

Paper Topics I

1. The Homeric Greeks seem to appreciate a wide variety of lives. Using evidence from the text, consider to what extent this attitude differs from letting everyone do what he or she feels like doing, because it doesn't matter anyway. How do the Homeric Greeks avoid such uncommitted relativism? Why is it not a problem for Aeschylus?
2. Using specific examples, describe the relation between the gods and mortals in the Odyssey and the first two Aeschylus plays (Agamemnon and The Libation Bearers). What does this tell us about the changing understanding of what the gods are and the role they play in people's lives?
- 3 The Oresteia is about ending a cycle of violence and revenge in Greece. Is Aeschylus' solution psychological, that is, does he think that what was required was a change in people's beliefs and desires? If not, what does he think needed to be changed?
4. Telemakhos and Orestes are compared and contrasted in Homer and Aeschylus. What role do the gods play in Telemakhos' recognition of his problem and its solution? What is Orestes' problem and what role do the gods play in resolving it?
5. Is it always a good thing to act under the guidance of a god in the Odyssey? Is it always a bad thing to act on one's own? What do your findings suggest about Homer's understanding of the relative values of responsiveness to a situation and acting on one's own? Why isn't this a problem by the end of the Oresteia?
6. In Homer, Athena plays a role in attuning each character to his or her situation. Take a case where she helps Odysseus get in sync with his situation and compare and construct how she helps the furies get in sync with theirs. What new dimension of life does Aeschylus highlight with her new role?
7. Compare and contrast Odysseus' homecoming as portrayed by Homer and Agamemnon's homecoming as portrayed by Aeschylus. What is the role of the gods in each case? How important are questions of guilt and retribution in each case?

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8. Aeschylus acknowledges both the value and the danger of the Furies and the Olympian Gods. Why does Aeschylus want to find another place/function/role for the Furies? What would the danger of an exclusive rule of the Olympian Gods be? Compare the Furies' and the Olympian Gods' role for the Greek society that Aeschylus portrays. Are both ways of being necessary for that society? Why or why not?

9. Contrast the portrayal of Athena in Homer and in Aeschylus. What aspects of the goddess does each emphasize and why? What does this tell us about Aeschylus' departure from Homeric polytheism?

You are encouraged to propose a paper topic of your own. Before working on your topic, however, you must get your GSI's approval.

Length: 5 – 7 double spaced pages.

Please use Times New Roman 12 pt. font, 1-inch margins, and number your pages.

Please print your GSI's name and section time on the top right hand corner of page one of your paper.

Due: Monday, February 26th, at 5:00 PM in Howison Library [#305 Moses Hall].

Late papers must be handed into the Library and dated by the librarian. They will be penalized one increment of grade (e.g. A to A-) per lecture. For example, an "A" paper handed in on Monday, March 7th will receive an "A" minus, and on Thursday, March 10th, a "B" plus, etc.

Suggestions:

- Make sure that you have clearly answered the question that you selected. It helps to state, explain, and then defend a specific thesis.
- Avoid summary comparisons. Show differences as well as similarities in any comparison you make.
- Avoid simply repeating what was said in lectures and sections.
- Back up your arguments with short, relevant quotations from the text.
- Be sure to define what you mean by terms such as "god", "world", "freedom" and "choice" in your discussion, and relate your use of these terms to the text.