Sponsor needs to verify the essay prior to the deadline on **January 20, 2026, at 5:00 PM Pacific Time.**

Enrollment Verification

- Upload an official enrollment verification (Registrar letter on institutional letterhead or National Student Clearinghouse document) confirming full-time undergraduate status for Spring 2026.
- Certify that you intend to continue your studies in Fall 2026.
- By submitting an essay, you are deemed to have made this certification.

Submission of Materials

- Entries must be submitted online at www.ethicsprize.org.
- Upload your essay and enrollment verification as PDF files. If opting for a Faculty Sponsor, their name and contact information, including email, must be provided with this documentation.
- You may edit an unfinished submission until the final deadline. Once submitted, no further edits are allowed.
- Due to volume, no materials will be critiqued or returned.

Contest Deadline:

 **January 20, 2026, by 5:00 PM Pacific Time**

Use of Name, Image, and Likeness

By submitting an essay, you acknowledge that if selected as a winner, The Elie Wiesel Foundation may use your name, image, likeness, voice, biographical information, and essay (in whole or in part) for publication, educational, and promotional purposes without additional consent or compensation.

Ethics Prize Alumni Network

All prize recipients become members of the Elie Wiesel Prize in Ethics Alumni Network, a lifelong community inspired by the legacy of Elie Wiesel – the challenge to us all.

Building on Professor Wiesel's teaching, alumni are encouraged to deepen their understanding of ethics and leadership, and to advance their own leadership skills and potential in service of humanity.

Through this network, winners continue to engage with the Foundation's programming, mentorship, and collaborative opportunities that uphold moral courage, responsibility, and the pursuit of conscience.


Rights and Discretion


The Elie Wiesel Foundation reserves the right to:


- Publish winning essays, in whole or in part, in print or digital form;
- Modify, amend, or discontinue any policies or procedures at its sole discretion and without prior notice; and
- Disqualify any entries that fail to meet the contest's ethical or procedural standards.

Changes may be implemented based on evolving operational needs, legal requirements, or organizational priorities.

The Elie Wiesel Foundation

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