# Short Essay/Project 2

Western Canon 1 | Brendan Shea, PhD ([Brendan.Shea@rtc.edu](mailto:Brendan.Shea@rtc.edu))

Here are the guidelines for the second essay project.

1. The questions are listed below. You should only answer **ONE** of them (not all of them!).
2. Each essay should be, in total, between **750** and **1250 words** (the visual art option below requires slightly less)**.** I won’t penalize you for going over, though you should think carefully about whether you *need* the extra words.
3. Direct quotes from the book or handouts can be **cited** simply as (page number or handout name). If you choose to use outside resources, please use a standard citation style (such as APA, MLA, or Chicago), and provide a full citation. In general, **no more than 15%** of your paper should be quotes.
4. Please don’t use the words or ideas of others without proper attribution. Please see the syllabus for details on the policy regarding **plagiarism and academic integrity.** I regularly use [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) to check for plagiarism or related issues.
5. Since the goal of the exam is to demonstrate how well *you* understand the material, you should try to **use your own words/examples**. Essays that simply reproduce the handouts will not receive good grades.
6. Please submit your exam as a SINGLE MS WORD file to the D2L assignment folder.

# Essay Choices

1. **Dialogue Option.** Choose 2-3 characters/people from the below list, and compose a dialogue between them on the subject of “What does it mean to lead a good human life?”.
   1. Medea, Jesus, Marcus Aurelius, Epicurus, Achilles, Gilgamesh, Socrates, Odysseus/Ulysses
2. **Theater Option: A New Tragedy.** Create an outline for a play (of your own creation!) that meets the criteria for Aristotle’s definition of tragedy. You don’t need to write the whole play, but your description must:
   1. Somehow involve course content (for example, you might write a new play about Medea, Socrates, Jesus, etc.).
   2. Include an overview of the plot and descriptions of the main characters
   3. Conclude with a brief explanation of why/how it meets Aristotle’s requirements for tragedy.
3. **Lyric Poetry Option.** Write at least FIVE lyric poems or song lyrics (of at least 100 total lines). These poems should all \*somehow\* be based on class material. You MUST include at least the following poems:
   1. A poem based on one of the stories in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.
   2. A poem based on the Christian Gospels, or on the book of Revelations.
   3. A poem expressing “Stoic” ideas.
   4. A poem written from the perspective of Medea.
   5. **At the end of each poem, write a 50-100 word explanation of how class material shaped your poem.**
4. **Philosophy option.** Write a modern explanation and defense of “Stoic” philosophy, using examples from both class readings AND from the modern world (e.g., current film/books/events/etc.). You should note how Stoicism compares with at least one competing philosophy or religion (such as Epicureanism, Skepticism, or Christianity).
5. **Visual Art Option.** Create an original piece of visual art (painting, drawing, etc.) based on Medea, Ovid, Gospels/Revelations, or Stoicism. Now, write a 300 to 600 word essay explaining why you made the design choices you did. (This analysis should convince me you’ve carefully done the reading!).
6. **An Alternate History.** Christianity eventually eclipsed both Stoicism and Greek/Roman mythology as the dominant worldview in Western Europe. In this essay, I’d like you to answer the question: “What if it didn’t?”. Instead, I’d like to tell me about how the world might have been different if one of the following ideas had “won”: (a) Stoicism, (b) Greco-Roman mythology (of the type described by Ovid and Euripides), or (c) Epicureanism.
7. **Literary analysis option: Medea, Antigone, OR Metamorphoses.** Write a literary analysis focusing on either Medea, Antigone, or stories from the Metamorphoses (here, you can choose from 1-3 stories). Your analysis should focus on a single central theme. The general topic should be of the form “The treatment of X in stories Y and Z.” Here, X might be anything from the gods to love to political authority to war/peace to gender to change to violence to whatever else interests you.

## Short Essay Grading Rubric

Each essay is worth 10 points. Your grade will depend on how well you do each of the following:

1. **To what extent does your submission demonstrate knowledge of relevant course material (5 points)?**

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| *1* | There are few meaningful references to course material. |
| *2* | There are some brief references to course material, but they are superficial, and don’t show in-depth knowledge of the content. |
| *3-4* | The submission engages with course material, and shows some knowledge. However, at least SOME significant and relevant details are either omitted or are described inaccurately. |
| *5* | The submission shows in-depth knowledge of the relevant course material. |

1. **To what extent does your essay/project offer a complete, coherent, and creative response to the prompt (5 points)?**

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| *1* | The submission does not answer/respond to the question in a meaningful way. (Projects that very short/off-topic may receive this grade). |
| *2* | The submission does not fully meet the minimal requirements of the question. (For example, falling below the word count, or not responding to certain parts of the prompt). |
| *3-4* | The submission meets the minimal requirements. However, the response lacks clarity, completeness, or creativity in comparison to a “5”. In argumentative essay, there are some gaps in the argument. In a creative project, more details may be needed, or some details/components don’t cohere well with the whole. |
| *5* | The submission exceeds the minimal requirements, and offers a complete, coherent, and creative response to the prompt. |