Final writing assignment

This assignment will be similar to the first two essays in that you will write an analytical essay of approximately 1000 words in length.It will be different, however, in that you will choose a quotation from *either Beowulf* or *Journey to the West* that either is highly comparable to or contrasts strongly with general trends or specific moments in the Homeric epics (*Iliad* and *Odyssey*). For this essay, understand your audience to be someone who is highly familiar with the Homeric texts, but is significantly less familiar with the new texts *(Beowulf* & *Journey to the West*). Because of this, a certain amount more background information and plot summary may be necessary for *Beowulf* or *JTTW* than is typically found in an analytical essay — imagine yourself to be surveying the wide world of epic beyond Homer and reporting back on the similarities and differences that you find out there. Try to keep the essay focused on the issues presented by the particular quotation that you have chosen — there is no need to try to explain an entire epic or make full and final judgments on its meaning or fundamental overall equivalence to the Homeric epics in a mere three pages; you are simply making a contribution to a larger discussion rather than settling it. Really wrestle with the issues in the text and closely analyze the quotations that you present — don't get swept away by broad generalizations without engaging directly with the text. But, also allow your close analyses demonstrate a wide familiarity with the chosen texts as a whole. Particular points of focus for this essay are twofold: (1) show great familiarity with the general flow of either *Beowulf* or *JTTW* by clearly contextualizing the quotation that you have chosen, and (2) make a clear and cogent comparison to the Homeric epics that also shows broad familiarity both with the overall feel of the epics and with their specifics. This is designed as a cumulative exercise that shows wide familiarity with what we have covered this semester. (Bonus point for bringing up *Gilgamesh* in some relevant and well-integrated way.)

The rubric is basically the same as previous, with the same method of calculating a grade.

Category 1: Quality of Writing

This section includes assessment of (1) the technical aspects of writing such as punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, spelling, formatting, and all other aspects of the basic grammar of the writing (the formatting should be 12-point of a standard font, double-spaced with 1-inch margins); (2) the clarity, interest, and variety of the writing (everything that makes for lively and interesting writing, not bland, dull, or especially incoherent — incoherent is a big problem).

Category 2: Structure & Transitions

This section includes assessment of all aspects of the structure and design of your essay. There should be a solid introduction that includes an extended quote from either *Beowulf* or *Journey to the West* that you will explore, ending in a thesis statement that clearly sets out some comparison or contrast with Homeric epic that you intend to explore. The essay should be sensibly divided into paragraphs with smooth transitions, clear topic sentences, statements of further evidence, and explanations of how those statements and evidence contribute to the overall thesis and argument, and a conclusion that revisits the thesis statement and sums up the discussion. The essay as a whole should aim at 1000 words in length.

Category 3: Depth of thought

This section concerns the overall depth of thought, and the strength and originality of ideas found in the essay. As much as possible this will be assessed independently from the manner in which these ideas are expressed. Consideration of counter-arguments and contrary points of view (where appropriate) is also important to the score in this section. Really think matters through deeply. Of particular interest in this section will also be your demonstration of overall familiarity with the epics under consideration through your discussion of parts of them.

Category 4: Use of textual evidence

This section concerns the quality, variety, and originality of the textual evidence included in the essay. Not only should you include a central quotation, but the essay should be full of supporting evidence taken directly from the texts, and this evidence should be introduced with a full sense of its context within the larger work. Not just the most obvious or common evidence should be included, but also novel and interesting quotations that deepen and alter the level of analysis, as well as consideration of quotations that might run against the grain of your central focus.