

Your second essay assignment is to write a short paper (about 1500 words, or six pages typed and double-spaced) on the Greek and Roman plays we have read for class—an essay which presents the thesis you have chosen to develop, and then supports it with carefully chosen and analyzed passages from the text. As you know, a thesis is an assertion of the particular idea that your essay will prove – it is a statement, rather than a question; it is detailed, rather than vague; and it is complex enough to require an entire essay for you to make clear the most significant evidence in its support. At the bottom of this sheet, you will find three *suggested* topics: you are encouraged to work on a topic of your own devising, providing (1) it deals with three works, including at least one of the two comedies; (2) it is an analytical essay proving a specific point; and (3) you clear it with me beforehand. Even as suggested topics, the following are probably too general to be covered fully in a short essay. Therefore, focus on a limited aspect of your topic, construct a developed thesis explaining why that aspect of it is significant, and then design the essay so that each paragraph in it contributes directly to the support of that thesis.

Otherwise, submission of this essay should be the same as that of the first one: Please double-space your essay, do not use a cover page (but put your name at the top of the first page), follow standard MLA format, and submit your essay online only, through the course Blackboard page (at sjsu6.blackboard.com), by the beginning of class on the day it is due. Submit your essay as an attachment only, in either doc (Word) or rtf format; all word processors can produce rtf (Rich Text Format) files – if you need help saving your file in rtf in some program other than Word, please ask at the Help Desk or Peer Mentor Center on the ground floor of Clark. Late work can only be submitted to either site by prior arrangement, and there will be a significant delay in its marking and return. Do not email or leave at my office any work for this class, unless I specifically ask you to do so. Corrected papers will be returned online in pdf format. Please keep a copy of all work submitted on disk, and retain all graded work returned until the end of the semester; English majors should save the graded copies of their essays in all department classes, since these will be required for the portfolio in their senior seminar. Please note that many people find it harder to proofread work on a computer screen than in printed form, so you may want to print out your final draft and make corrections to that, before submitting the finished file online. Also note that the file name for any work you are submitting should begin with your last name, first name, course number, and assignment name: for example, “Smith_John_125A_Essay1.doc.” Finally, remember that I have kept a copy of your marked first essay so that, before I begin reading this one, I will review the technical mistakes you made earlier, looking to see if there is any progress in those areas on the second. You, too, should take the time to review those errors, and improve your writing on this essay. And please remember to submit your essay to Turnitin.com as well.

Your thesis should make clear the specific point to be proved in your essay, and you should develop your paragraphs to prove it. To support your readings and to make your analysis clear, you will need to quote short passages from the texts, integrated into your own prose, which relate to the central claims or themes of your essay; please cite the line numbers for each quotation or group of quotations parenthetically at the end of the phrase or sentence, mark the line ends according to MLA style, and avoid using long, indented quotations. Using shorter quotations makes it easier to establish what your reading of each is, through discussion and analysis, as well as to employ that reading in supporting the thesis of your essay. Quoting poetry within your sentences requires you to mark the line ends – and you should follow MLA style on this, too. Revise for content and to strengthen your thesis and transitions; proofread thoroughly, even if you use a spell-checker first; and follow MLA style, including a Works Cited list at the end, even if you have only used the class anthology. You are not asked to use secondary sources for this essay, and using them cannot replace or supersede your own analysis of quotations from the text, but if you do use them, follow MLA style in documenting them, as well.

- 1. The Role of Women in Greek and Roman Theater.** From *Agamemnon* to *Pseudolus*, women have been a particular concern for the Greek and Roman playwrights we have read. Given a public voice women rarely enjoyed off-stage, did these female creations of male authors articulate particular concerns, and are the themes of the Roman *Pseudolus*—the one example in which women are mute on-stage—any different? Based strictly on internal evidence—that is, details that you can find in the works themselves, or interpretations you can support with reference to those works—discuss the image of women offered in three of these works, and how that image informs your reading of each of the works as a whole.
- 2. The Power Politics of the Polis.** One common bond in all almost all plays we have read is their awareness of politics. Questions of who should rule, and how, issues of justice, and notions of divine right and political destiny dominate *Agamemnon*, *The Eumenides*, *Oedipus*, *Antigone*, *Medea*, and *Lysistrata*. Choose three of those works, and discuss what each has to tell us about the political process it depicts, as well as the resulting moral consequences, within the work.
- 3. The Tragedy of Comedy, and Vice-Versa.** There is not much humor in Greek tragedies, nor is there much tragedy in the two comedies we have read, *Lysistrata* and *Pseudolus*. The differences, however, may be largely in the treatment, while the themes (unrequited or forbidden love, war and violence, mistaken or concealed identity, family disputes, and so on) may seem basically similar. Compare the treatment of one or two major themes in three of the plays (including at least one comedy), comparing the catharsis through pity and fear with the one through laughter and jeers, in order to discuss what these plays really agree and disagree about.