

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

For this course, you'll write a researched position paper (due at the end of the semester) and an essay on images of the ancient world. In addition, you'll also turn in write-ups of your two in-class presentations and a proposal for your position paper.

Position Paper

Write a 6- to 8-page position paper discussing a topic of your choice relating to the role and impact of women in the ancient era (3500 BCE–500 CE). 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.

We'll work through it in stages over the course of the semester:

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 a question or problem that the people at the time might have debated—e.g., “How are the expectations for goddesses different from those of mortal women?”; or a question that might arise among modern historians—e.g., “Is Athens really more repressive of women than Sparta?” 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 (see below), and may serve as the basis for it.

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.

3. Find your Evidence

Research your topic and find at least three primary and secondary sources that will provide you with evidence for your argument. 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. Your sources may include, but should not be limited to, the primary and secondary readings assigned for this course. At least one source should not be an assigned reading.
- **Tertiary sources are not allowed.** These include textbooks, encyclopedias, and most websites.

4. Make your Argument

- 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 below).

Sample Introduction (not for this course, obviously)

PROBLEM →	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
OPPOSING SIDES →	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>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</i>
THESIS STATEMENT →	<i>inevitably find a way around them.</i>

- 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.
 - For example, if you were writing the Hannibal/elephants paper 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 the 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.
 - Each section starts with an assertion followed by evidence, and each section builds on the previous sections to make an overall argument.
- End with a conclusion that shows how your three assertions came together to support your thesis.

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.

Important: Before you upload your final paper, make sure your paper conforms to the [Requirements for All Papers](#), including formatting, structure, and citations. You will be marked down drastically if your paper is not properly cited. For how to do citations and bibliographies, see the Citations handout.

Essay on Representations and Images

Write a 3 to 4-page essay taking a position on one of the following topics:

- Two pieces in a museum.** How a culture sees abstract ideas (masculinity, virtue, old age, divinity, and so on) is often reflected in its artwork. What can two different works of art depicting the same idea, but from different times or places, tell us about how the cultures that produced them?
 - First, go to a museum in person and find two works of art depicting women or female ideas from the ancient era (3500 BCE to 500 CE) that (a) reflect the same abstract idea or the same subject *and* (b) come either from different cultures or from the same culture but different historical periods.
 - For example, you could choose two love goddesses, one from Egypt and one from Rome; or you could choose two little girls, one from Archaic Greece and one from Hellenistic Greece.
 - Possible venues include: Metropolitan Museum’s Egypt Collection; Metropolitan Museum’s Greek and Roman Art Collection; Brooklyn Museum of Art’s Ancient Egyptian Art Collection; and Fordham Museum of Greek, Etruscan and Roman Art. You are, of course, not limited to these venues, and you are not limited to New York.
 - Describe and discuss three aspects of the first artwork that seem to reflect how the artist felt about the subject and what the subject stood for. Compare each of these aspects to a similar (or contrasting) aspect of the second artwork. (Some possibilities include facial expression, dress, use of technique or medium, stiffness/fluidity, apparent strength/weakness, idealism/realism, or any other elements offering some kind of insight into what the artist was trying to convey.)
 - Make an argument about how consistently the same core idea was seen in the two times or places that produced these two works. If art is an expression of cultural values, what do the differences between these works tell you about the respective cultures they come from? What do their similarities tell you about what these ancient cultures have in common?
 - On a separate “Works Discussed” page after your essay:
 - List the title of each work, the artist, the approximate date it was created, and the name of the museum gallery where the work can be found.
 - Paste in photographs of the items. If it’s permitted at the museum, take a picture of the items while you’re there. If it’s not, find pictures of those specific items on the museum’s web site.
- The ancient world on film.** Every depiction of an historical event, whether in prose, poetry, painting, theater, or film, involves an artist using history to convey his or her own beliefs. What do the creators of the film and the authors of the source material it was based on want you to believe?
 - First, choose and watch any feature-length film that seriously depicts women in the ancient world (3500 BCE to 500 CE). Then find the ancient primary source material it was based on and read it.
 - Describe and discuss three moments from the film that demonstrate what the filmmakers are trying to say about these events and the people or cultures involved. Compare each of these moments to the corresponding moment in the primary source material.
 - In both cases, you are to discuss ***the filmmakers’ and the author’s intent and agenda***—how the filmmakers and the ancient authors are using the past to drive their own agendas and beliefs.
 - ***Do not*** use the source to fact check the film and list what it got “wrong”. ***You must consider the primary source to be at least as skewed, manipulative, and agenda-driven as the film.***
 - Make an argument about what the creators of the film and the authors of the source material want you to believe. How were these stories twisted (or preserved) to shape the audience’s perception of the culture and society depicted in the film and the primary source?
 - On a separate “Works Discussed” page after your essay, list the title of film, year, director, stars and studio. Then list the book or books you drew your written evidence from, using standard citation style. The references to the primary source must be cited in the text as usual.

Important: Before you upload, make sure your essay conforms to the [Requirements for All Papers](#), including formatting, structure, and citations. You will be marked down drastically if your paper is not properly cited. For how to do citations and bibliographies, see the Citations handout.

Some possibilities for the film and sources option include, but are not limited to, the following. (This is a general list of films set in the ancient world, not films dealing with gender specifically.)

Greece and Greek Mythology

Film	Subject	Possible primary sources to compare
<i>300</i> (2007) or <i>The 300 Spartans</i> (1962)	Battle of Thermopylae	Herodotus, <i>The Histories</i> book 7
<i>300: Rise of an Empire</i> (2014)	Battle of Salamis	Herodotus, <i>The Histories</i> book 8
<i>Agora</i> (2009)	Hypatia	Socrates Scholasticus, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> , 7.15; John of Nikiû, <i>Chronicle</i> 84.87–103; The Suda, <i>Life of Hypatia</i>
<i>Alexander the Great</i> (1956) or <i>Alexander</i> (2004)	Alexander	Plutarch, <i>Alexander</i> ; or Arrian, <i>Anabasis</i>
<i>Atlantis</i> (2011)	Atlantis myth	Plato, <i>Timaeus</i> and <i>Critias</i>
<i>Barefoot in Athens</i> (1966)	Socrates	Plato, <i>Phaedo</i> , <i>Apology</i>
<i>Clash of the Titans</i> (1981, 2010)	Theseus	Plutarch, <i>Theseus</i> ; Ps.-Apollodorus, <i>Bibliotheca</i> ; Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i>
<i>Damon and Pythias</i> (1962)	Damon and Pythias, Syracuse	Cicero, <i>On Duties</i> 3.45; Diodorus Siculus 10.4
<i>Elektra</i> (1963)	Elektra	Euripides, <i>Elektra</i> ; Sophocles, <i>Elektra</i>
<i>The Fury of Achilles</i> (1962)	Achilles, Trojan War	Homer, <i>Iliad</i> Books 1, 9, 16-19
<i>Helen of Troy</i> (1956)	Helen, Trojan War	Homer, <i>Iliad</i> 3, <i>Odyssey</i> 4, 23; Euripides, <i>Helen</i> ; Ovid, <i>Heroides</i> 16; Isocrates, <i>Helen</i>
<i>Hercules</i> (1997), <i>Hercules</i> (2014), or <i>The Legend of Hercules</i> (2014)	Hercules	Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i> 9, 12; Apollodorus, <i>The Library</i> ; Euripides, <i>Herakles</i> ; Apollonios Rhodios, <i>Argonautika</i> 1.1175–1280
<i>Iphigenia</i> (1977)	Iphigenia	Euripides, <i>Iphigenia at Aulis</i>
<i>The Odyssey</i> (1997) or <i>Ulysses</i> (1955)	Odysseus	Homer, <i>Odyssey</i> [focus on key events of the film]
<i>The Trojan Horse</i> (1961)	Trojan War, Aeneas	Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i> Book 2
<i>The Trojan Women</i> (1971)	Greek subjugation of Troy	Euripides, <i>The Trojan Women</i>
<i>Troy</i> (2004)	Achilles, Trojan War	Homer, <i>Iliad</i> [focus on key events of the film]

Rome and the Roman Empire

Film	Subject	Possible primary sources to compare
<i>Agora</i> (2009)	Hypatia	Socrates Scholasticus, <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> , 7.15; John of Nikiû, <i>Chronicle</i> 84.87–103; The Suda, <i>Life of Hypatia</i>
<i>Attila</i> (2001)	Attila	Jordanes, <i>Origin and Deeds of the Goths</i> 36-53; Procopius, <i>History of the Wars</i> 3.4
<i>Boudica</i> (2003)	Boudica	Tacitus, <i>Annals</i> 14.29–39, <i>Agricola</i> ; Cassius Dio, <i>Roman History</i> 62
<i>Caligula</i> (1980) [warning: explicit sex]	Caligula	Suetonius, <i>Caligula</i> ; Cassius Dio, <i>Roman History</i> 59
<i>The Centurion</i> (1961)	Battle of Corinth	Polybius, <i>The Histories</i> book 38
<i>Centurion</i> (2010)	Roman Britain	Tacitus, <i>Agricola</i>
<i>Cleopatra</i> (1963, 1999)	Cleopatra, Caesar, Antony	Plutarch, <i>Caesar</i> and <i>Antony</i>
<i>Coriolanus</i> (1963)	Coriolanus	Plutarch, <i>Coriolanus</i> ; Livy 2.33–2.40
<i>Decline of an Empire</i> (2014)	St. Katherine of Alexandria	Saints lives of Saint Katharine of Alexandria
<i>Druids</i> (2001)	Vercingetorix, Julius Caesar	Julius Caesar, <i>Gallic Wars</i> book 7; Cassius Dio 40:33–41, 43:19; Plutarch, <i>Caesar</i> 25–27
<i>Duel of Champions</i> (1961)	Horatius	Livy 1.24–26
<i>The Eagle</i> (2011)	Roman Britain	Tacitus, <i>Agricola</i>
<i>Empire</i> (2005 Mini-Series)	Augustus	Suetonius, <i>Augustus</i> ; Nicolas of Damascus, <i>Life of Augustus</i> ; Cassius Dio, 45–56
<i>The Fall of the Roman Empire</i> (1964)	Rome under Commodus	Cassius Dio 73; Herodian 1.15; Historia Augusta, “Commodus”
<i>The First King: Birth of an Empire</i> (2019)	Romulus and Remus	Livy 1.4–6; Dionysius 1.71–87; Plutarch, <i>Romulus</i> ; Ovid, <i>Fasti</i> ; Appian, <i>Roman History</i> book 1
<i>Gladiator</i> (2000)	Rome under M. Aurelius, Commodus	Cassius Dio 73; Herodian 1.15; Historia Augusta, “Commodus”
<i>Hannibal</i> (1959) or <i>Hannibal</i> (2006)	Hannibal Barca, 2d Punic War	Cornelius Nepos, <i>Hannibal</i> ; Livy 21–30; Plutarch, <i>Fabius</i>
<i>Hero of Rome</i> (1964)	Scaevola, Lars Porsena, formation of Roman Republic	Livy 2.1–21
<i>I, Claudius</i> (1976) [1-2 episodes]	Claudius	Tacitus, <i>Annals</i> 11–12; Suetonius, <i>Claudius</i>
<i>Julius Caesar</i> (1953, 1970, 2002)	Julius Caesar	Plutarch, <i>Caesar</i> ; Suetonius, <i>Divine Julius</i>
<i>Messalina</i> (1960)	Messalina, Claudius	Suetonius, <i>Claudius</i> 26–29, 37; Tacitus <i>Annals</i> 11–12; Cassius Dio 60–61
<i>Pompeii: The Last Day</i> (2003) or <i>Pompeii</i> (2014)	Eruption of Vesuvius, Roman Italy	Pliny the Younger’s letters to Tacitus, #65 and #66

Film	Subject	Possible primary sources to compare
<i>Quo Vadis?</i> (1951, 2001)	Persecution of Christians under Nero	Tacitus, <i>Annals</i> 13–16; Suetonius, <i>Nero</i> ; Cassius Dio 61–63
<i>Rome</i> (2005–2007) [use 1-2 episodes]	Collapse of the Republic	Various (see me)
<i>Fellini Satyricon</i> (1969)	Imperial Rome, homosexuality	Petronius, <i>Satyricon</i>
<i>Scipio Africanus: The Defeat of Hannibal</i> (1937)	Scipio Africanus, 2d Punic War	Polybius 10; Cornelius Nepos, <i>Hannibal</i> ; Livy 26-29; Valerius Maximus 3.7; Plutarch, <i>Marcellus</i> and <i>Fabius</i>
<i>Siege of Syracuse</i> (1960)	Archimedes, Siege of Syracuse	Plutarch, <i>Marcellus</i> ; Livy 21-23
<i>The Sign of the Cross</i> (1932)	Persecution of Christians under Nero	Tacitus, <i>Annals</i> 13–16; Suetonius, <i>Nero</i> ; Cassius Dio 61–63
<i>Spartacus</i> (1960) or <i>Spartacus: Blood and Sand</i> (2010)	Spartacus, Roman gladiators/slavery	Appian, <i>Roman History</i> 116–120; Plutarch, <i>Crassus</i> 8–11

Egypt

Film	Subject	Possible primary sources to compare
<i>Cleopatra</i> (1963, 1999)	Cleopatra, Caesar, Antony	Plutarch, <i>Caesar</i> and <i>Antony</i>
<i>Exodus: Gods and Kings</i> (2014)	Moses, Hebrew exodus	Old Testament, <i>Exodus</i>
<i>The Prince of Egypt</i> (1998)	Moses	Old Testament, <i>Exodus</i>
<i>A Queen for Caesar</i> (1962)	Cleopatra	Plutarch, <i>Caesar</i> and <i>Antony</i>
<i>The Ten Commandments</i> (1956)	Moses, Hebrew exodus	Old Testament, <i>Exodus</i>

Israel, Canaan, Biblical Stories

Film	Subject	Possible primary sources to compare
<i>Abraham</i> (1993 miniseries, 1994 film)	Abraham	Old Testament, <i>Genesis</i> books 11–25
<i>David and Goliath</i> (1960), <i>David and Bathsheba</i> (1951)	David, kingdom of Israel	Old Testament, <i>1 Samuel</i> , <i>2 Samuel</i>
<i>Esther and the King</i> (1960)	Esther	Old Testament, <i>Esther</i>
<i>Exodus: Gods and Kings</i> (2014)	Moses, Hebrew exodus from Egypt	Old Testament, <i>Exodus</i>
<i>Jacob</i> (1994)	Jacob and Esau	Old Testament, <i>Genesis</i> 25–50
<i>Jason and the Argonauts</i> (1963)	Jason	Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i> ; Apollonius Rhodius, <i>Argonautica</i>
<i>Jesus of Nazareth</i> (1977)	Jesus	New Testament: <i>Matthew</i> , <i>Mark</i> , <i>Luke</i> , <i>John</i>
<i>Joseph</i> (1995) or <i>Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat</i> (1999)	Joseph	Old Testament, <i>Genesis</i> 37–50
<i>King David</i> (1985)	David, kingdom of Israel	Old Testament, <i>1 Samuel</i> , <i>2 Samuel</i>
<i>Last Days of Sodom and Gomorrah</i> (1962)	Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham, Lot	Old Testament, <i>Genesis</i> 14-19
<i>The Last Temptation of Christ</i> (1988)	Jesus	New Testament: <i>Matthew</i> , <i>Mark</i> , <i>Luke</i> , <i>John</i>
<i>Masada</i> (1981 Mini-Series)	Siege of Masada	Josephus, <i>The Jewish War</i> book 1
<i>The Nativity Story</i> (2006)	Birth of Jesus	New Testament: <i>Matthew</i> , <i>Mark</i> , <i>Luke</i> , <i>John</i>
<i>Noah</i> (2014)	Noah, Great Flood	Old Testament, <i>Genesis</i> 6-9
<i>One Night with the King</i> (2006)	Esther	Old Testament, <i>Esther</i>
<i>The Passion of the Christ</i> (2004)	Jesus, the Crucifixion	New Testament: <i>Matthew</i> , <i>Mark</i> , <i>Luke</i> , <i>John</i>
<i>The Prince of Egypt</i> (1998)	Moses	Old Testament, <i>Exodus</i>
<i>The Red Tent</i> (2014 miniseries)	Dinah (daught. of Jacob)	Old Testament, <i>Genesis</i> 30, 34
<i>Risen</i> (2016)	Aftermath of the Crucifixion, Roman Judea	New Testament, <i>Acts of the Apostles</i>
<i>Samson and Delilah</i> (1949)	Samson and Delilah	Old Testament, <i>Judges</i> 13-16
<i>Sins of Jezebel</i> (1951)	Israel under Ahab	Old Testament, <i>1 Kings</i> 16-22
<i>Slave of Dreams</i> (1995)	Joseph	Old Testament, <i>Genesis</i> 37–50
<i>Solomon and Sheba</i> (1959)	Solomon and Sheba	Old Testament, <i>Kings</i> or <i>Chronicles</i> ; Josephus, <i>Antiquities</i> book 8
<i>A Story of David</i> (1960)	David, kingdom of Israel	Old Testament, <i>1 Samuel</i> , <i>2 Samuel</i>
<i>The Ten Commandments</i> (1956)	Moses, Hebrew exodus from Egypt	Old Testament, <i>Exodus</i>

Mesopotamia, Persia, Asia

Film	Subject	Possible primary sources to compare
<i>Esther and the King</i> (1960)	Esther	Old Testament, <i>Esther</i>
<i>Gautama Buddha</i> (2007)	Siddhārtha Gautama	The <i>Buddhacarita</i> , <i>Lalitavistara Sūtra</i> , other Buddhist bios
<i>Intolerance</i> (1916) [Part 1 only]	Iron Age Babylon	Herodotus 1.70–144; Josephus, <i>Antiquities</i> 10–11
<i>One Night with the King</i> (2006)	Esther	Old Testament, <i>Esther</i>
<i>Queen of Babylon</i> (1954)	Semiramis, Babylon	Diodorus Siculus, 2.4-20

Links to most of these primary sources can be found on the ancient texts page on my website.

Presentation Write-Ups

You'll make presentations to the class on two of the scholarly articles assigned as class readings, one in the first half of the course and one in the second half. You'll then turn in 2–3 page essay write-up that:

- Briefly summarizes what the document says and, *more importantly*, analyzes what the author is trying to say about the subject at hand. In other words, you need to 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.
- Provides 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.
- Incorporates any responses that came up in class after your presentation, and your own reactions to them.

The main point of the presentation and the write-up is NOT solely to summarize the reading. **Summary should be less than half 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 Roman history.

Due at the class meeting after your presentation. Note that many students write the essay first, and read from it for the presentation. If you do that, you should still consider how the class discussion impacts on what you've written, and add things that came up in discussion before submitting the write-up for the following class.