

Inquiry Seminar: The Greeks at War  
1st Assignment  
Due Sept. 14  
Circa 4 pages

Among the goals of Concordia's Inquiry Seminars is developing the ability to read texts closely and to analyze them critically. This first written assignment focuses on these skills.

Select a passage from the Iliad for close analysis that captures some key insight of Homer into the nature of war. I won't stipulate the length of the passage, but be sure you give yourself enough material to work on without taking on so much material that you will be forced to give a superficial analysis. In your close analysis you should:

1. restate and clarify the passage in your own words
2. connect your passage to one or several other passages in the Iliad that shine light on it, either by reinforcing its point or by offering a counterpoint to it
3. discuss and evaluate the passage, addressing both its significance and its truth

Murnaghan's introduction is a model of how to proceed with this. Note that she frequently quotes short passages from the Iliad and then offers exposition and critical assessment.

Below is an excerpt from the Philosophy Department's Statement on Writing describing Expository Writing. It might be useful to you in approaching this first assignment.

Expository Writing: A skill fundamental to the practice of philosophy is exposition of philosophical texts. Such exposition involves clear, careful statement of both what texts say and how they say it. Exposition of content (the what) includes restatement of the claim advanced by the text, whether that be a particular assertion or a more general theory. Exposition of the manner of assertion (the how) involves identifying ways in which the claim is advanced. This may include explicit argument, rhetorical appeal, as well as metaphor and imagery. A further role of such writing is placing a text in its relevant context, whether that be a social/historical context, an intellectual tradition, or the author's biography. Such writing serves several key roles in philosophy. First, it enacts publically the key skill of close reading. Second, it aims to secure agreement among discussants about the meaning and import of the text in question. This is crucial to avoid parties to a discussion talking past each other because they have fundamentally different understandings of the text under discussion. Third, it places the text against a relevant background, allowing a more adequate appreciation of its import. We regard this expository mode of writing as common to all disciplines in the humanities.