

Writing Assignment Overview
The Classical World
Spring 2010
Tom Rainey and Stephen Beck, faculty

You will be required to write a seminar response for one seminar each week as well as three 5-page essays and a 2-3-page critical review of *Gladiator*. Here are some general guidelines for all your written work:

- **Text-focused writing.** Both your responses and your essays will focus on our texts. Responses will aim to elucidate and raise lines of inquiry about the texts, while your essays will use the texts as the source of support for your theses.
- **Formatting.** All written work is to be typed, 12 point type, doubled-spaced, with multiple pages stapled.
- **Spelling, punctuation and grammar.** Faculty will give appropriate feedback in a timely manner on your writing. In order to focus more fully on the content of your writing, faculty will not proofread/correct papers for spelling, grammar or punctuation. Should your writing be problematic in those areas of writing mechanics, faculty will refer you to Evergreen Writing Center for individual tutoring.

Seminar Responses:

Beginning on April 6 and for one seminar each week thereafter, you will bring a seminar response of 1-2 pages in length. (Half of each seminar will write a response for Tuesday, while the other half will write one for Thursday.) The purpose of your response is to help build an enlightening seminar discussion, by helping your fellow students better understand the text and by framing discussion topics for seminar. Because of this, seminar responses will not be accepted late, *at all*.

Your responses are to have three parts: (1) quotation; (2) description; (3) response.

- (1) **Quotation:** Choose a one- or two-sentence quotation from the seminar text that is both at the heart of the text and of interest to you. Avoid tangential features of the text. Don't quote too much, but attempt to find a passage that captures *in nuce* the central theme, topic, or idea that is your topic.
- (2) **Description:** Describe your topic in the text. Often, this means giving a *restatement* of a position from the text. Sometimes, it means giving an account of central concepts. Sometimes, it means describing an image or a character. In any case, the goal is to represent, as faithfully as possible, your topic *as it is present in the text itself*. Focus on specific passages and details; avoid broad generalizations about the whole of the text as well as editorial comments.
- (3) **Response:** Present your own initial thoughts about your topic. You may not fully understand a concept or a position, or may find something in the topic objectionable, or you may be able to develop useful examples or applications of the idea in the text. Whatever the source of your interest, make this clear to the reader. It is OK to be tentative, to try out ideas that you haven't fully worked out, to experiment with new thoughts. You do not need to have a definite conclusion; rather, you should aim for a paper that will provide good, focused ideas or questions for further discussion in seminar.

Schedule of Essays:

Your 5-page essays are to be organized around your thesis on the topics below. To support your thesis, you will need to marshal evidence from the appropriate program texts as well as from lectures. Your papers must include proper in-text citations as well as a Works Cited list at the end. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the days below.

1. **April 12: Homer.** What was the significance of Homer for Greek culture and civilization? Consider both the role that Homer played in Greek society and its consequences for Greek history. Develop a thesis in answer to the question, and support it by drawing upon *Odyssey*, *The Greeks* as well as lectures.
2. **May 3: Plato.** Describe and critique the conception of justice that Plato presents in *Republic*. You will need to focus your critique on one particular feature of Plato's account of justice, and your position needs to be substantial enough to require careful exegesis of Plato's views. Support your position with your own good reasoning, but you may also draw upon our historical and literary texts (*The Greeks*, *Odyssey*, *Antigone*) as well as lectures in order to support your thesis.
3. **June 1: Virtues of a Roman citizen.** What were the virtues of an ideal Roman citizen; how and why did this ideal change from the Republic to the Empire? Explain in some detail the nature of Roman virtues, what roles they played in Roman culture, and how the changing nature of Roman citizenship affected changes in conceptions of Roman virtue. In addition to lectures, draw upon historical texts (*The Roman World*, *Fall of the Roman Republic*, *Twelve Caesars*), literary texts (*Aeneid*) as well as philosophical texts (*On Obligations*, *Meditations*; some references to *Nicomachean Ethics* insofar as it influenced Cicero may not be amiss).
4. **June 3: Critical Review of *Gladiator*.** Evaluate the film with respect to its historical accuracy *and* authenticity, in light of your studies of Roman history and thought.