

Position Paper

The assignment: Write a 6- to 8-page position paper, due at the end of the semester, in which you express an opinion about a topic related to gender in ancient 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.

3. Find your evidence

Research your topic and find at least three sources that will provide you with evidence for your argument; these need to be primary and secondary sources only (see the Research and Citation Center for more on sources). 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. See the Research and Citation Center for more on sources.
- For guidance on finding full-text online primary and secondary sources, see the Research and Citation Center.

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 the proposal page).
- 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?

OPPOSING > 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 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 Romans would inevitably find a way around them.*

THESIS >

- 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 described on the proposal page, 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 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.

Your essay must have citations for all quotes, paraphrases, and ideas from your sources. There must also be a bibliography that lists your sources. We'll talk about this in class, and see the Research and Citation Center for more.

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.