

## History 1010-200: *Western Civilization to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century*

Prof. Lester • Fall 2008

### QUESTIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR THE FIRST WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT

#### Paper I: *The Iliad* and the World of the Ancient Greeks:

**Due:** At the beginning of class, Monday September 22, 2008

Write a 5-page paper in response to one of the questions below. Do a close reading of *The Iliad* and craft a well thought-out and elegant essay. Your paper should have a thesis that is clearly stated and should be grounded in the historical context during which the epic poem was sung (ca. 1200-1000BC) and later written down (ca. 750BC). Be sure to integrate quotations from the text to support your argument and to end with a clear and insightful conclusion. You DO NOT need to do any outside reading or research for this paper! I am looking for your own personal reading and interpretation of this source, in your words.

1. Analyze how Achilles both embodies and challenges the Greek ideal of *arête* or excellence as a warrior hero. His status as a hero is built not only on his skills, but also the development of his character throughout the epic poem. By the end do you think Homer still intends him to be a hero?
2. Homer gives Greek and Trojan women little to no role in warfare, but he depicts them as important in determining the fate of cities, dynasties, and several heroes of the story. Characterize the role and authority given to women in *The Iliad*. Be sure to consider the distinction between women who are wives (queens and mothers) and women who are the “prizes” of men. You may wish to focus on one particular woman.
3. *The Iliad* grapples with the tension between war and the chaos it unleashes on the one hand, and civilization and ordered governance on the other. Identify an emblematic scene or example of ordered civilization and discuss how the Greeks understood this ideal.

Parenthetical citations will suffice for this assignment, that is, simply give the book number, lines of the poem, and page number of any quotations you use. For example: (Bk. 24, lns, 592--6, p. 605). Any outside sources that you consult must be listed in a Works Cited page at the end of the paper. For further details please speak with your TAs.