

Short Essay/Project 1

Western Canon 1 | Brendan Shea, PhD (Brendan.Shea@rtc.edu)

Here are the guidelines for the first 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** (about 3 to 5 pages; 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 to check for plagiarism or related issues.
5. Since the goal of the essay 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.
7. As part of the writing process, you'll need to submit a **ROUGH DRAFT** of your essay and participate in a **WORKSHOP** with your peers. You can find details on D2L.

Essay Choices

1. **Epic poetry option.** Write an "epic" poem (of at least 100 total lines) based on either (a) current news story or (b) some event in your life. The poem should:
 - a. Feature a hero (it might be you!), whose actions are talked about in *the third person*. (This is important!).
 - b. Have a central conflict, which is resolved by the end of the poem. (The hero can win or lose, die or survive—it's just important that something *happens*.)
 - c. Include at least 7 of the 12 stages of the "Hero's Journey" model (from lecture). At the end of the poem, write a 250- to 500-word explanation/analysis of which stages you've included.
 - d. You must include some sort of supernatural entities that we've discussed in class! (Basically, whenever you don't know why something good/bad happened, you should consider attributing it to these beings, along with some sort of explanation as to *why* they did it). You're free to use the Sumerian gods, the Greek or Roman gods, the God of the Torah, etc.
2. **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** at least the following poems:
 - a. An imitation of one of the poems from the Torah. (For example: Write an original psalm, or a new "verse" for the Song of Solomon).
 - b. A poem/song incorporating the Greek gods.
 - c. A poem/song based on Plato's "Cave Analogy" or his "Symposium."
 - d. A poem/song celebrating the friendship and adventures of Gilgamesh and Enkidu.
 - e. **At the end of each poem, write a 50-100 word explanation of how class material shaped your poem.**
3. **Philosophy option.** Write a Platonic dialogue concerning the question "What is love?" (the subject of the Symposium). Your dialogue should contain at least two characters who *disagree* about the answer to this question. In order to back up their points, the characters **MUST** regularly reference course material (for example, they could describe the views of love in the Symposium, or talk about the sorts of love present in the Torah, Gilgamesh, the Iliad, etc.).

4. **Visual Art Option.** Create an original piece of visual art (painting, drawing, etc.) based on something we've read in class. Now, write a 250- to 500-word explanation of why you made the design choices you did. (This analysis should convince me you've carefully done the reading!).
5. **Literary Analysis Option.** Write a comparison and contrast essay based on one of the following themes. (Note: in your essay, you should choose just TWO of the works to compare/contrast.).
 - a. *God/gods.* The nature of God/gods (and their relationship to humanity) in the Torah, Gilgamesh, Iliad/Odyssey, or Plato.
 - b. *Friendship and love.* The portrayal of friendship or love in the Torah, Gilgamesh, Iliad/Odyssey, or Plato.
 - c. *The meaning of life.* Ideas about what it means to lead a good/meaningful human life in the Torah, Gilgamesh, Iliad/Odyssey, or Plato.
 - d. *Something else:* You can choose something else but you need to clear this with me ahead of time.

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)?

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.

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

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.