

Written Assignments

For this course, you'll write one essay and one researched position paper based on evidence from the ancient world.

Essay on *Clouds*

Due Monday, November 11.

Position Paper

Due Monday, December 9.

A proposal is due Monday, October 14.

Presentation Write-Ups (2)

Due one week after the presentation.

Essay on *Clouds*

Use three moments from *Clouds* to take a position on the culture, beliefs, and social expectations of classical Athens.

What you need to do:

1) Get ready.

Review the requirements. Review the Requirements for All Papers. This page has important guidance and videos on formatting your document, structuring your essay, and using evidence.

Watch the video. The overview video explains what I want you to cover in the essay and what I'm expecting in terms of arguments, evidence, and structure.

Another resource you may find helpful is [the Elephant Pamplet](#), which gives step-by-step guidance on preparing for and writing a position paper.

2) Choose your topic from one of the three prompts below.

OPTION A

Right and wrong in *Clouds*

Clouds emphasizes traditional values throughout the play and then ends with violence. Does *Clouds* offer an internally inconsistent message on morality?

Discuss the consistency of the moral argument of *Clouds* by comparing it with the moral argument in the tragedy. Where do both plays stand with regard to the Athenian debate on relative morality (nomos vs. physis)?

OPTION B

Aristophanes's agenda

The surviving plays of Aristophanes range over a long and turbulent period of Athenian history. Do Aristophanes's opinions and technique change over time?

Discuss the consistency of Aristophanes's approach to writing, and the evolution of his overall philosophy across this most troubled period. What themes and ideas are present in both plays? Is his approach, methodology, or agenda consistent? If not, how does it change?

OPTION C

Socrates vs. Socrates

The "Socrates" found in Aristophanes's *Clouds* is a deliberate distortion driven by a desire to discredit the real Socrates. What does this version of Socrates have in common with the one depicted in works by Socrates's student, Plato?

Discuss how Socrates was seen by Athenians in their time of strife. What about his behavior and beliefs that caused him to be venerated by some, and yet so feared by others that he was executed? What characteristics of Socrates and his philosophy were most exaggerated by the two authors (either in ridicule or praise), and why?

(What's important to remember is that both versions of Socrates are distortions, twisted in the service of what their authors were trying to say about them.)

3) Choose a second work to compare with *Clouds*.

OPTION A

For the “right and wrong” option, choose a tragedy from the Greek classical period in which morality is a key issue to compare with *Clouds*.

Popular options include:

- *Medea* by Euripides;
- *Elektra* by Euripides or Sophocles; and
- *Antigone* by Sophocles.

There are other possibilities as well.

OPTION B

For the “Aristophanes’s agenda” option, choose another play by Aristophanes to compare with *Clouds*.

Popular options include:

- *Frogs*, mounted in 405 BCE, 11 years after the revised version of *Clouds*;
- *Birds*, mounted in 414; and
- *Wealth*, mounted in 388.

Any of the 11 surviving plays is fair game. Full texts in English are also available [here](#) or [here](#).

OPTION C

For the “Socrates vs. Socrates” option, choose a work by Plato in which Socrates is a major character to compare with *Clouds*.

Possibilities include:

- *Phaedo*, which has Socrates discussing life and afterlife on the brink of his execution;
- *Apology*, a version of Socrates’s self-defense against charges of irreligion; or

any of the other dialogs that focus on how Plato wanted to show Socrates’s methods and beliefs. Full texts in English are available [here](#).

4) Find three moments from *Clouds* that are strong examples of your topic.

OPTION A

For the “right and wrong” option, find three incidents from *Clouds* that involve a moral decision or an argument between characters about what the morality of an action.

Compare each of these incidents with a similar (or contrasting) moment in the tragedy you’ve selected.

OPTION B

For the “Aristophanes’s agenda” option, find three incidents from *Clouds* that reflect either Aristophanes’s opinions or how he makes the play reflect them.

Compare each of these moments with a similar (or contrasting) moment in the other comedy.

OPTION C

For the “Socrates vs. Socrates” option, find three incidents from *Clouds* that reflect an opinion or behavior expressed by Aristophanes’s version of Socrates.

Compare each of these moments with a similar (or contrasting) moment in the work by Plato.

5) Write a 3- to 4-page essay in which you take a position on Athenian culture.

Introduction. State what you believe *Clouds* shows us about the culture, beliefs, and social expectations of fifth-century Athens in a way that answers the question in the prompt you chose. (This is your thesis statement.)

Body. Describe and discuss, one by one, each of the three moments you found from *Clouds* and compare with a similar moment from your second work. For each section, discuss what the evidence tells us about classical Athens.

Conclusion. Tie your examples and assertions together and show how they support your overall thesis.

6) Finalize your essay.

Citations. Make sure your evidence is cited and that you include a bibliography. For how to do citations and bibliographies, see the Research and Citation Center. You will be marked down drastically if your paper is not properly cited.

Optional draft. You may email me 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.

Double-check the requirements. Make sure your essay meets the Requirements for All Papers for formatting, structure, and evidence, as well as the specifications given above for what's expected for this assignment.

Once you're sure your essay meets the requirements, upload it as DOCX or PDF to BlackBoard.

Proposal for the Position Paper

Over the course of the semester, you'll be writing a 6- to 8-page position paper.

The first stage of this project is to write [a 1-page proposal](#), which includes your topic and a preliminary thesis statement.

What you need to do:

1) *Get ready.*

Watch the video. The overview video explains what I want you to cover in the proposal and what I'm expecting to be included.

2) *Choose a problem or question you want to explore.*

Choose a controversy or debate pertaining to the ancient Greek world.

One starting point is to look over the 13 meeting topics. What would you like to dig more deeply into?

You can choose something that the people at the time might have debated (e.g., "Who was truly to blame for the Peloponnesian War?" as a debate arising amongst the Greeks during or after the war), or a question arising among modern historians (e.g., "Was the Athenian Empire an actual empire?").

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.

3) *Formulate a preliminary thesis statement.*

Opposing sides. The problem you're interested in addressing should involve something that could be argued with opposing positions. 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...."

Preliminary thesis. 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...."

You can change it later. 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.

4) Write your one-page proposal.

What to include. Your proposal is structured like the introduction to your position paper, and may serve as the basis for it. It should include

- your problem/question;
- the opposing sides; and
- your preliminary thesis.

A sample proposal can be found on the website.

Feedback and guidance. The proposal is not graded, but whether you submitted a proposal on time will be factored into the final grade for the position paper.

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.

5) Finalize your proposal.

Submit your proposal. Upload your proposal to BlackBoard.

Jane Student-Smith

3 October 2022

History of All Ancient Things

Prof. Wilson

Proposal: Hannibal and the Elephants

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? 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.**

Problem

Thesis

Note that the thesis is

- (a) a statement of opinion you can back up with evidence, and
- (b) specific as to the reasons why the thesis will be supported

Position Paper

Use evidence from primary and secondary sources to take a position on a research topic of your interest.

What you need to do:

1) *Get ready.*

Review the requirements. Review the Requirements for All Papers. This page has important guidance and videos on formatting your document, structuring your essay, and using evidence.

Watch the video. The overview video explains what I want you to cover in the essay and what I'm expecting in terms of arguments, evidence, and structure.

Another resource you may find helpful is the Elephant Pamphlet, which gives step-by-step guidance on preparing for and writing a position paper.

Choose your topic and thesis. The first stages of writing this paper involve choosing a topic and writing a proposal. For these two stages, see the video and details on the proposal page.

2) *Find your evidence.*

Review your feedback. The next step after writing your proposal and reviewing my feedback is to gather the research you will need to support the arguments you'll be making in your paper.

Find 3 sources. 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.

Kinds of sources. 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. We will talk about this in class as well.

3) Write a 6- to 8-page research paper in which you take a position on your topic.

Introduction. 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).

A sample intro can be found on the website.

Body. 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.

Each section starts with an assertion followed by evidence, and each section builds on the previous sections to make an overall argument.

Conclusion. Tie your examples and assertions together and show how they support your overall thesis.

4) Finalize your essay.

Citations. Make sure your evidence is cited and that you include a bibliography. For how to do citations and bibliographies, see the Research and Citation Center. You will be marked down drastically if your paper is not properly cited.

Optional draft. You may email me 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.

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In-Class Presentations

You'll make two short presentations in class on one of the primary source excerpts assigned as class readings, one in the first half of the semester and one in the second half.

Your presentation will give the class your perspective on (a) what this reading means, (b) the author's perspective on the topics, and (c) how it relates to the material being discussed in the course.

Sign-ups. Sign up for the first of these presentations on the Sign-up #1 page, and the second on the Sign-up #2 page. Your presentation will be given the day that reading is assigned on the schedule.

Write-ups

A 2-to-3 page written version is due by the next class meeting after your presentation.

Your write-up should do the following:

- Briefly summarize what the document says and, more importantly, analyze 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.
- Provide 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 to BlackBoard before the next class meeting after you present in class. In this final version of the write-up you can incorporate ideas and reactions that came up during the in-class discussion that followed the presentation.