

DAY ONE
Junior Comprehensive Examination, Spring 2019

Part A: Explication. Write a critical interpretation of **one** of the following passages. Your essay (1800-word max.) should include reference to at least two other texts you have studied in the COL sequence.

1) *Book of J 5-6 (Rosenberg 63-4)*

[5] Now the snake was smoother-tongued than any wild creature that Yahweh made. "Did the God really mean," he said to the woman, "you can't eat from any tree in the garden?" "But the fruit of the trees we may," said the woman to the snake. "Just the tree in the middle of the garden, the God said. You can't eat from it, you can't touch--without death touching you." "Death will not touch you," said the snake to the woman. "The God knows on the day you eat from it your eyes will fall open like gods, knowing good and bad." Now the woman sees how good the tree looks, to eat from, how lovely to the eyes, lively to the mind. To its fruit she reached; ate, gave to her man, there with her, and he ate. And the eyes of both fall open, grasp knowledge of their naked skin. They wound together fig leaves, made coverings for themselves.

[6] Now they hear Yahweh's voice among the evening breezes, walking in the garden; they hid from the face of Yahweh, the man and his woman, among the trees of the garden. "Where are you?" Yahweh called to the man.

2) Homer, *Odyssey* 9.118-143 (Fagles, 214-15)

From there we sailed on, our spirits at a low ebb
and reached the land of the high and mighty Cyclops,
lawless brutes, who trust so to the everlasting gods
they never plant with their own hands or plow with the soil.
Unsown, unplowed, the earth teems with all they need,
wheat, barley and vines, swelled by the rains of Zeus
to yield a big full-bodied wine from clustered grapes.
They have no meeting place for council, no laws either,
no, up on the mountain peaks they live in arching caverns--
not a care in the world for any neighbor.

Now,
a island stretches flat across the harbor,
not close inshore to the Cyclops' coast, not too far out,
thick with woods where the wild goats breed by hundreds.
No trampling of men to start them from their lairs,
no hunters roughing it out on the woody ridges,
stalking quarry, ever raid their haven.
No flocks browse, no plowlands rool with wheat;
unplowed, unsown forever--empty of humankind--
the island just feeds droves of bleating goats.
For the Cyclops have no ships with crimson prows,
no shipwrights there to build them good trim craft

that could sail them out to foreign ports of all
as most men risk the seas to trade with other men.
Such artisans would have made this island too
a decent place to live...

3) Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 77

[D]uring this time it chanced that Hephaestion had a fever; and since, young man and soldier that he was, he could not submit to a strict regimen, as soon as Glaucus, his physician, had gone off to the theatre, he sat down to breakfast, ate a boiled fowl, drank a huge cooler of wine, fell sick, and in a little while died. Alexander's grief at this loss knew no bounds. He immediately ordered that the manes and tails of all horses and mules should be shorn in token of mourning, and too away the battlements of the cities round about; he also crucified the wretched physician, and put a stop to the sound of flutes and every kind of music in the camp for a long time, until an oracular response from Ammon came bidding him honour Hephaestion as a hero and sacrifice to him. Moreover, making war a solace for his grief, he went forth to hunt and track down men, as it were, and overwhelmed the nation of the Cossaeans, slaughtering them all from the youth upwards. This was called an offering to the shade of Hephaestion. Upon a tomb and obsequies for his friend, and upon their embellishments, he purposed to expend ten thousand talents, and wished that the ingenuity and novelty of the construction should surpass the expense.

4) Catullus 11

Furius and Aurelius, comrades of Catullus,
whether he'll penetrate the distant Indies
where the shore's slammed by far-resounding Eastern
thunderous breakers,

or make for Hyrcania, or the queening Arabs,
or the Sacae, or the Parthians with their quivers,
or that flat delta to which the seven-channelled
Nile gives its color,

or toil across high-towering Alpine passes
to visit the monuments of mighty Caesar,
the Gaulish Rhine, those rude back-of-beyonders
the woad-dyed Britons--

All this, or whatever the high gods in heaven
may bring, you're both ready to face together;
just find my girl, deliver her this short and
blunt little message:

Long may she live and flourish with her gallants,
embracing all three hundred in one session,
loving none truly, yet cracking each one's loins
over and over

Let her no more, as once, look for my passion,
which through her fault lies fallen like some flower
at the field's edge, after the passing ploughshare's
cut a path through it.

Part B: Thematic Essay. Write an essay of no more than 1800 words in response to **one** of the following questions. Center your analysis on at least **three** texts, of which one must be from COL 241 (we encourage you to include at least one text from another course in the sequence).

1) Peoplehood. The processes by which groups of people come to identify themselves as distinct from others have appeared throughout the assigned texts. Groups use stories, ritual practices, mythological ancestry, particular forms of political organization, claims to territory rooted in the distant past, and other strategies to reproduce dichotomies of us/them, superior/inferior, and human/monster. Discuss how various texts establish stories of peoplehood. Do some texts call into question, and thus critique, assumptions about what it means to be inside/outside a people?

2) Emotions. Emotions like love and hatred and emotional states like madness are difficult to define, yet emotions and emotional states play a key role in many of the assigned texts. Emotions help rouse troops to kill or comfort the families of those who have been killed. Emotions define landscapes. Emotions delineate gender roles. And emotions underline the absurdity of societal norms. Discuss how various texts employ and problematize emotions and emotional states. Do some texts teach us when we can love and hate, when we can be happy and sad, or when we should suppress our emotions?

3) Inversions. Discuss how some texts invite us to reevaluate our assumptions about what it means to be *in* the world. Such texts dramatize inversions of norms, especially in the face of troubling turns of events. What happens when the enslaved become the chosen people? What happens when women call into question the authority of kings? What happens to communities thrown into civil war or are afflicted by natural evils like plagues? What happens when humans defy the gods? The self-assured violence meted out by elites in a society can suddenly lead to revolution and their downfall. A shepherd may not be all that he seems. Do examples of these inverted/perverted/controverted moments teach the reader anything about the human condition? Inversions seem to call into question the status quo, but do inversions suggest deeper, more universalizing value systems?

DAY TWO

Junior Comprehensive Examination, Spring 2019

Part A: Explication. Write a critical interpretation of **one** of the following passages. Your essay (1800-word max.) should include reference to at least two other texts you have studied in the COL sequence.

1) Boethius, *On the Consolation of Philosophy* 4.1.8-9 (Relihan 92)

And since you have seen the essence of true happiness through my previous demonstrations, and have even come to recognize where it is to be found, I will show you the way that can carry you back home, after we've run through all the things that I think I must first set before it. In fact, I will equip your mind with wings, so that it can raise itself on high, so that you can cast your confusion into exile and return safe to your homeland, following my lead, along my path, by my conveyances.

[Meter]

See what I have: These are swift-beating wings for you,
Alert to rise to heaven's heights;
Swift-thinking mind, once these wings are attached to it,
Looks down to earth in vast disgust.

2) *The Lais of Marie de France*, lines 83-94 (Hanning and Ferrante 157)

“My lord,” the lady answered him,
“there is no joy in this world
like hearing the nightingale sing.
That’s why I stand there.
It sounds so sweet at night
that it gives me great pleasure;
it delights me so and I so desire it
that I cannot close my eyes.”
When her lord heard what she said
he laughed in anger and ill will.
He set his mind on one thing:
to trap the nightingale.

3) Al-Ghazali, *Deliverance from Error* (McCarthy 55-56)

Then I entered Damascus and resided there for nearly two years. My only occupation was seclusion and solitude and spiritual exercise and combat with a view to devoting myself to the purification of my soul and the cultivation of virtues and cleansing my heart for the remembrance of God Most High, in a way I had learned from the writings of the sufis. I used to pray in seclusion for a time in the Mosque, mounting to its minaret for the whole day and shutting myself in. Then I traveled from Damascus to Jerusalem, where I would go daily into the Dome of the Rock and shut myself in. Then I was inwardly moved by an urge to perform the duty of the pilgrimage and to draw succor from the blessings of Mecca and Medina and the visit to the tomb of the Apostle of God--God's blessing and peace be upon him!--after finishing my visit to the Friend of God--God's blessings and peace be upon him! So I traveled to the Hijaz. Then certain concerns and the appeals of my children drew me to my native land....

4) Fulcher of Chartres, *A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem* 3.37.1-3 (Ryan 270-71)

At that time the sun appeared to us in dazzling color for almost one hour. It was changed by a new and hyacinthine beauty and transformed into the shape of the moon as in a two-pronged eclipse. This happened on the third day before the Ides of August when the ninth hour of the day was waning.

Therefore do not marvel when you see signs in the heavens because God works miracles there as he does on earth. For just as in the heavens so also on earth He transforms and arranges all things as He wills. For if those things which He made are wonderful, more wonderful is He who made them. Consider, I pray, and reflect on how in our time God has transformed the Occident into the Orient.

For we who were Occidentals have now become Orientals. He who was a Roman or Frank has in this land been made into a Galilean or a Palestinian. He who was of Rheims or Chartres has now become a citizen of Tyre or Antioch. We have already forgotten the places of our birth; already these are unknown to many of us or not mentioned anymore.

Part B: Thematic Essay. Write an essay of no more than 1800 words in response to **one** of the following questions. Center your analysis on at least **three** texts, of which one must be from COL 243 (we encourage you to include at least one text from another course in the sequence).

1) Spiritual Practice. Discuss the ways in which spiritual practices are conceptualized across various texts. These texts suggest a number of spiritual paths, including but not limited to revelation, mystical vision, conversion, discipline, study, and persecution. Choose two or three of these paths, and explore what these texts suggest about the effects of each kind of path. What kind of religious experience does each approach seem to facilitate or promote?

2) Poetry. What is the power of poetry in these texts? How do its spiritual, philosophical, and/or sensual capacities work together or in conflict in the texts? Which kinds of human experience does poetry promote or enhance, and which does it hinder?

3) Allegory. Many of these texts convey meaning through parables, visions, and symbolism. What is the power of these modes allegory--saying one thing to convey another--in conveying metaphysical or moral truths? Why is veiled or disguised language necessary? What are its limitations?

DAY THREE

Junior Comprehensive Examination, Spring 2019

Part A: Explication. Write a critical interpretation of **one** of the following passages. Your essay (1800-word max.) should include reference to at least two other texts you have studied in the COL sequence.

1) Montaigne, "Of practice," 273

It is many years now that I have had only myself as object of my thoughts, that I have been examining and studying only myself; and if I study anything else, it is in order promptly to apply it to myself, or rather within myself. And it does not seem to me that I am making a mistake if--as is done in the other sciences, which are incomparably less useful--I impart what I have learned in this one, though I am hardly satisfied with the progress I have made in it. There is no description equal in difficulty, or certainly in usefulness, to the description of oneself. Even so one must spruce up, one must present oneself in an orderly arrangement, if one would go out in public. Now, I am constantly adorning myself, for I am constantly describing myself.

2) Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 3.1-26

Hail holy light, offspring of Heav'n first-born,
Or of th'Eternal coeternal beam
May I express thee unblamed? Since God is light,
And never but in unapproached light
Dwelt from eternity, dwelt then in thee,
Bright effluence of bright essence increate.
Or hear'st thou rather pure ethereal stream,
Whose fountain who shall tell? Before the sun,
Before the heavens thou wert, and at the voice
Of God, as with a mantle didst invest
The rising world of waters dark and deep,
Won from the void and formless infinite.
Thee I revisit now with bolder wing,
Escaped the Stygian pool, though long detained
In that obscure sojourn, while in my flight
Through utter and through middle darkness borne
With other notes than to th'Orphean lyre
I sung of Chaos and eternal Night,
Taught by the Heav'nly Muse to venture down
The dark descent, and up to reascend,
Though hard and rare: thee I revisit safe,
And feel thy sov'reign vital lamp; but thou
Revisit'st not these eyes, that roll in vain
To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn;
So thick a drop serene hath quenched their orbs,
Or dim suffusion veiled.

3) Madame de Lafayette, *The Princesse de Clèves*, 111-12

It is easy to imagine in what state they passed the night. All M. de Clèves's fortitude had been exhausted by having to endure the misery of seeing a wife whom he adored in love with another man. His courage was at an end; it even seemed to him that none was required of him in an affair where his honor and self-esteem were so deeply wounded. He no longer knew what to think of his wife; he no longer saw how he should require her to behave, nor how he should behave himself: he saw nothing but precipices and chasms on every side. Finally, after a long period of agitation and uncertainty, realizing that he would soon have to leave for Spain, he decided to do nothing that might increase suspicions or allow more to be known of his unhappy state. He went to see Mme de Clèves and told her that what was important was not to establish which of them had failed to keep the secret, but rather to make people think that the story they had been told was a fiction which had nothing to do with her. It was up to her, he said, to convince M. de Nemours and everyone else of this: she need only treat him with the coldness and severity that it was her duty to adopt towards a man who showed her that he loved her; in this way, she would easily stop him believing that she had any feelings for him. Thus, he concluded, there was no reason to be distressed by what M. de Nemours might have thought: if in future she gave no sign of weakness, all his suppositions would be easily destroyed. Above all, it was essential for her to go to the Louvre and attend court functions as usual.

4) Teresa of Avila, *The Book of Her Life*, Chapter 4, 12

I remember, clearly and truly, that when I left my father's house I felt that separation so keenly that the feeling will not be greater, I think, when I die. For it seemed that every bone in my body was being sundered. Since there was no love of God to take away my love for my father and relatives, everything so constrained me that if the Lord hadn't helped me, my reflections would not have been enough for me to continue on. In this situation He gave me such courage against myself that I carried out the task.

As soon as I took the habit, the Lord gave me an understanding of how He favors those who use force with themselves to serve Him. No one noticed this struggle, but rather they thought that I was very pleased. Within an hour, He gave me such great happiness at being in the religious state of life that it never left me up to this day, and God changed the dryness my soul experienced into the greatest tenderness.

Part B: Thematic Essay. Write an essay of no more than 1800 words in response to **one** of the following questions. Center your analysis on at least **three** texts, of which one must be from COL 244 (we encourage you to include at least one text from another course in the sequence).

1) Body: How do the texts you have read for the course imagine and understand the body's part in human experience? What is the relationship between body, mind, and soul? How do bodies marked by race and gender fit into these understandings?

2) Interpretation: From reading our fates in the stars to close reading a poem, how we make meaning--the process of interpretation--tells us who we are. What kinds of things lend themselves to interpretation in these texts, and how are they interpreted? What are the objects and methods of interpretation that these texts promote or disparage? What are the consequences of wrong interpretations? Does interpretation differ from other mental operations, such as reason or imagination?

3) Individual and Community: What relationship do these texts imagine between the individual and the community, imagined as nation, society, or polis? Are the boundaries between them firm or fluid? To what extent does individualism benefit or harm society, and which is to be prioritized?