Writing Assignment #3: Greek Epic and Tragedies

Choose one of the two following essay topics:

1. All of the assigned Greek works (The Odyssey, Antigone, Oedipus the King, Hippolytus, and Agamemnon) are filled with violence: murder, executions, suicide, and self-mutilation. Why must Oedipus suffer such violent act? Are Odysseus and Clytaemnestra justified in their use of violence? Are the deaths of Antigone and Hippolytus unjust? Are these senseless acts of violence or can it be argued that the violence is necessary or natural? Using two of the above-mentioned works, write a thesis-based essay in which you compare or contrast the two texts on the use of violence.

2. Notwithstanding what Homer implies about the heroic ideals at the end of the Odyssey, Odysseus regards himself as a hero, even though Achilles, the archetypal hero, laments that heroism only led to his death. What Homer does is to make Odysseus's heroism multidimensional; he is cunning, a trickster, and a deceiver, as well as a great warrior, and in the end he is husband and father. How do the heroic figures in the tragedies we read fit the pattern(s) of heroism in the Odyssey? In what way are they heroes? Using any two figures from Agamemnon, Hippolytus, Antigone, and Oedipus the King (you must choose two figures), write a thesis-based essay in which you compare or contrast the two figures in relation to the Homeric treatment of heroism.

Thesis: Make sure that your claim meets the standards outlined in the “Thesis” handout.

4 tests for a good thesis:

1. Is it an explanation, not a fact?
2. Can someone argue against it?
3. Is it too obvious to be worth defending?
4. Is it precise?

Evidence: Make sure your argument shows just how the textual evidence supports the thesis.

Note: In a compare OR contrast essay, you must do the following in the introductory paragraph:

A. Introduce the theme
B. Establish the authors’ views on the given theme.
C. Assert your own argument about the differences OR the similarities between the two texts/authors on the given theme.

Length: 4-5 pages.

Due: After lecture, Tuesday 10 March. Late papers will be penalized by the subtraction of one-third letter grade per day. Finally, don’t forget turnitin.com!