



Images of Women in Athenian Literature

Women in Antiquity | Meeting #8

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Upcoming Dates

- Tuesday, April 7
Tuesday, April 21
No class meetings
- Monday, May 18
Position Paper Due
- Sunday, April 5
Responses for Week 8 Due

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Five things today

- Position Paper
- Classical Athens
- Female protagonists
- Literary women vs. goddesses
- Antigone and Medea

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Quiz #6 | Women in Athenian Literature

1. According to Pomeroy, Athenian tragedians often showed women as forceful and rebellious because the play's female protagonists

- a. represented the needs of private life and family against the power of the state
- b. were there to be destroyed and put in their place at the end of the play
- c. accurately depicted Athenian women's agency and active public participation in real life
- d. were actually gods dressed as women

2. In the play *Antigone*, Antigone's sister Ismene insists that Antigone go out, not

- a. delay in burying their brother
- b. disobey Creon's ban on burying their brother
- c. offer to fight Creon in single combat
- d. visit Egypt during the tourist season

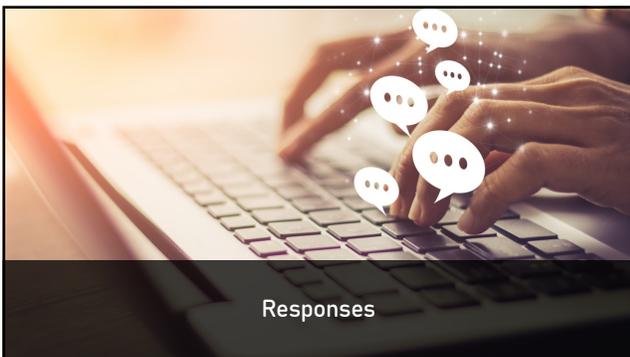
3. In the play *Medea*, the legendary hero Jason

- a. kills his own sons to spite Medea
- b. has sailed away and is not present in the play
- c. sets aside his foreign wife, Medea, and marries a princess to get ahead
- d. dies at the end

Extra Credit

EC. The play *Medea* ends with Medea escaping in a flying chariot. What do you think this tells us about the play's sympathies and message?

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The Position Paper

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The Position Paper

- Making an argument
- Giving three reasons
- Supporting with evidence from primary and secondary source

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Guidance and resources

Requirements for All Papers

All written assignments for this course MUST adhere to these requirements — or be subject to a modified grade. Check for all of the following before submitting any paper.

Before starting on your assignments, I urge you to watch the videos below. They're very short, and they cover the key requirements with tips for how to meet them. Happy and good design to your grade!

- [How to Format Your Paper](#)
- [How to Write a Paper](#)
- [How to Write a Paper](#)

Position Paper

IMPORTANT

- Watch the video. The overview video explains what your professor is looking for in your position paper, including how to format, research, and structure.
- Before you start, make sure your essay meets the Requirements for All Papers, including formatting, research, and citations.
- **Key Note:** Be respectful and thoughtful. Use the Research and Citation Guide to help you format your research in your paper to be properly cited.

[Quick Overview: The Position Paper](#)

Research and Citations Center

Classroom resources available in my classroom space, for assistance and support in history. All information that is not from your own text must be cited, including in-text citations, bibliographies, or any other type of citation.

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[How to Write a Paper](#)

Writing a Position Paper for History Students

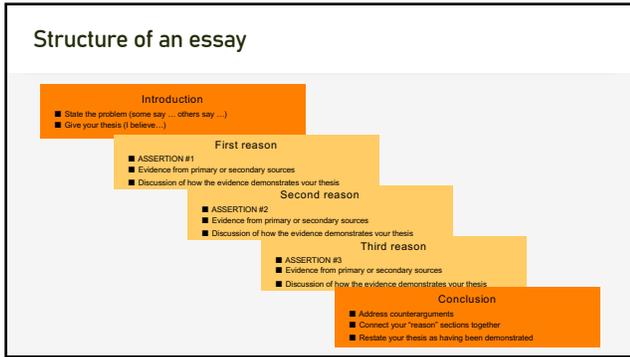
How to Write a Position Paper for History Students. Before in the last of the first lecture, also available in PDF and in video.

[How to Write a Paper](#)

A sample introduction

Read the introduction below and think about how you might write your own introduction. The introduction below is a sample introduction for a position paper on the topic of the American Revolution. The introduction below is a sample introduction for a position paper on the topic of the American Revolution. The introduction below is a sample introduction for a position paper on the topic of the American Revolution.

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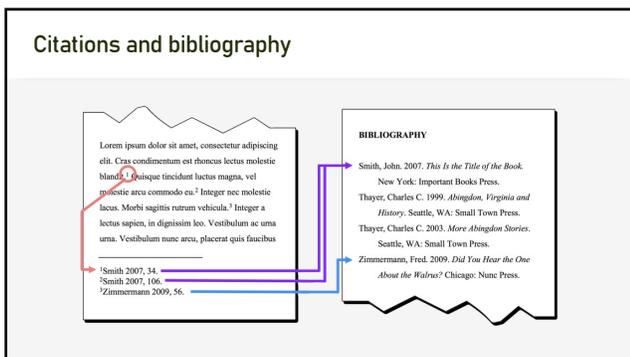


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Approaches to research

- Assigned readings
 - Relevant primary sources
 - Ancient Texts index on my website markwilson.com/pages/texts.html
 - Articles assigned for class
 - Pomeroy's *Goddesses, Whores...*
- Search for library books
 - Lehman/CUNY OneSearch lehman.edu/library
 - Digital resources
 - Books on the shelf
 - NY Public Library browse.nyp.org
 - Worldcat worldcat.org
- Footnotes in the books you've already found
- Good ol' Prof. Wilson

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Citing ancient sources



Footnote or parenthetical citation:
Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War* 3.2

Bibliography:
Thucydides and Steven Lattimore. *The Peloponnesian War*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998.



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Citing a play or poem



Footnote or parenthetical citation:
***Clouds*, lines 1087-1104**

Bibliography:
West, Thomas G., Grace Stary West, Plato, and Aristophanes. *Four Texts on Socrates: Plato's Euthyphro, Apology, and Crito, and Aristophanes' Clouds* (Rev. ed). Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.



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Points to remember

- Cite all information from outside your head
 - Direct quotes
 - Paraphrases
 - Information, facts, statistics
 - Ideas
- Everything in the paper should support your thesis argument
- Do not just narrate the history
- Check the requirements for all papers

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Questions about whatever



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Women in Athenian Literature



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Classical Athens

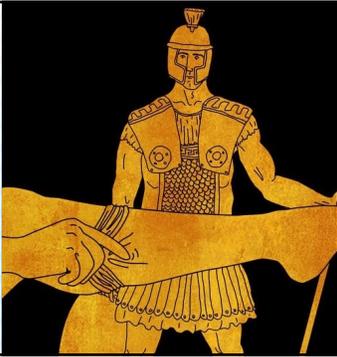
- Expansion and patronage of creative expression
- Build up and expansion of Athenian monuments and structures
- Escalation of Athenian influence

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Secondary Source Reading

K. J. Dover
"Classical Greek Attitudes to Sexual Behavior"

- Sexual behavior is more complex than we think
 - Varies across class and situation
- Not one of suppression, but firm ideas about appropriateness
- Athens is changing so rapidly that some of these things are coming into question
 - Erosion of social norms through rapid transformation
 - Concern from people concerned about mores that things are being undermined
 - Backdrop for a lot of literature, especially comedies
- **Bacchae**
 - A god comes to Thebes and people are like we don't really need you, we're responsible for our own community and justice
 - Gods respond to human failings - things that impact negatively on the community



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Natural philosophy

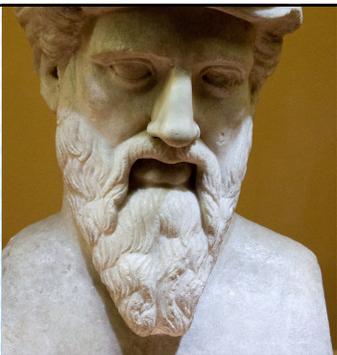
- **Chaos ("expanse")**
 - Primordial void / unformed mass
 - First thing to exist
 - First gods created from its substance
- **Cosmos ("order")**
 - Order and structure brought to the chaos
- **Strong contrast**
 - Chaos is the alternative to cosmos
 - Chaos is before / outside
 - Earth (place of order) vs. space (above or below)
 - Discussed in Birds
- **Nous ("awareness")**
 - Human genius
 - Faculty of the human mind necessary for understanding what is true or real
 - Source of reason and cosmos

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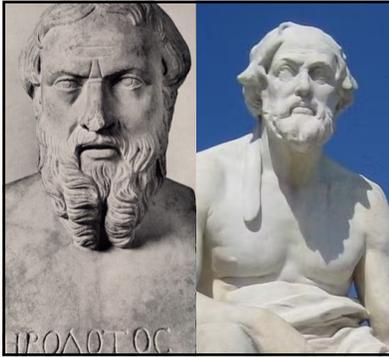
Secondary Source Reading

Voila Lambropoulou
"Some Pythagorean Female Virtues"

- Pythagoras - looking for a rational way of living and constructing a community
- Women have distinctive virtues characteristic of them
 - Generosity and bravery
 - Moderation, keeping an even keel
 - These exist to help ground and smooth out the wildnesses of men
- Pythagoreans believed that women are the foundation of society by being the foundation of family and marital relationship



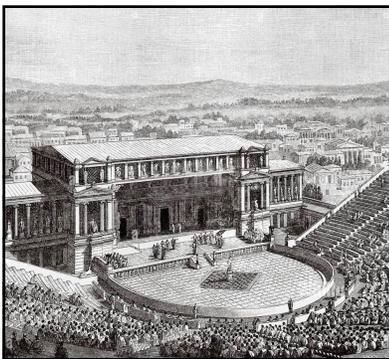
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**Historians:
Herodotus and
Thucydides**

- Herodotus
 - "Father of history"
 - Told the story of the Persian Wars
 - Social, anecdotal and subjective
 - Focus on human nature
- Thucydides
 - Main source for the Peloponnesian War
 - Evidence-based and objective
 - Focus on making an argument and supporting with narrative evidence

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Tragedy and comedy

- Interactive, communal creative expression
- Tragedy
 - Suffering of the community due to a selfish choice
 - Reinforcement of communal values
- Comedy
 - Targeting of a social issue or problematic person
 - Questioning and subjective
 - Call to arms

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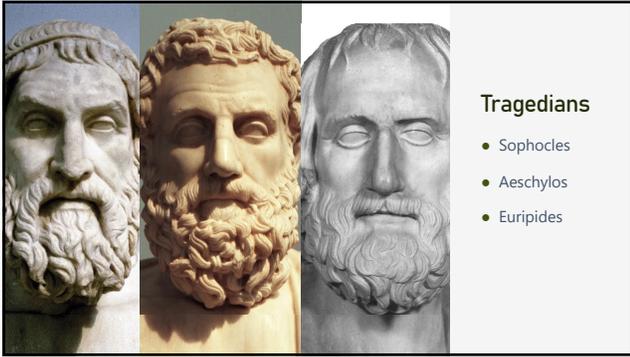
Secondary Source Reading

Helene Foley
"The Conception of Women in Athenian Drama"

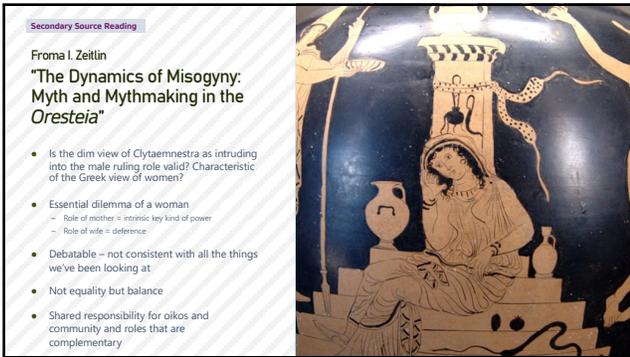
- How to approach the understanding of:
 - how women are presented in literature and
 - how we can gain insight into real women in Greek society
- Conclusion:
 - Simple relationships are upended in drama
 - For the purpose of understanding what is the norm and how it is violated
- The simplest conflict is two people already connected by family:
 - Clytemnestra / Agamemnon
 - Orestes / Oytanmestra
- These private relationships reflect, parallel, and twist the problems in public society



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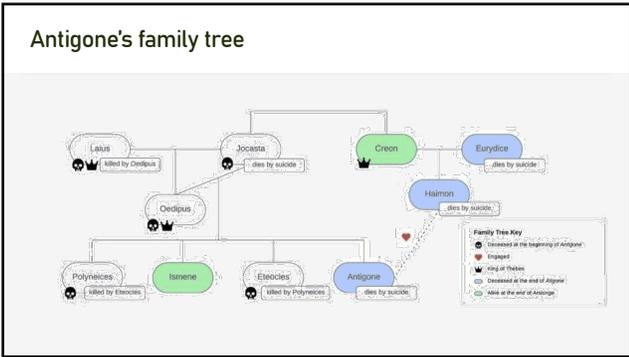


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Antigone's family tree

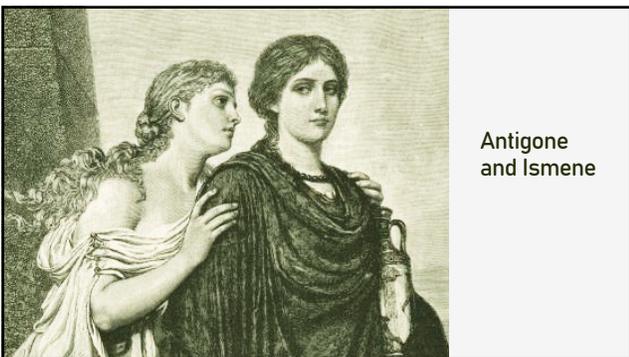


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Antigone and Creon

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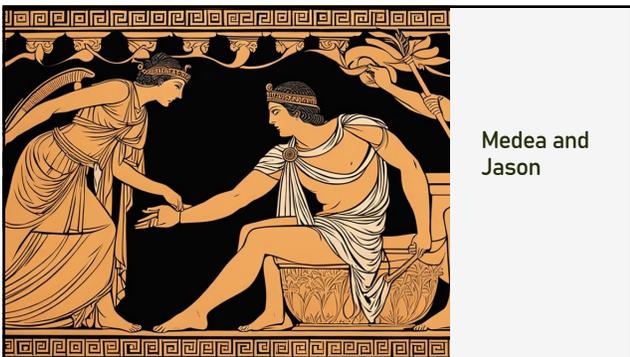


Antigone and Ismene

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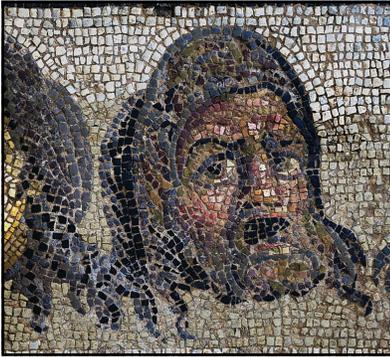
Medea and Jason

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Medea's revenge and escape

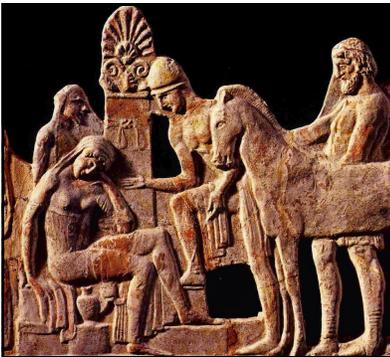
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Dramatic characters are dramatic

- Cannot map literary figures onto ordinary society
 - As with mythology, literary figures are a response and a critique
- Stories in drama are deliberately designed to be abnormal
 - Exaggerated circumstances and especially exaggerated characteristics

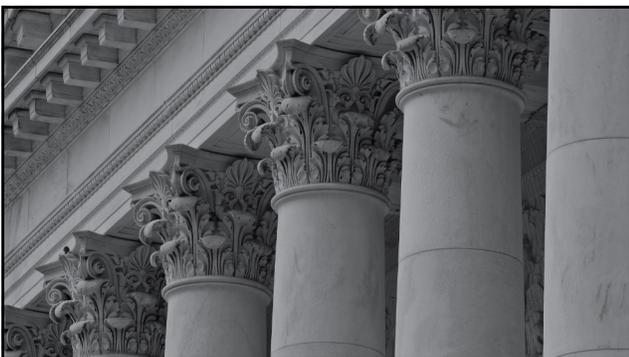
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Women in Athenian Literature

- Especially true of female characters
 - Antigone and Medea are extremely unusual figures
 - Plights are extremes and abnormal
 - Designed to throw into relief the contrasting circumstances people would be familiar with by presenting aberrant examples
- Cannot say "this is what women's lives were like"
 - Instead, this is what provokes a response in contrast to the reality of women's lives

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