

GNED 1202 –Assignment #1 (version 1.0)

Due: Thursday Nov 5, 2015 in class.

In this assignment you will be asked to read a slightly more substantial reading from ancient Athens and then provide a written summary paper of about 6-7 pages (about 1200-1400 words).

Paper

You will be given a choice of readings on the next page. You are to pick **one** and then write a short paper in which you:

- Briefly (less than two pages) summarize the main events or ideas in the reading. The purpose of this part of the assignment is to improve the clarity, correctness, and conciseness of your written expression.
- Describe how the reading illustrates a specific world view/mentality/way of interpreting the world/society/life. Be sure to include several quotations from the reading that illustrate your argument.
- You may or may not decide to include some of your own observations and feelings about this reading. Be careful that you do not write too much in this vein. I do not want to read four pages of your opinions about, for instance, war or suffering or gender relations. However, a judiciously small amount of personal reflection can improve your paper and make it more engaging.

This assignment is meant to be an exercise in the close reading of a text. It is not a general research paper in which you read a wide variety of secondary sources. While you are certainly permitted to make use of secondary sources (if so, be sure to cite them accordingly), the intent here is that you develop the ability to read a text carefully, perhaps repeatedly, and see if *you* can find the assumptions and beliefs of the author as shown by examples in the text. I am certainly not interested in reading a paper in which the student has copied and pasted a variety of Wikipedia entries!

Based on previous years' submissions, the biggest problem students make in this assignment is to not include a clear thesis statement in the introduction to their paper. Be sure to clearly indicate what your paper is about and to clearly articulate the paper's main thesis.

Submission Instructions

- The text of your assignment must be single-sided, double-spaced and use a 12pt font. The left margin should be 1.5 inches, the right margin 1.25 inch, and the top and bottom margins 1 inch. Number the pages.
- You must hand in a hard copy (i.e., bring me a paper copy; do not just email it to me) in class on the due date. Alternately, you can drop it off in my assignment box (just outside of B233).
- Do not submit your assignment with a special cover or folder. Simply prepare a title page (with your name and the paper title) and staple it together with the rest of your paper.

- You can use any citation style you'd like (e.g., in-line notes, footnotes, end notes, etc). Just be consistent. If your reading in the book includes line numbers, be sure to include them in your citations. Be sure to include the page number in your citation.
- Late penalties will be applied. Problems with computers, printers, transportation, workload in other courses, bad bosses, frustrating roommates, or demanding girlfriends/boyfriends are normally not grounds for special consideration in this regard.
- Please stay within the length requirements (6-7 pages or about 1200-1400 words).

Readings

Pick one of the following readings for your paper. I have tried to provide a short description so you know roughly what it is about. You may find that as you read your selection, you don't like it; in that case, pick a different one. The readings are not so long that you can't in fact read several of them before choosing.

All of these readings are in your Norton textbook.

- Gilgamesh, Books 3-8 (Adventures with Enkidu then Enkidu's death)
- Homer, *The Iliad*, Book 15-16 (Patroclus fights and dies)
- Homer, *The Iliad*, Books 20-21 (Achilles' aristeia)
- Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book 18 (Odysseus disguises himself as a beggar)
- Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book 22 (Odysseus kills the suitors of his wife along with his female servants)
- Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book 1, *On Croesus and Solon* (Solon, an Athenian statesman, and Croesus, a rich king, debate what makes a happy life).
- Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, lines 1-1257 (Tragedy about the *hubris*/pride of a ruler and the problem of revenge)
- Sophocles, *Oedipus*, (Tragedy about knowledge)
- Euripides, *Medea*, (Tragedy about passion, the problems of patriarchal society, and the vengeance of a wife on her husband)
- Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* (Comedy about the women of Greece ending war by withholding sex)
- Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Book 2-3 (Plague in Athens and moral breakdown)

Note: I have my own copies of some of these that you could borrow if the library's copies are unavailable.

Tips for a Good Paper

1. Focus. Your paper needs to have a focus. You need to come up with something to say about the two papers.

A good thesis statement helps to create focus. Every essay requires some kind of thesis statement. In your introductory paragraph there should be a clear statement of what the essay is going to say. For example, "Aeschylus's play *The Eumenides* is a timeless examination of the personal costs of revenge" is a clear thesis statement. It is not enough to say you are going to "summarize reading A and then discuss it".

A well thought out title is another way to help you focus. The title may seem like a relatively minor part of the paper, but coming up with a good title will force you to think about what your paper is about. If you can't come up with a good title your paper may lack focus. "Assignment One" or "Examination of Homer, Book 18" are not particularly good titles.

2. The concluding paragraph should restate the thesis statement and summarize the evidence in support of it. A final few sentences can be a teaser for other study that could be done, or a pithy remark (and restatement) about the thesis.
3. When you are summarizing a reading the key things to note are: what is its main focus, what are its major themes, how it is connected to its time period, etc.
4. When summarizing it can sometimes be difficult to not use too much of the original text. If you want to quote the text, that is okay, as long as it is clearly cited and the quotation is not too long. Otherwise you must paraphrase. I find that making a point form outline of what I want to say, then fleshing out the sentences helps me to keep things in my own words.
5. Examples. Using personal examples is a good idea, it will often improve a paper, but it is important to remember that it is just an example. You cannot generalize from your personal experience.
6. Proof read your essay prior to handing it in! Tips for effective proofing are to read the paper out loud, or to have someone else read it. When proofing our own writing we tend to see what we were thinking and not necessarily what is actually written.