

Humanities 1

Winter 2020  
Professor Cox

### Writing Assignment 3 (graded)

Choose one of the following topics and write a thesis-based essay on it. In length, make your paper from four full pages to five full pages.

1, Most people who read Plato's *Symposium* go from one stage of the argument to the next, finding each stage at least plausible, right to the end; but when they look back on the text, they are surprised to find that an argument about the goodness of sexual love has produced the conclusion that an intelligent, reflective person should not have sex. Readers often feel that something must have gone wrong somewhere—but where? If you do not accept Plato's conclusion, identify exactly what you think went wrong.

2. Don't try to reason with me!

I then with the best counsel tried to win  
the Titans, sons of Ouranos and Earth,  
but failed. They would have none of crafty schemes  
and in their savage arrogance of spirit  
thought they would lord it easily by force.  
--*Prometheus Bound*, lines 204-208

“The Greeks valued persuasion more than force, but in their plays persuasion tends to have nothing but bad results.” To what extent, if any, is the quoted statement true? Use as evidence two of the following three works: *The Clouds*, *Prometheus Bound*, *Oedipus the King*.

3. “Character is fate,” said the Greek philosopher Heraclitus. Could it be that the terrible things that happen to the people in Greek tragedies are simply the result of their character, and require no explanation involving the gods or a mysterious, pre-determined destiny? Use as evidence *Prometheus Bound* and *Oedipus the King*

4. “‘Knowledge is power’ is a statement that has been made by many prominent people, including Thomas Jefferson. But *The Clouds*, *Prometheus Bound*, and *Oedipus the King* suggest that the statement is not true.” Argue for or against this view, or modify it to agree with the evidence you find in the texts. Discuss two of the three plays. Remembering that both knowledge and power can take a variety of forms, be clear about the kind(s) of knowledge and power you are discussing.

Turn in your essay at the **end of lecture on Friday, February 28.**