

**Essay Prompts**  
**Discovering Greeks (CL 10) – Fall 2021**  
**Due on TurnItIn Monday, Nov. 22 by 11:59 pm**

In three to four (3-4) double-spaced pages, answer one of the following essay prompts. **If you choose a prompt from Category A**, your analysis should focus principally on primary-source readings (e.g., Herodotus, Sophocles, Plato, and so forth) and/or images (art, architecture, grave goods, etc.), though secondary material from McInerney, lecture, and/or discussion may and likely will also prove helpful in crafting a good essay.

**If you choose from Category B**, you must cite *any and all* sources that you consult, in addition to classroom materials. This includes Web pages. Wikipedia is not an acceptable source, but it can lead you to good sources. Your essay should have a strong thesis, the claim of which should be supported by both evidence and your own analysis of that evidence.

**Citation Format:** Please use footnotes to mark citations from both ancient authors (e.g., Herodotus 3.38, Sophocles, *Medea* 354) and secondary sources (McInerney p. 257). All papers must be double-spaced with one-inch margins on all sides.

The first page of your document must be a cover-page containing the following information:

**Your Name**

**Name of Your Teaching Assistant and Section Number**

**November 22, 2021**

**Choice of Prompt (signified by prompt number)**

**Your electronic signature beneath the following Statement:**

*I have read and understood the relevant sections concerning plagiarism in the [UCLA Student Code of Conduct handbook](#). This paper is my own work and has in no way violated UCLA's Code of Conduct.*

**CATEGORY A**

1] Choosing two different historical moments or cultures we have encountered (e.g., Mycenaean, Persian, Spartan, classical Athenian), write a comparative essay discussing two different representations of gender. Consider whether and how you can identify instances of gender fluidity, gender as performed, or gender as a site of negotiation and paradox. Examples to stimulate your thinking may include: Mycenaean frescoes or grave goods; women in historiography; ancient sexual practices; gender and the gods. In analyzing images or passages from ancient texts, be specific about how details of the image or the language of the text support your argument.

2] Ancient Greek tragedy is filled with various kinds of conflict, including the conflicting and sometimes contradictory kinds of identities that are contained within one character. Focusing on two plays from *Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays*, regardless of whether they have been assigned, write an essay that analyzes specifically this kind of conflict, namely, the contradictory containment of multiple identities in a single character. Your essay should analyze the conflicting energies, identities, and articulations of purpose and meaning as seen in a character such as Medea, Phaedra, Hippolytus, Dionysus, Antigone, or Creon. How do your chosen figures reflect different polarities of identity, including but not limited to: mortal/immortal; human/animal; male/female or masculine/feminine; aristocratic/democratic; or empowered/powerless? Use specific language from two plays to build your argument, which should not only analyze the polarities and contradictions of two individual characters but which should also compare those two characters with each other.

3] One of Pericles' claims in the Funeral Oration is that Athenians have always lived in the same place (Thuc. 2.36). A related notion running through his speech is the notion that Athenians do things differently from others, leading rather than imitating (Thuc. 2.37). Focusing your essay on at least four pieces of material culture (McInerney provides examples throughout of sculpture, pottery, architecture, gravestones, etc.), offer a reading of these pieces in relation to Pericles' claim of Athenian exceptionalism. In what ways is Pericles correct? In what ways is his claim overblown? To answer this, you will need to compare two pieces of Athenian art and/or architecture with examples from elsewhere (e.g., Sparta, Persia, or elsewhere in the Greek world). Feel free to range chronologically, given Pericles' claim of continuity. Can you identify something distinctive about Athenian art/architecture, or does it continue trends that preceded and influenced it? Be specific in your reading of these material culture objects: what details mark something as generic, and what details mark it as distinctive/innovative?

4] Using evidence from primary sources, McInerney, and from lecture, write an essay about public space in ancient Greece. You can choose to think broadly here: public space may include the *agora* or the Athenian Acropolis or the Pnyx, but may also include the sea or the plain of Marathon or the island of Delos, or somewhere else. What are the differences (or connections) between a neutral place and a space that has been designated as special, as having a particular meaning (such as an open field v. an open field with a monument in the middle)? Discussing two places/spaces, discuss how meaning is created, including for whom and by whom that meaning is created. You will want to focus on specific architectural or spatial details to make your case, while evidence from primary texts should also buttress your argument.

5] Using evidence from two different kinds of sources (for instance, material culture, architecture, history, tragedy, or comedy), discuss two different notions of freedom that prevailed among ancient Greeks. You may answer this question in many ways. Some provocations to your thinking might include: does freedom always look like what we might now expect? How does freedom relate to war, democracy, and different ways of being Greek (Spartan, Athenian, Ionian, etc.)? How is freedom determined, maintained, and threatened? What are its advantages and limitations for various peoples? You may wish to consider different kinds of freedom: political, sexual, social, "artistic."

6] Compare the leadership styles of two Ancient Greek leaders, whether historical, fictional, or legendary. Who do you think was more effective? Who do you think was more ethical? Whom would you ultimately choose to be the leader of your polis?

7] Choose an image we have not discussed, or a text that we have not read: it could be a statue or vase in McInerney, or a play we did not read, a portion of Homer, a section of Herodotus, etc. Create an argument that sets this image or work (or portion of work) in dialogue with something we *have* studied. How does your chosen image or text complicate, undermine, affirm, or in general relate to that which we have studied? What difficulties of classification arise? What does your object or text say about a part of Greek culture that is not obvious at first, but that you wish to unpack in your analysis?

8] Was Ancient Athens a democracy? Discuss.

9] Visit the Getty Villa. Choose an image from Ancient Greece. Write an essay in which you perform a close analysis of the object, setting it in the context of material from this course and possibly connecting it with a primary source reading from this course. How can you connect your chosen object to other course material, and how does your object “speak” in relation to the course material?

## CATEGORY B

10] Choose a classically themed site in Los Angeles (for some examples, consider [this](#), or [this](#), or [this](#), or one of your own choosing). Write an essay in which you do the following: (a) identify the classical model (specific) or influence (general); (b) discuss what you take to be the meaning or significance of the original object in context; and (c) discuss the how the piece, object, architectural form, etc., acquires new meaning in its current (LA-based) context. What is not obvious about the object or building in its new context, and what does your sense of its “classical” meaning contribute to our understanding?

11] Choose a television show, film, poem, play, or novel that has classical Greek themes or characters. Write an essay in which you do the following: (a) identify the classical model or influence; (b) discuss what you take to be the meaning or significance of the original influence in its ancient context; and (c) discuss the how the classical influence acquires new meaning in its current context.

12] Write an essay in which you discuss how an aspect of antiquity has been appropriated by a political or ideological group in the present. For some examples, you may wish to consult websites such as [Pharos](#) or [Eidolon](#). How does the group distort the ancient material? How does their appropriation serve their ideological ends, and in what ways might you complicate, correct, or reject their appropriation, based on your sense of the ancient evidence?

13] Compose a creative short story set in the Athenian *agora*. You may write it from either a first-person perspective or third-person viewpoint. Your story should dramatize the perspective or happenings of a person not normally accorded strong focus in Greek literature (i.e., a slave, a woman, a young person, an old person, someone suffering an illness, a refugee). Details should be historically accurate, to the best of your ability. McInerney and primary-source readings are key here. In addition to your short story, compose a one- to two-paragraph analysis of what you hope to convey – sociologically, historically, or literarily – by means of your story. Remember to cite your sources.

14] Stage a debate between two figures from ancient Greek writings (you may include characters such as Solon, Sappho, Pericles, and/or characters from tragedy, comedy, philosophy, *etc.*). Compose a speech for each of your chosen figures in the style of a debate. The debate can be on a topic of your choosing, and you may mix chronologies (i.e., Sappho can debate Socrates). Examples might include: the value of democracy; the role of women in society; the purpose of public festivals; the nature of tragedy; the role of slaves; the meaning of the Parthenon. Write one speech for each character, followed by an analysis of who wins your debate, and why.