

Short Essay/Project 2

Western Canon 1 | Brendan Shea, PhD (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 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?".
 - a. 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:
 - a. Somehow involve course content (for example, you might write a new play about Medea, Socrates, Jesus, etc.).
 - b. Include an overview of the plot and descriptions of the main characters
 - c. 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:
 - a. A poem based on one of the stories in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.
 - b. A poem based on the Christian Gospels, or on the book of Revelations.
 - c. A poem expressing "Stoic" ideas.
 - d. A poem written from the perspective of Medea.
 - e. **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)?

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.