12ACP and SCW Remote Learning #1 – 3/20/20

1. Click on the Wikipedia link below, and read the first few paragraphs of Franz Kafka’s bio. Feel free to read more if you’re interested, but the first few paragraphs should give enough context for the story I’m asking you to read.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franz_Kafka>

1. Now click on this second link. You’ll find a number of different formats for reading Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*. I just used the html which is fine for any phone or laptop, but if you have an e-reader like a kindle, that format is available too. Use which ever you want.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/5200>

 It’s a novella or short story, divided into parts I, II, and III.

1. If you choose to accept this mission, **read Part I for Monday 3/23. Then, think about each of the questions below. On Monday, write me a letter/email.**

In the 1st paragraph, **just tell me what’s up**. How have you been doing? What have been the most and least pleasurable/fulfilling ways you’ve been spending your time?

In the second paragraph, **answer one of the questions provided**—which ever most interests you.

If you’d like an additional challenge, answer more questions, starting a new paragraph for each subsequent topic.

If you get off-topic, that’s fine. **This is a personal letter, not an essay**. It’s not graded. Personal letter writing is becoming a lost art. If there’s any other topic you’d like to reflect on, feel free. I’ll read whatever you send me, and I’ll try to reply quickly.

*The Metamorphosis* Part 1 Questions

I recommend reading the story before you look at these questions. Previewing the questions might predetermine your reaction to the story, probably in a bad way.

1. Why is Gregor so preoccupied with the details of his professional life, even though he has clearly transformed to an extent that they should no longer be relevant? What does his response to his dilemma suggest or reveal about human beings or society more broadly?
2. I think this story is funny because of how persistently logical Gregor’s thinking is even in the face of an absurd situation? What does this feature suggest about the human faculty of logic/rationality?
3. What aspect of our serious lives do you find absurd? What would it take for everyone else to realize what you do about this? What would it take to change it?
4. What aspect of human cognition or emotion do you find unnecessary or overrated? How so? Why?
5. Are Gregor’s family’s expectations of him reasonable? To what degree are your family’s expectations for you reasonable or unreasonable by comparison?
6. Gregor loses the ability to communicate, but not for lack of effort. When have you failed to communicate with someone important, or about something important? Or, when has someone failed to communicate with you about something important? In either case, why? And, what were the consequences of this failure?
7. Do you have an interpretation of what you’ve read so far that’s not covered by one of these questions? What is it? In other words, what is this story *really* about?
8. Here’s something more creative: Don’t overlook the quality of Kafka’s physical details of Gregor’s appearance and movement. Look easy? Hard? Fun? Write your own micro-story (like that you could fit on two sides of an index card) from the point-of-view of a character who has changed into some sort of animal but still thinks more or less like a person. Focus on physical details. Make those the priority even though there may be deeper thematic concerns.