

Written Assignments

For this course, you'll write a researched position paper (due at the end of the semester) and an essay on images of the ancient world. In addition, you'll also turn in the write-up of your in-class presentation and a proposal for your position paper.

Position Paper

- Proposal [Upload to BlackBoard](#) by March 18
 - Optional Draft Email to Professor by April 29
 - Final Draft [Upload to BlackBoard](#) by May 13
- Essay on Representations and Images [Upload to BlackBoard](#) by April 15
- Presentations on a Primary Source Post on the relevant weekly discussion page on the night before the meeting date;
[Upload to BlackBoard](#) also

Overview Videos

- [Quick overview: The Images Essay \(due in week 10\)](#)
- [Quick Overview: The Proposal](#) (due in week 7)
- [Quick Overview: The Position Paper](#) (due in week 14)
- [Writing an Interpretive Essay \(1\): Thesis and Structure](#)
- [Writing an Interpretive Essay \(2\): Sources and Citations](#)

Documents related to the writing assignments:

- [Citations Packet](#)
- [Research Options under Covid-19](#)
- [Choosing Sources for Research](#)
- [Policies: Plagiarism](#)

Important: Before you upload, make sure your paper conforms to the [Requirements for All Papers](#), including formatting, structure, and citations. You will be marked down drastically if your paper is not properly cited. For how to do citations and bibliographies, see [the Citations handout](#).

Assignment Requirements: Position Paper

Write a 6- to 8-page position paper in which you express an opinion about a topic related to Roman history, and use evidence to back up that opinion. In this paper, you're taking a side on some question or controversy, and you're using reasoning and research to support your side of the argument.

We'll work through it in stages over the course of the semester:

1. Choose a Topic

- First, choose one of the 13 meeting topics for the course and decide on a controversy or debate pertaining to that topic.
- You can choose something that the people at the time might have debated—e.g., “Is Greek culture degrading Roman virtue and old-fashioned values?” as a question arising in the late Republic, or a question arising among modern historians—e.g., “Did the Roman empire arise through conscious imperialism or ad hoc reactions to events?” In each case you need to outline both sides of the question in your paper and then provide evidence why you think one side was right.
- Choose a topic you're interested in and have fun with it. Make it wacky, make it provocative—anything is fine as long as you make an argument regarding your chosen topic and support it with facts.

2. Write a Proposal

- The proposal is just a brief one-page preview of your position paper. It should include:
- **The topic** you think you'll want to write about and **the problem** you're interested in addressing. You should be able to delineate the problem by describing the opposing views people might take. To make sure you have two clear opposing opinions, you might want to express them in the form “Some say... . Others say....”
- Your preliminary thesis statement—in other words, what you think you might be arguing in your paper.
 - Your thesis statement, both here and in the final paper, should be a statement of opinion that someone could disagree with. It can take the form of following up the description of the opposing opinions with your own: “I believe....”
 - Remember that your thesis is provisional. You can change anything about your approach and interpretation after the proposal; in fact, uncovering information as you do your research makes refining or changing your initial assessments very likely.
- Your proposal is structured like the introduction (see below), and may serve as the basis for it.
- I will give you feedback on things like the feasibility of researching your topic, whether the scope is too big or too narrow for a paper like this, and some possible sources you might want to look at.

3. Find your Evidence

- Research your topic and find at least three primary and secondary sources that will provide you with evidence for your argument. I'll point you toward some possibilities in my feedback on your proposal.
- Ideally you should have a mix of primary and secondary sources, but it will depend on the topic.
- Tertiary sources are not allowed. These include textbooks, encyclopedias, and most websites.
- For guidance on finding full-text online primary and secondary sources in the Covid-19 era, read the Research Options handout.

4. Make your Argument

- In your introduction, briefly describe the problem and state the position you will argue as a thesis statement. Your introduction should follow the format of the proposal (see below).

Sample Introduction

PROBLEM >	Hannibal Barca, the great Carthaginian general, brought 37 war elephants with him over the Alps into Italy, and at the climactic Battle of Zama they had a front line that included 80 elephants. Did Hannibal's elephants really make a difference? <i>Some say that Hannibal's elephants were crucial in establishing the morale of his troops against the legendary Roman legions and in intimidating other armies along the way into alliances; but others say that Hannibal's elephants did the Carthaginian side more harm than good in their fight with Rome.</i> I believe that Hannibal's use of elephants was a mistake, not because war elephants were a dumb idea in general, but because Roman adaptability meant that the
OPPOSING > SIDES >	Romans would inevitably find a way around them.
THESIS > STATEMENT >	

- In the body of your paper, make three assertions as to why your thesis statement is valid. For each assertion, describe and discuss the evidence from the primary and secondary sources.
 - For example, if you were writing the Hannibal/elephants paper above, you could start one section with an assertion that elephants were not a bad idea inherently, then discuss evidence showing the effective use of elephants in war.
 - Then begin the next section with an assertion that Romans were adaptable in war, and discuss evidence showing how Romans changed their military tactics and strategies to meet new kinds of war and new enemies.
 - Your third section could begin with an assertion that the it was Roman adaptability that trumped the effectiveness of Hannibal's evidence, and discuss the evidence that showed how the Romans overcame the use of elephants in the fight with Hannibal.
 - Each section starts with an assertion followed by evidence, and each section builds on the previous sections to make an overall argument.
- End with a conclusion that shows how your three assertions came together to support your thesis.
- **Optional Draft.** You may submit an optional draft two weeks before the final due date. It should include most of your paper (at least two thirds of the final content, with sections to be written described in square brackets). I'll give feedback, but not a grade, to help you refine your final paper. To make sure I see it soonest, please email me your optional draft rather than uploading it to BlackBoard.

Assignment Requirements: Essay on Representations and Images

Write a 3 to 4-page essay taking a position on one of the following topics:

1. **Two pieces in a museum.** How a culture sees abstract ideas (masculinity, virtue, old age, divinity, and so on) is often reflected in its artwork. What can two different works of art depicting the same idea, but from different times or places, tell us about how the cultures that produced them?
 - First, go to a museum website and find **two works of art from the ancient Roman world** that (a) reflect the same abstract idea or the same subject *and* (b) come either from different cultures or from the same culture but different historical periods.
 - For example, you could choose two love goddesses, one from Roman Egypt and one from Rome; or you could choose two little girls, one from Republican Rome and one from the Imperial Rome.
 - Possible venues include: Metropolitan Museum’s Greek and Roman Art Collection; Fordham Museum of Greek, Etruscan and Roman Art. You are, of course, not limited to these venues, and you are not limited to New York.
 - Describe and discuss three aspects of the first artwork that seem to reflect how the artist felt about the subject and what the subject stood for. Compare each of these aspects to a similar (or contrasting) aspect of the second artwork. (Some possibilities include facial expression, dress, use of technique or medium, stiffness/fluidity, apparent strength/weakness, idealism/realism, or any other elements offering some kind of insight into what the artist was trying to convey.)
 - Make an argument about how consistently the same core idea was seen in the two times or places that produced these two works. If art is an expression of cultural values, what do the differences between these works tell you about the respective cultures they come from? What do their similarities tell you about what these ancient Roman cultures have in common?
 - On a separate “Works Discussed” page after your essay:
 - List the title of each work, the artist, the approximate date it was created, the city or region it came from originally, and the name of the museum gallery where the work can be found.
 - Paste in photographs of the items. If it’s permitted at the museum, take a picture of the items while you’re there. If it’s not, find pictures of those specific items on the museum’s web site.

- 2. The ancient Roman world on film.** Every depiction of an historical event, whether in prose, poetry, painting, theater, or film, involves an artist using history to convey his or her own beliefs. What do the creators of the film and the authors of the source material it was based on want you to believe?
- First, choose and watch any feature-length film set in the ancient Roman world. Then find the ancient [primary source](#) material it was based on and read it. (Some suggestions are below.)
 - Describe and discuss three moments from the film that demonstrate what the filmmakers are trying to say about these events and the people or cultures involved. Compare each of these moments to the corresponding moment in the primary source material.
 - In both cases, you are to discuss **the filmmakers’ and the author’s intent and agenda**—how the filmmakers and the ancient authors are using the past to drive their own agendas and beliefs.
 - Do not use the source to fact check the film and list what it got “wrong”. You must consider the primary source to be at least as skewed, manipulative, and agenda-driven as the film.
 - Make an argument about what the creators of the film and the authors of the source material want you to believe. How were these stories twisted (or preserved) to shape the audience’s perception of the culture and society depicted in the film and the primary source?
 - On a separate “Works Discussed” page after your essay, list the title of film, year, director, stars and studio. Then list the book or books you drew your written evidence from, using standard citation style. The references to the primary source must be cited in the text as usual.

Some possibilities for the film and sources option include, but are not limited to, the following. Links to most of these primary sources can be found on the [ancient texts page](#) on my website.

Rome and the Roman Empire

Film	Subject / Possible primary sources to compare
<i>Agora</i> (2009)	Hypatia Socrates Scholasticus, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> , 7.15; John of Nikiû, <i>Chronicle</i> 84.87-103; The Suda, <i>Life of Hypatia</i>
<i>Attila</i> (2001)	Attila Jordanes, <i>Origin and Deeds of the Goths</i> 36-53; Procopius, <i>History of the Wars</i> 3.4
<i>Boudica</i> (2003)	Boudica Tacitus, <i>Annals</i> 14.29–39, <i>Agricola</i> ; Cassius Dio, <i>Roman History</i> 62
<i>Caligula</i> (1980) [warning: explicit sex]	Caligula Suetonius, <i>Caligula</i> ; Cassius Dio, <i>Roman History</i> 59
<i>The Centurion</i> (1961)	Battle of Corinth Polybius, <i>The Histories</i> book 38
<i>Centurion</i> (2010)	Roman Britain Tacitus, <i>Agricola</i>
<i>Cleopatra</i> (1963, 1999)	Cleopatra, Caesar, Antony Plutarch, <i>Caesar and Antony</i>
<i>Coriolanus</i> (1963)	Coriolanus Plutarch, <i>Coriolanus</i> ; Livy 2.33–2.40
<i>Decline of an Empire</i> (2014)	St. Katherine of Alexandria Saints lives of Saint Katharine of Alexandria
<i>Druids</i> (2001)	Vercingetorix, Julius Caesar Julius Caesar, <i>Galic Wars</i> book 7; Cassius Dio 40:33–41, 43:19; Plutarch, <i>Caesar</i> 25–27
<i>Duel of Champions</i> (1961)	Horatius Livy 1.24-26

Film	Subject / Possible primary sources to compare
<i>The Eagle</i> (2011)	Roman Britain Tacitus, <i>Agricola</i>
<i>Empire</i> (2005 Mini-Series)	Augustus Suetonius, <i>Augustus</i> ; Nicolas of Damascus, <i>Life of Augustus</i> ; Cassius Dio, 45–56
<i>The Fall of the Roman Empire</i> (1964)	Rome under Commodus Cassius Dio 73; Herodian 1.15; Historia Augusta, “Commodus”
<i>The First King: Birth of an Empire</i> (2019)	Romulus and Remus Livy 1.4-6; Dionysius 1.71-87; Plutarch, <i>Romulus</i> ; Ovid, <i>Fasti</i> ; Appian, <i>Roman History</i> book 1
<i>Gladiator</i> (2000)	Rome under M. Aurelius, Commodus Cassius Dio 73; Herodian 1.15; Historia Augusta, “Commodus”
<i>Hannibal</i> (1959) or <i>Hannibal</i> (2006)	Hannibal Barca, 2d Punic War Cornelius Nepos, <i>Hannibal</i> ; Livy 21-30; Plutarch, <i>Fabius</i>
<i>Hero of Rome</i> (1964)	Scaevola, Lars Porsena, formation of Roman Republic Livy 2.1-21
<i>I, Claudius</i> (1976) [1-2 episodes]	Claudius Tacitus, <i>Annals</i> 11–12; Suetonius, <i>Claudius</i>
<i>Julius Caesar</i> (1953, 1970, 2002)	Julius Caesar Plutarch, <i>Caesar</i> ; Suetonius, <i>Divine Julius</i>
<i>Messalina</i> (1960)	Messalina. Claudius Suetonius, <i>Claudius</i> 26-29, 37; Tacitus <i>Annals</i> 11-12; Cassius Dio 60-61
<i>Pompeii: The Last Day</i> (2003) or <i>Pompeii</i> (2014)	Eruption of Vesuvius, Roman Italy Pliny the Younger’s letters to Tacitus, #65 and #66
<i>Quo Vadis?</i> (1951, 2001)	Persecution of Christians under Nero Tacitus, <i>Annals</i> 13–16; Suetonius, <i>Nero</i> ; Cassius Dio 61–63
<i>Rome</i> (2005–2007) [use 1-2 episodes]	Collapse of the Roman Republic Various (see me)
<i>Fellini Satyricon</i> (1969)	Imperial Rome, homosexuality Petronius, <i>Satyricon</i>
<i>Scipio Africanus: The Defeat of Hannibal</i> (1937)	Scipio Africanus, 2d Punic War Polybius 10; Cornelius Nepos, <i>Hannibal</i> ; Livy 26-29; Valerius Maximus 3.7; Plutarch, <i>Marcellus</i> and <i>Fabius</i>
<i>Siege of Syracuse</i> (1960)	Archimedes, Siege of Syracuse Plutarch, <i>Marcellus</i> ; Livy 21-23
<i>The Sign of the Cross</i> (1932)	Persecution of Christians under Nero Tacitus, <i>Annals</i> 13–16; Suetonius, <i>Nero</i> ; Cassius Dio 61–63
<i>Spartacus</i> (1960) or <i>Spartacus: Blood and Sand</i> (2010)	Spartacus, Roman gladiators/slavery Appian, <i>Roman History</i> 116–120; Plutarch, <i>Crassus</i> 8–11

Assignment Requirements: Presentation Write-Ups

For your two presentations on a primary source from the Reader, write a 2–3 page essay that does the following:

- Briefly summarizes what the document says and, more importantly, analyzes what the author is trying to say about the subject at hand. In other words, you need to identify and discuss what you believe is the author's interpretation, bias, and point of view and how it affected the author's treatment of the topic. Give examples from the document that illustrate your assessment of the author's spin.
- Provides perspective by relating the material in the document, and the author's bias on it, to the bigger picture—the material being discussed in class.

The main point of the presentation and the write-up is NOT to summarize the reading. Summary should be less than 25% of your presentation and your write-up. The main point is to analyze the reading and talk about what it means and what it tells us about that place and time in ancient history.

Your write-up needs to be posted on the weekly discussion page ***the night before*** the class meeting for which we are reading that selection, so your fellow students can react to it during our discussions. Post the essay to BlackBoard at the same time for grading.

Submitting Assignments

- **All written assignments must be submitted via [BlackBoard](#)** using the upload links there. BlackBoard is accessed through CUNY Login. If you have trouble with BlackBoard, please call the IT helpdesk at (718) 960-1111 or go the Lehman College [BlackBoard support page](#). I won't accept written assignments by email . If BlackBoard itself is down, I'll announce alternative arrangements to the class.
- **Late assignments will be marked down.** I'll still accept late submissions, but there will be a penalty that will hurt your grade.
 - Written assignments will be marked down one letter grade per class meeting after the assignment due date, up to a maximum of 30 points. That means you're still better off turning in your paper late, and having it be marked down, than not turning it in at all.
 - I do not give extra credit opportunities except to the entire class. I do not grade on a curve.
 - I do not give incompletes unless we've discussed and agreed on the grounds for giving one prior to the final exam.
 - Make-up assignments or exams are given only in cases of documented medical emergency or comparable life disruption.
 - I do not accept rewritten essays after an assignment has been submitted, graded, and returned; but some deductions are reversible (see the sample grading sheet on [the Requirements page](#)).
- Any instances of plagiarism, whether on essays, papers, quizzes, or exams, will have dire consequences. See [the policies page](#) for what counts as plagiarism and the penalties involved in presenting the work of others as your own.