

**DAY ONE**  
**Junior Comprehensive Examination, Spring 2021**

**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 colloquium sequence so far.

**1.) Virgil, *Aeneid* 5.551-76 (Fagles)**

Aeneas commands  
the flooding crowds to clear the whole broad arena,  
leave the field wide open. Then in ride the boys,  
trim in their ranks before their parents' eyes,  
mounted on bridled steeds and glittering in the light  
and as they pass, the men of Troy and Sicily  
murmur a hum of admiration. All the riders,  
following custom, wear their hair bound tight  
with close-cut wreaths, each bearing a pair of lances,  
cornel, tipped with steel. Some sling burnished quivers  
over their shoulders, high on their necks the torques  
of flexible, braided gold encircle each boy's neck.  
Three squadrons with three captains weave their ways,  
each leading a column of twelve, six boys in double file,  
a trainer beside each troupe, all shining in the sun.

The first young squadron parades along in triumph  
led by little Priam, who bore his forebear's name—  
your noble son, Polites, destined to sire Italians—  
riding a Thracian stallion dappled white, his pasterns white  
and prancing, high brow flashing a blaze of white.  
Next comes Atys, soon the source of the Latin Atians,  
little Atys, a boy the boy Prince Iulus loved.  
Last, handsomest captain of them all, comes Iulus  
riding a mount from Sidon, radiant Dido's gift,

a memento of the queen, a pledge of her affection.  
The rest of the youngsters ride Sicilian horses,  
old Acestes' gifts, the riders awed by applause  
the Dardans give their fine dressage, delighted  
to see in their looks their own lost parents' faces.

## 2.) Plato, *Republic* 391a3-391c5 (Reeve)

It is only out of respect for Homer, indeed, that I hesitate to say that it is positively impious to accuse Achilles of such things or to believe others who say them. Or to make him address Apollo in these words:

You've injured me, Farshooter, most deadly of the gods;  
And I'd punish you, if I had the power.

Or to say that he disobeyed the river—a god—and was ready to fight it, or that he consecrated hair to the dead Patroclus, which was already consecrated to a different river, Spercheios. It isn't to be believed that he did any of these. Nor is it true that he dragged the dead Hector around the tomb of Patroclus or massacred the captives on his pyre. So we'll deny that. Nor will we allow our people to believe that Achilles, who was the son of a goddess and of Peleus (the most moderate of men and the grandson of Zeus) and who was brought up by the most wise Cheiron, was so full of inner turmoil as to have two diseases in his soul—slavishness accompanied by the love of money, on the one hand, and arrogance towards gods and humans, on the other.

## 3.) *Enuma Elish* tablet I, 78-110 (Foster)

In the cella of destinies, the abode of designs,  
The most capable, the sage of the gods,  
                  the Lord was begotten,  
In the midst of Apsu Marduk was formed,  
In the midst of holy Apsu was Marduk formed!

Ea his father begot him,  
Damkina his mother was confined with him.  
He suckled at the breasts of goddesses,  
The attendant who raised him endowed him well with glories.  
His body was magnificent, fiery his glance,  
He was a hero at birth,  
    he was a mighty one from the beginning!  
When Anu his grandfather saw him,  
He was happy, he beamed his heart was filled with joy.     90  
He perfected him, so that his divinity was strange,  
He was much greater, he surpassed them in every way.  
His members were fashioned with cunning  
    beyond comprehension,  
Impossible to conceive, too difficult to visualize:  
Fourfold his vision, fourfold his hearing  
When he moved his lips a fire broke out.  
Formidable his fourfold perception,  
And his eyes, in like number, saw in every direction.  
He was the tallest of the gods, surpassing in form,  
His limbs enormous, he was surpassing at birth.     100  
“The son Utu, the son Utu,  
“The son, the sun, the sunlight of the gods!”  
He wore (on his body) the auras of ten gods,  
    had (them) wrapped around his head(?) too,  
Fifty glories were heaped upon him.  
Anu formed and produced the four winds,  
He put them in his hand, “Let my son play!”  
He fashioned dust, he made a storm bear it up,  
He caused a wave and it roiled Tiamat,  
Tiamat was roiled, churning day and night,  
The gods, finding no rest, bore the brunt of each wind.     110

#### 4.) Thucydides, Book 2.40-41 (Woodruff)

We are lovers of nobility with restraint, and lovers of wisdom without any softening of character. We use wealth as an opportunity for action, rather than for boastful speeches. And as for poverty, we think there is no shame in confessing it; what is shameful is doing nothing to escape it. Moreover, the very men who take care of public affairs look after their own at the same time; and even those who are devoted to their own businesses know enough about the city's affairs. For we alone think that a man who does not take part in public affairs is good for nothing, while others only say he is "minding his own business." We are the ones who develop policy, or at least decide what is to be done; for we believe that what spoils action is not speeches, but going into action without first being instructed through speeches. In this too we excel over others: ours is the bravery of people who think through what they will take in hand, and discuss it thoroughly; with other men, ignorance makes them brave and thinking makes them cowards. But the people who most deserve to be judged tough-minded are those who know exactly what terrors or pleasures lie ahead, and are not turned away from danger by that knowledge. Again we are opposite to most men in matters of virtue: we win our friends by doing them favors, rather than by accepting favors from them. A person who does a good turn is a more faithful friend: his goodwill towards the recipient preserves his feeling that he should do more; but the friendship of a person who has to return a good deed is dull and flat, because he knows he will be merely paying a debt—rather than doing a favor—when he shows his virtue in return. So that we alone do good to others not after calculating the profit, but fearlessly and in the confidence of our freedom.

In sum, I say that our city as a whole is a lesson for Greece, and that each of us presents himself as a self-sufficient individual, disposed to the widest possible diversity of actions, with every grace and great versatility. This is not merely a boast in words for the occasion, but the truth in fact, as the power of this city, which we have obtained by having this character, makes evident.

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**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 colloquium). Try not to repeat what you have written about in Part 1.

**1.) Travel** changes us, whether the reason for travel is welcome or not. In antiquity, long-distance travel was difficult and often dangerous, but was also an essential component in the articulation—even, in some instances, the survival—of cultural and individual identity. What factors encouraged individuals or groups to embark on a risky journey? What challenges did they face, and what rewards did they hope for? And did the outcome of the journey expand their horizons, or create a new set of limitations?

**2.) Memory** – The past is activated repeatedly in ancient literature through the memory of those who have gone before. But however extensive, memory is always, inevitably, fragmented, even as it struggles against both oblivion and nostalgia. How does memory exert its power over individuals? And how does individual memory distinguish itself from collective memory?

**3.) Women and war** – Although generally the direct result of decisions made by people in positions of authority, war normally has consequences for many individuals who reside far from the seat of power. In ancient literature, women often represent, and sometimes speak for, these victims of “collateral damage.” Their relative powerlessness within a starkly patriarchal society has long been seen as inevitable; but is it? How do the women themselves make sense of their suffering, and how do they try to counter it? And do the texts themselves enable the women’s agency, or deprive them of it?

**DAY TWO**  
**Junior Comprehensive Examination, Spring 2021**

**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 colloquium sequence so far.

**1.) Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, (Relihan, 89-92), Bk 3, Meter 12, Ins. 52-58; Bk. 4, Prose 1.**

[*Meter*]

This tale points at you,  
You who seek to conduct your minds  
To the light of the day above:  
Let not man give a backward glance  
In defeat, to the caves of Hell—  
What he takes with himself as his  
He will lose when he sees the dead.

[*Prose*]

Philosophy had sung these words softly and sweetly, never losing the dignity of her appearance or the impressiveness of her speech, but I had not yet forgotten the sorrow that was planted within me, and so I interrupted her train of thought then, just as she was getting ready to say something else.

I said: Yes, you are the one who leads on toward the true light, and the words that flowed from your pleading were not only obviously divine, examined in themselves, but also irrefragable, according to your arguments; still, though I had recently forgotten them in my depression because of the wrongs done to me, you have spoken things that were not completely unknown to me before. But here is what is perhaps the greatest cause of my sorrow: the fact that evil things can exist at all, or that they can pass unpunished, when the helmsman of all things is good. Make no mistake: Only you can ponder this with the amazement that it deserves. No, there is another, an even greater thing connected to it: I mean, when gross wickedness thrives and has dominion, that not only does virtue go without its true rewards, but it is even forced to grovel at the feet of lawless men and to be ground beneath their heels, subjected to punishments as if for crimes committed. That such things happen in the kingdom of a God who knows all things, who is capable of all things, but who desires good things and the good alone—no one can be amazed at it, and no one can complain about it, as it deserves.

And then she said: True, it would be everlastingly incomprehensible, a thing more monstrous than all other monstrosities if, as you reckon it, the cheap earthenware pots were prized, and the expensive ones defiled, in what I may call so great a master's perfectly appointed house. But that is not the way it is. If the conclusions we reached a little while ago have not been torn to pieces but still hold, then, by the agency of that same creator of whose kingdom we now speak, you will come to see that good people are always powerful, while evil people are always disreputable and unable to sustain themselves; that vices are never without punishment, and virtues never without reward; that things worthy of rejoicing always happen to good people, and disasters always happen to the evil.

**2.) *The Lais of Marie de France, Guigemar, (Hanning and Ferrante, 40-41, lns. 379-384; and 43-44, lns. 481-495)***

“But now love struck him to the quick;  
great strife was in his heart  
because the lady had wounded him so badly  
that he forgot his homeland.  
His other wound no longer bothered him,  
but he sighed with new anguish.

...

But he who hides his sickness  
can hardly be brought back to health;  
love is a wound in the body,  
and yet nothing appears on the outside.  
It's a sickness that lasts a long time,  
because it comes from nature.  
Many people treat it lightly,  
like those false courtiers  
who have affairs everywhere they go,  
then boast about their conquests;  
that's not love but folly,  
evil and lechery.  
If you can find a loyal love,  
you should love and serve it faithfully,  
be at its command.”

### **3.) Ibn Tufayl, *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, (Goodman, 114-115, Section 45)**

“Hayy turned the focus of his thoughts on that being. What was it? What was its manner of existence? What had bound it to this body? Where had it gone, and how had it gotten out? What drove it away if it was forced to leave; or if it left of its own free choice, what made it so loathe the body? His mind was filled with these questions. He soon dropped the body and thought no more of it, knowing that the mother who had nursed him and showed him so much kindness could only be that being which had departed. From that – and not from this lifeless body – all those actions had issued. The whole body was simply a tool of this being, like the stick with which he fought the animals. His affection was transferred now from the body to the being that was its master and mover. All his love was directed toward that.”

### **4.) *The Book of John Mandeville*, (Higgins, 166-167, Chapter 31).**

“Beside this isle of Milstorak on the left beside the River Phison, there is a marvelous thing: it is a valley between the mountains that lasts for almost four leagues. Some call it the Enchanted Valley, some call it the Devil's Valley, and some the Perilous Valley. In this valley storms and great noises and uproars are often heard, every day and every night, and great sounds and great resounding noises of drums and kettledrums and trumpets, as if there were a great celebration.

This valley is completely full of devils and always has been, and people say that it is one of the entrances to Hell. In this valley there is much gold and much silver, and that is why many pagans, and many Christians too, often go into it to seek the treasure that is there. But few of them return-especially the pagans, and also the Christians who go because they are greedy to have things-for they are soon strangled by the Devil.

...

Know that when my companions and I were in this valley, we thought long and hard about whether we dared venture our bodies and enter under God's protection, and some of [my] companions agreed, and some were opposed. There were with us there two worthy Friars Minor, who were from Lombardy, who said that if there were any of us who wanted to enter, they would put us in good standing [with God] and go in with us. When these worthy men told us this, trusting in God and in them, we had mass sung and were confessed and took communion and entered, [all] fourteen [of us]. But on coming out there were only nine of us, and we did not know whether our companions had been lost, or whether they had returned and come out ahead [of us]. But nevertheless



we have not seen them since, and they were two Greeks and three Spaniards. Our other companions who did not want to enter went by another route so as to be ahead of us, and so they were.

Thus we passed through the said valley, and in many places there saw gold and silver and precious stones and jewels in abundance on every side, as it seemed to us. But whether it was as it seemed to us, I do not know, for I never touched [anything], because the devils are so cunning that they often make nonexistent things appear so as to deceive people. For this reason I did not want to touch [anything], and also because I did not want to put myself out of my devout state; for I was more devout then than I have ever been since, as much out of terrible fear of the devils that I saw in many forms as because of the many dead bodies that I saw lying throughout the whole valley—so many that if there had been an all-out war between the two most powerful kings in the country, and the greater part were routed, there scarcely would have been as many dead as there were in this valley, which was a very hideous thing to see.”

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**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 colloquium). Try not to repeat what you have written about in Part 1 or on Day 1.

**1.) Dialogue & Difference.** Medieval writers and thinkers were eager to understand their world, particularly those moments and places where encounters with difference – religious, ethnic, linguistic – were acutely felt. They employed many strategies to investigate and characterize differences, but especially common were the use of dialogue and conversation. How was this form useful and effective? What could be conveyed in a dialogue that was missing or flattened by narrative prose? Does it require the cultivation of empathy? How does the conversational mode give insight into ways of learning, perceiving and understanding in the medieval world? Have we lost some of these techniques in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with our reliance on first person, eyewitness, accounts and instantaneous information presented through social media platforms?

**2.) Gender & Authority.** Scholars of the Middle Ages have characterized the twelfth century as a period of greater independence, power, and authority on the part of women. Grounding your response in your own critical readings, would you agree? If so, in what ways did women hold power and how were they represented as figures of authority? How did this compare to masculine ideals at that time? In what ways were women or men constrained or silenced? Are there other ways of reading or interpreting our sources that might bring gender and gendered dynamics to the fore?

**3.) Wonder, Imagination & Fantasy.** In our modern contemporary world, the “medieval” looms and is deployed as a space of fantasy, of imagination, and sometimes of wonder. In what ways and with what types of images did medieval writers employ wonder and fantasy? Identify and analyze at least three examples. How did medieval readers and writers interpret the fantastical or wonderful? Why do you think the medieval has become a site for *modern* fantasies about the past? What kinds of stereotypes or forms of knowledge creation lie behind the redeployment of the “medieval” or the “Middle Ages” in our present day?

**DAY THREE**  
**Junior Comprehensive Examination, Spring 2021**

**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 colloquium sequence so far.

**1.) Lorenzo Valla, *On the Donation of Constantine* (Bowersock, p. 11, sec. 7).**

I speak to you, kings and princes. Since it is hard for a private person to firm any ides of a royal disposition, I probe your mind, I examine your conscience, I ask for your testimony. Would any one of you, had he been in Constantine's place, have thought he should act to bestow upon another person, by gracious liberality, the city of Rome—his own fatherland, the center of the world, the queen of cities, the most powerful, noblest, richest of peoples, which triumphed over nations and was sacred to behold? Would he have thought to remove himself to a modest town, or after that to Byzantium, and, in addition, to turn over Italy along with Rome, not just a province but a victor over provinces? Would he have thought to give away the three Gauls, the two Spains, the Germans, the British—the whole western world—and to deprive himself of one of the two eyes of his empire? I cannot be persuaded to believe that any sane person would do this. What is normally more desirable, more pleasurable, more welcome than for you to enlarge your empires and kingdoms and to extend your sway as far and wide as possible? It seems to me that all your concern, all your thinking, all your effort is taken up day and night with this. From this arises your special hope of glory. Because of this you put aside worldly delights, because of this you submit to a thousand perils, because of this you give up with equanimity your loved ones and your own limbs. As far as I have heard or read, not one of you was ever deterred from the effort to increase his empire because he would have lost an eye, a hand, a leg, or some other member. On the contrary, this blazing passion for extensive rule most of all goads and drives one who is already supremely powerful. Alexander—who was not content to have wandered on foot through the deserts of Libya, to have subdued the East to the farthest sea, to have conquered the north amid a multitude of wounds and misfortunes, as his troops were already balking and were loathing such distant and rough campaigns—seemed to himself to have accomplished nothing at all without the subjugation of the west and all of its nations either by force or by the authority of his name.

**2.) Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, *La Respuesta* (Arenal and Powell, 28-30, Ins. 780-803).**

Well, and what then shall I tell you, my Lady, of the secrets of nature that I have learned while cooking? I observe that an egg becomes solid and cooks in butter or oil, and on the contrary that it dissolves in sugar syrup. Or again, to ensure that sugar will flow freely one need only add the slightest bit of water that has held quince or some other sour fruit. The yolk and

white of the very same egg are of such a contrary nature that when eggs are used with sugar, each part separately may be used perfectly well, yet they cannot be mixed together. I shall not weary you with such inanities, which I relate simply to give you a full account of my nature, and I believe this will make you laugh. But in truth, my Lady, what can we women know, save philosophies of the kitchen? It was well put by Lupercio Leonardo [*sic*] that one can philosophize quite well while preparing supper. I often say, when I make these little observations, “Had Aristotle cooked, he would have written a great deal more.” And so to go on with the mode of my cogitations: I declare that all this is so continual in me that I have no need of books. On one occasion, because of a severe stomach ailment, the doctors forbade me to study. I spent several days in that state, and then quickly proposed to them that it would be less harmful to allow me my books, for my cogitations were so strenuous and vehement that they consumed more vitality in a quarter of an hour than the reading of books could in four days. And so the doctors were compelled to let me read.

### **3.) Galileo, *The Starry Messenger* (1610), (Drake, 27-28)**

Surely it is a great thing to increase the numerous host of fixed stars previously visible to the unaided vision, adding countless more which have never before been seen, exposing these plainly to the eye in numbers ten times exceeding the old and familiar stars.

It is a very beautiful thing, and most gratifying to sight, to behold the body of the moon, distant from us almost sixty earthly radii, as if it were no farther away than two such measures – so that its diameter appears almost thirty times larger, its surface nearly nine hundred times as large as when viewed with the naked eye. In this way one may learn with all the certainty of sense evidence that the moon is not robed in a smooth and polished surface but is in fact rough and uneven, covered everywhere, just like the earth’s surface, with huge prominences, deep valleys, and chasms.

Again, it seems to me a matter of no small importance to have ended the dispute about the Milky Way by making its nature manifest to the very senses as well as to the intellect. Similarly it will be a pleasant and elegant thing to demonstrate that the nature of those stars which astronomers have previously called “nebulous” is far different from what has been believed hitherto.

### **4.) Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, (p. 62, ch. XI, para. 24-25)**

[24] Anxiety for the future time disposeth men to inquire into the causes of things, because the knowledge of them maketh men better able to order the present to their best advantage.

[25] Curiosity, or love of knowledge of causes, draws a man from consideration of the effect to seek the cause, and again the cause of that cause, till of necessity he must come to this thought at last: that there is some cause, whereof there is no former cause, but is eternal, which is it men call God. So that it is impossible to make any profound inquiry into natural causes without being inclined thereby to believe there is one God eternal, though they cannot have any idea of him in their mind answerable to his nature. For as a man that is born blind, hearing men talk of warming themselves by the fire, and being brought to warm himself by the same, may easily conceive and assure himself there is something there, which men call *fire* and is the cause of the heat he feels, but cannot imagine what it is like, nor have an idea of it in his mind such as they have that see it; so also, by the visible things of this world and their admirable order, a man may conceive there is a cause of them, which men call God, and yet not have an idea or image of him in his mind.

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**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 colloquium). Try not to repeat what you have written about in Part 1 or on Days 1 and 2.

**1.) Audience** – Authors’ awareness of their audience is integral to the choices they make about genre, perspective, and the expression (or apparent suppression) of their own authority. How do writers of the early modern period negotiate the relationship with their audience? And is this a distinctive feature of the period, or can it be traced to earlier developments in literary form?

**2.) Religious Change** – The early modern period coincides with a new awareness of epistemological alternatives to traditional religious ideas. How can we understand this change? What factors propelled and shaped the adoption of new religious attitudes? And how was this awareness refined through literary expression?

**3.) Observation & Order** – During the early modern period new perspectives on the world, on nature, and on the self, emerged often grounded in methods of close observation and perception. Account for how and why observation became a trustworthy guide. What sorts of questions arose that could be answered through these methods? What proof was there for trusting one’s own perceptions? How did individuals articulate the relationship between observation, human reason, and Divine order?