

Essays – Position Paper Topic Ideas

Recent topics for the Position Paper.

Here are some of the topics that students have put forward in their proposals for their position papers in this course over the past few years. Some are general directions, while others are specific questions of the kind you will need as the basis for your proposal.

If you're stuck for a topic, browse through the categories and think about what ideas and questions you might be interested in exploring, finding evidence, and expressing your own thoughts and interpretations. Use these past topics as guides in formulating a problem or debate on which you can take a position in your paper, or as inspiration for a new topic no one has explored before.

Comparing Gender Roles in Different Cultures

- Comparing Spartan women with Roman women
- A comparison of Spartan and Egyptian women
- Contrasting prominent women
- Did women in ancient Egypt experience more social, legal, and economic freedoms than women in ancient Greece and Rome?
- First women: Eve and Pandora
- Greek and Egyptian women
- Greek women vs. Roman women
- Parallels in life cycle traditions between Hellenic and diasporan Jewish society
- Status of women in Ancient Egypt vs. Ancient Greece
- Was living as an Egyptian woman better than living as a woman in other nations?
- Women in Greece and Egypt

Gender in Athens

- Athenian women as empowered
- The exclusion of women in ancient Athens
- Female agency within the family structure in Athens
- Hetairai vs. Athenian Women
- LGBTQ community in Ancient Athens
- Were hetaira women more free than married women in nobles' families in ancient Athens?
- Women in the Athenian polis

Gender in Sparta

- Gender roles in ancient Greece: A deeper look into social orders in Sparta
- The life of a Spartan woman
- The "liberated" Spartan women
- Spartan women
- Spartan women: control and expectation
- Women's identity and Spartan women

Gender in Egypt

- The competence of Hatshepsut
- Female leadership in New Kingdom Egypt
- Hatshepsut's legitimacy
- Hatshepsut as a fluke
- How valid is the Egyptian reputation with regard to gender equality
- Roman Accounts of Cleopatra
- Women as Pharaohs in Egypt

Gender in Athens vs. Sparta

- Ancient Greece's Women: Athenians and Spartans
- The double standard of female sexuality in ancient Greece
- Gender and Freedom in Ancient Greece: Sparta vs. Athens
- Gender and Power in Ancient Athens vs. Sparta
- Gender expectations in Sparta and Athens
- Greek attitudes about sexual behavior: benefits for women and men
- The Greek family in history and myth
- Greek women were seen per how they benefitted men
- Oppressed ancient women in Greece
- The relationship between male and female aspects in ancient Greece
- Spartan vs Athenian women
- Spartan vs Athenian women: Which society gave women more power?
- Womanhood in Ancient Greece
- Women in Ancient Greece Oppression or Hidden Influence?

Gender in Sumer

- Power of women in *Epic of Gilgamesh*
- Women in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

Gender in Judea

- The choices of Ruth
- Exclusion in Israel
- Gender in relation to Jewish religion
- Jewish women in antiquity
- Monotheism and Jewish women
- Representation of women in the Bible
- Sarah and the Sacrifice of Isaac
- Vashti and Esther
- Women and the Kingdom of Israel
- Women in Jewish literature
- Women in the Hebrew Community
- Women in the Old Testament

Gender in Rome

- Economic Influence and Gendered Limits: How Roman Elite and Freedwomen Upheld the Paterfamilias System
- Gender in the Twelve Tables
- Homosexuality in Rome
- Mother and son relationships among the Romans
- The rape and suicide of Lucretia
- Women in Roman society
- Zenobia and the Romans

Literature and Legend: Greek

- Characterizations of female characters as a means of reinforcing gender expectations
- Crafty Penelope
- Did Helen of Troy cause the Trojan War?
- Depictions of women as inferior in Homer and Hesiod
- Euripides's *Medea*: Is Medea's character a victim of patriarchal oppression or a threat to the patriarchy?
- Gender in *Theogony*
- Gender roles in *Bacchae*
- Hesiod's viewpoint on gender
- How does Hesiod portray women in his works and how does that reflect greater Greek beliefs?
- Is Helen more noble than Andromache?
- Portrayals of gender roles in Greek legend
- Representation of women in Greek literature
- The romanticism of the imagery in Sappho
- Treatment of women in Homer
- Women in Herodotos
- Women in Homer

Literature and Legend: Other Cultures

- Characterization of Ancient Irish women
- Enkidu's influence on Gilgamesh
- If women were truly powerless, why do ancient sources highlight their intelligence, decision-making, and responsibilities?
- Portrayal of masculine women
- Representations of powerful women

Literature and Legend: Pandora and Medusa

- Depictions of Medusa
- Eat the fruit, break the world: the price of female curiosity
- Is Pandora to be blamed for the evil and misery released into the world?
- The symbolism of Medusa
- Pandora's guilt
- Hesiod's version of Pandora
- Why does Greek mythology transform Medusa, a victim of violence, into a monstrous figure whose power must be destroyed?

Female Social Participation

- The female burden
- Female agency and fear
- Female agency in ancient decision-making
- Female is to nature vs. male is to culture
- The gender divide as a result of males feeling threatened
- Men in the ancient era assert superiority based on fear of women
- Unrecognized influence of women
- Why women weren't treated equally in the ancient world
- Women as a catalyst for change
- Women in the public sector
- Women's Powers in Antiquity

Philosophy

- Did ancient philosophers support the traditional gender roles or challenge the dominance of women?

Gods and Goddesses

- Aphrodite and morality
- Are Greek goddesses actually powerful or just controlled by men?
- Athena and her seeming lack of femininity
- Athena's dual-genderedness
- Demeter and Kore
- Divine gender roles in Greek mythology
- Female sexuality in Ancient Greece through gods and goddesses
- Gender expectations: Goddesses and mortal women
- Goddesses in the Roman religion
- Greek goddesses and their relation to mortal women
- Greek gods and nonconsensual sex
- Greek mythology and patriarchal norms
- Monogamy among gods and goddesses
- Mortals vs. immortals
- Relative power of the Greek gods
- Virtue, gods, and mortals
- Women in mythology
- Women's role in ancient religion

Gender and war

- The extent of women's roles in times of war
- Warfare determined women's freedoms and privileges in the ancient world
- What roles did women play in the strategy of war?