Guidelines for Writing Assignments in This Class

- Develop your own thoughts without consulting outside sources. These assignments do not require any extra research or bibliographies. Never use anyone else's words or ideas (from books, the Web, relatives, etc.) without giving credit.
- Your main claim should reveal something about the text that a casual reader might not notice. Your goal is not only to observe explicit information found in the book but also to interpret it, to draw attention to implicit meanings. The thesis statement (containing your main claim) communicates your perspective or angle, and will ideally reveal something unexpected—a twist.
- Use specific details—usually words and brief phrases—as evidence in support of what you are claiming about the text. Quotations should ordinarily be no longer than three words. This will make it less tempting to let the quotations speak for themselves. Your discussion should explain how the quotations, considered in their specific context, support your claims.
- Maintain a coherent argument by keeping points relevant. Each point should support your main claim. It is fine to talk about other passages in the book (or in other books that we have read), but your writing should be constantly focused on a single argument.
- Your argument will be more convincing if you say things about what the author or text is doing with words—how the author/poet/writer/speaker uses language—rather than simply share your own impressions or beliefs. Try not to stray from focused discussion of the book itself into generalities ("the Odyssey is an important work of Greek literature") or asides about yourself ("having grown up without a father in the home, I can identify with Telemachus").
- Assume that the instructor has read the book, and avoid simply repeating—summarizing or paraphrasing—what happens or what the author explicitly, directly says in your chosen passage.

MECHANICS

- Remember to doublecheck grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
- Number pages and include your name. Staple pages together for this course. Please do not submit special plastic folders. Doublespace assignments. Use a 12 point font or the equivalent.
- Use the present tense; this usually works best when writing about literature rather than describing historical events. Examples: Orestes kills [not killed] the murderer of his father. Prometheus tries [not tried] to trick Zeus. Ismene says… [not said].
- Give your paper a title that identifies your specific contribution. Your own essay title should NOT be italicized, underlined, in quotation marks, or in bold type. It should simply be capitalized like a headline: Swallowing the Bitter Pill of Zeus.
- Italicize the titles of books and other major works. Examples: Homer's Odyssey. Oedipus the King by Sophocles.
- Commas and periods go inside closing quotation marks, but they go outside parentheses. Example: By calling Kronos "crooked," the poet hints that the family line from father to son is not straightforward (Theogony, p. 17).
- There is no need for footnotes here. Put citations in parentheses. Examples: (Od. 9.214), (Agamemnon, line 50).