

Written Assignments

For this course, you'll write two major essays for this course: a shorter one on the Athenian comedy *Clouds*, and a researched position paper due at the end of the semester.

Before uploading, make sure your essays meet the Requirements for All Papers. All written assignments must be submitted via BlackBoard.

	<i>Upload by</i>
Essay on <i>Clouds</i>	Monday, November 6
Proposal for the Position Paper	Monday, October 9
Position Paper	Monday, December 11
Presentation Write-Ups (2)	One week after in-class presentation

IMPORTANT:

- **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.
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- **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.

Essay on *Clouds*

The assignment: Write a 3- to 4-page essay comparing three moments from *Clouds* to another work in order to take a position on the culture, beliefs, and social expectations of classical Athens, responding to one of the following three prompts.

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OPTION 1: 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?

- First, choose a tragedy from the Greek classical period in which morality is a key issue. (Popular options include *Medea* by Euripides; *Elektra* by Euripides or Sophocles; and *Antigone* by Sophocles; but there are other possibilities as well.)
- **Describe and discuss** 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.
- **Make an argument** for 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 2: 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?

- First, choose another play by Aristophanes. (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; but any of the 11 surviving plays is fair game. Full texts in English are available here.)
- **Describe and discuss** three moments 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.
- **Make an argument** for 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 3: 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?

- First, choose a work by Plato in which Socrates is a major character. (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 dialogues that focus on how Plato wanted to show Socrates's methods and beliefs. Full texts in English are available here.)

- **Describe and discuss** three moments 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. What characteristics of Socrates and his philosophy were most exaggerated by the two authors (either in ridicule or praise), and why?
- **Make an argument** about how Socrates was seen by Athenians in their time of strife. What stood out about his behavior and beliefs that caused him to be venerated by some, and yet so feared by others that he was executed?
- (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. Aristophanes and Plato each had an agenda with respect to how they wanted to show Socrates. That means that both authors offered a distorted picture of Socrates that separates us from the real-life man.)

Proposal for the Position Paper

The assignment: Write a one-page proposal for the position paper due at the end of the semester, giving the topic and a possible thesis.

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We'll work through the position paper in stages over the course of the semester. The first stages involve choosing a topic and writing a proposal.

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., "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?"). 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 to the position paper, and may serve as the basis for it. A sample introduction is shown on the Position Paper page.

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.

Note: A sample proposal can be found on the course website, on the Proposal page.

Note: The one-page proposal described here is what's due in Week 7.

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 Greek 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.

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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.

3. Find your evidence

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.

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. We will talk about this in class as well.

4. Make your argument

Finally, you'll be writing a 6- to 8-page paper, with an introduction stating your thesis; three sections covering reasons why your thesis is valid, supported by evidence; and a conclusion consolidating your reasoning and showing how it demonstrates the validity of your thesis.

- 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).
 - See sample below.
- 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.

For example, if you were writing the Hannibal/elephants paper introduced 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 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.

- 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.

Sample Introduction

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 >

OPPOSING >

SIDES >

THESIS >

Presentation Write-Up

The assignment: For each of your two presentations on primary sources, write a 2- to 3-page essay that summarizes and interprets what the reading tells us.

Your write-up should include the following:

- **Brief summary.** Describe what the document says and, more importantly, what the author is trying to say about the subject at hand.
- **Analysis.**
 - 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.