



CLASSICS SUMMER SCHOOL  
WADHAM COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD



‘Gender and Sexuality in the  
Ancient World’

**STUDENT HANDBOOK**



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# WELCOME

Thank you for applying to take part in the Classics Summer School at Wadham. As you are aware the current situation with COVID-19 has meant that the Summer School has been cancelled. Understandably, this is disappointing for you and for our tutors and undergraduate helpers unable to share their passion and knowledge for Classics with you. In lieu of being able to participate in person, the handbook and attached resources aim to give an idea of the content and associated reading. Although not the same as being able to take part in the Summer School, it is hoped that these resources can be used to develop both your interest and your expertise in the study of Classics and related subjects.

The handbook and resources are taken from those used previously in running the Summer School. As such, please be aware some of the handbook may make reference to sessions you will not have covered (for example, the language content has been omitted). Similarly, whilst the essay section has been included there is obviously no requirement for you to complete an essay. It has been included simply to give some ideas of relevant questions based on the stimuli provided and provide some essay writing tips from tutors teaching Classics at Oxford.



# PREPARATION: ESSAY QUESTIONS & PRESCRIBED READING

The main theme of the Classics Summer School at Wadham will be ‘Gender and Sexuality in the Ancient World’ – the different roles played by women and men in the Greek and Roman worlds, and Greek and Roman views of the body, sexuality, love and the household. The Greeks and Romans had very different views from ours on the relationship between the sexes; gender roles for men and women also changed radically over the course of the 1500 years or so of Greek and Roman history. To what extent were women confined to the home in the Classical Greek world? What kind of picture do we get of male-female relationships in the Late Roman Republic from the Latin love poets? Was there such a thing as “homosexuality” in the ancient world? We will look at some of the key primary texts on gender roles and male and female sexuality in antiquity, along with some of the most exciting and important modern scholarship in the field.

You are required to research and write an essay (c. 1,500 words) over the course of the week, on one of the following four topics (the choice is yours):

- a. Did women enjoy higher social status in the Greek world, or the Roman world? Why?
- b. How accurate a picture does ancient poetry (Greek and/or Latin) provide of EITHER ancient sexuality OR ancient gender roles?
- c. How do ancient ideas of ‘homosexuality’ and ‘heterosexuality’ differ from modern ones?
- d. Given that virtually all our evidence for women in antiquity was produced by men, can we really say anything about the reality of life as a woman in the ancient world?

## READING

### ANCIENT TEXTS

The easiest way to access relevant ancient texts on **gender** in the ancient world is through the excellent website <http://www.stoa.org/diotima/anthology/> (translations of primary sources online). Do browse through as little or as much as you have time for (all on the Diotima website, except where stated):

#### Greek:

- Greek women poets: Sappho
- Semonides 7
- Sophocles, *Antigone*
- Euripides, *Medea*
- Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* (<http://www.lysistratascript.com/script/>)
- Lysias I, *On the Murder of Eratosthenes*

#### Latin:

- Catullus 16
- Selections from Ovid's *Amores*
- Ovid on Sappho
- Juvenal, *Satire 6*  
(<http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/JuvenalSatires6.htm>)

The Diotima website also has a link to a selection from Mary Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome* (<http://www.stoa.org/diotima/anthology/wlgr/>) – please browse widely in this!

Other ancient texts are available in translation online at the Perseus Digital Library: [www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/)

## **MODERN BOOKS & ARTICLES** (all in the Appendix)::

### Introductory reading on **gender**:

- John Gould, 'Law, custom and myth: the social position of women in Classical Athens', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 1980, 38-59

### Introductory reading on **Greek women**:

- Sharon James, 'Sex and the single girl: the Cologne fragment of Archilochus', in James and Dillon, *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*, 2012, 81-83 – you'll find a translation of the Cologne fragment of Archilochus on the Diotima website
- Edith Hall, 'The Many Faces of Lysistrata', in D. Stuttard, *Looking at Lysistrata*, 2011, 29-36

### Introductory reading on **Roman women**:

- Sharon James, 'Vergil's Dido', in James and Dillon, *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*, 2012, 369-371
- Judith Hallett, 'Women in Augustan Rome', in James and Dillon, *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*, 2012, 372-384

### Introductory reading on **sexuality**:

- Sappho and Catullus are both excellent starting points (some translated excerpts on the Diotima website, but do pursue further online); at the end of this handbook you will find a couple of pages from an ancient handbook to dream interpretation (Artemidorus, *Dream Analysis* 1.78-80) which is well worth reading!

# STUDY SKILLS: ESSAY WRITING

This guidance is intended to introduce you to how to get the most from your teaching whilst at the summer school and beyond. We have tried to answer the questions that are likely to arise before and during your time in Oxford: it is not intended to be a definitive set of rules, because each student has their own approach to work and methods for effective studying.

## **TACKLING THE READING LIST**

Initially reading lists can appear daunting and most students feel that they have to read everything on the list in order to come to a full understanding of a topic. You will have a limited amount of time to prepare for your tutorial and the resources you need might not always be immediately available (which is true in any university); so be pragmatic:

- Select extracts carefully from the recommended texts to suit your purposes.
- Discuss ideas with the student ambassadors: they may be able to provide alternative perspectives.
- 1,500 words is a very short essay! Aim to gain an in-depth understanding of the books and/or articles you do read rather than attempt to read everything.
- Organise your time well – aiming to read one of the texts per day in advance of the summer school is much easier than aiming to read all the texts at once at the last minute.

## **READING & NOTE-TAKING**

We all know how to read, but reading academic texts in a short space of time requires a very different set of skills. These skills will be vital when you are studying for an undergraduate degree so try practicing them as early as you can. Rather than just deciding to begin at the beginning, it is worth thinking about how to approach reading a book.

- Begin your reading by browsing or surveying the book. Study the table of contents and index to see how the ideas in the book are structured. From chapter headings and subheadings, you may be able to note those sections that are most relevant for your purposes.

- Check the publication date. This may alert you to the position of the book in relation to recent ideas or current data.
- Read the abstract, foreword, preface and introduction as these tend to contain the structure of the book and a summary of the main themes.
- Conclusions provide a summary of the main ideas and may point to a different perspective arising from the author's discussion of the material.
- Indices are located at the back of some books. They should not be ignored. They list the topics covered in the book with appropriate page numbers for each subject. Using the index for references to a specific topic will speed up your reading.
- For factual information, it is often unnecessary to read the whole book. Carefully skim the table of contents and index to select the most useful parts.
- If you have a particularly difficult piece to read, you may need to read it more than once – first to understand the basic ideas, then more closely to get answers to the specific questions you have in mind. You may need to go back and read a simple text as an introduction.

Notes are taken for different purposes and these will determine the amount of detail required. You might be tempted to try to write down everything you read. This is often not practical or even desirable. When making notes look for the key points or main ideas. These may be summarised in the preface, introduction and at the beginning of each chapter of a book.

At university, tutors are not looking for a regurgitation of your notes. Be critical when you read academic texts. Ask yourself some of the following questions:

- a) Is the material well presented?
- b) Is the author biased?
- c) Do the facts support the author's conclusion
- d) How does the author's perspective compare with those of others who have written on the same subject?
- e) What do you think?

As you read, you should begin to develop the argument(s) for your essay. When you're reading, always have in mind the question you are trying to answer as this will help you to focus your reading and note-taking.



## **ESSAY WRITING GUIDE**

### **Introduction – General Points on Good Essay Writing**

It is important to remember why we write essays. An essay is an act of written communication intended as a solution to an intellectual problem. Therefore, the most important element of any essay is critical analysis – a.k.a. argument. In an essay there will be three elements:

**Narrative — description/ stating of facts**

**Analysis — evaluating the importance of those facts**

**Argument — making a case that your analysis provides the best solution to the question/ problem**

Narrative is important, but it is the easiest element to write and does not contribute much to solving the problem. Far more important is your analysis and argument. Narrative must be used, but only as a support for your argument. Therefore, do not just list facts or describe what other people have argued. Set out your own argument and use facts and reviews of the literature to defend your position.

When writing an essay, ask yourself the following questions:

#### **1) Have I answered the question in the introduction?**

There are two crucial points here. Firstly you must be sure that you are answering the question precisely and in its entirety. Secondly you should set out your answer in your introductory paragraph.

Essay questions are carefully written in order to test the adaptability of your knowledge and essay writing skill. You must answer the question set, rather than your own preferred

question. Therefore, take time to think carefully about the wording of the question.

Your central argument needs to be summarised fully within the first lines of the essay. This may seem a blunt and unattractive essay style, but you need to communicate your ideas efficiently because the readers have limited time to consider your argument and they will not want to hunt around your essay for your answer. It is not good enough to have a clear conclusion; you must make your case in the introduction and argue it all the way through the essay to the end.

Ensuring that your argument is clearly laid out in the introduction and is consistent throughout the essay requires careful planning. Before you write a word of the essay you need to know what you are going to say and how it links together to form a coherent argument. The importance of good planning is difficult to over-emphasise.

## **2) Have I defined all of the unclear elements in the question?**

Sometimes essay questions contain words whose meaning is unclear. A good essay writer will always seek to clarify the meaning of such words so as to base their argument on a solid foundation.

When it comes to the analysis of words you should be as pedantic as it is possible to be. Clear definitions are important, but semantic analysis should not detain you for long in your essay. A sentence or two is typically sufficient. The key thing to remember is that you are only defining these terms so that your answer to the question is more solidly founded, and you should not be tempted to begin an extensive debate on the specifics of language. In some essay questions there are many ambiguous terms employed and defining them all can be tricky. Nevertheless, be succinct and remember that definitions are a means to the end of creating a clear argument.

In thinking about how to define complex terms it is typically best to offer a clear elucidation in your own words. Dictionary definitions, even those taken from Classical dictionaries, rarely capture the detail of a concept and should usually be avoided. It is common for an essay question to introduce a concept that is widely used in the literature, and in these cases a definition taken from a respected source is a good approach. That said, be aware that no conceptualisation is incontestable and you need to accept that at some point a choice must be made as to what a term means so that you can move on to the main point of the essay – answering the question with a clear argument.

### **3) Do I have a logical structure that is clearly set out in a ‘road map’?**

Once again the aim here is clarity of communication. Your essay is a contribution to the academic community, and therefore it needs to be clear to your peers. To achieve this, a logical structure is needed.

Essentially you are aiming to organise your essay in a way that is reader-friendly. Therefore, you should have paragraphs that link together to form a coherent whole, and where the movement from one paragraph to the next makes sense and does not jar with the reader.

Perhaps the easiest way to understand logical structure is to understand what it is not. ‘Stream of consciousness’ is the antithesis of a logical structure. This is where the writer does not plan the essay but writes down ideas as they pop into their head. This typically manifests as long incoherent paragraphs that jump from one point to the next without any obvious justification. This is not a style of writing, it is the lack of a style, and it is frustrating for readers.

Your essay is not written for your own records, so well organised prose is very important. You are trying to sell your ideas to a buyer who is not going to spend much time at your stall. You therefore need to make their comprehension of your ideas as easy as possible. The best way to achieve this is once again through careful planning. After you have decided upon your central line of argument you can then decide what the core elements of the case are and these can form the basic bones of your structural skeleton. To make an argument there will typically be three or four separate but connected elements that need to be discussed. If you assign each of these elements a paragraph or two, you can discuss each in turn and build up your whole argument piece by piece.

Breaking your argument into easily comprehensible bite-size elements is not always easy to achieve but will always depend on the question and your proposed answer. Through planning your argument you will determine the content of your separate paragraphs. These paragraphs should be linked together so that the prose develops seamlessly. The best way to link your paragraphs is by showing how they interconnect to make your argument. It is also worth reiterating your core argument at the end of every major paragraph by utilising the question wording. This has the advantages of reminding the reader of your central position and also showing that each of your points is relevant to the question. You should end each paragraph with a bridging sentence that links your separate points together. Such bridging sentences ensure that your essay flows nicely and that the reader understands how you are developing your argument and how it relates to the question.

The final important point to make is that you must advertise your proposed structure in your introduction so that the examiner knows in advance what your central points are, how they link together, and in what order you intend to analyse them. This is commonly referred to

as a 'road map', as it helps the reader navigate your essay with ease. This does not need to be any longer than two sentences that signal how the essay will develop.

#### **4) Have I balanced my argument?**

Your essay must communicate a single argument with clarity, and you certainly should not sit on the fence. However, it is a mistake to analyse only one side of a debate. If you do not make it clear that you have considered alternative explanations then your reader may assume that you do not know what alternatives there are or, even worse, that you are incapable of defeating counter-arguments and you have therefore chosen not to mention them.

To avoid this problem you need to analyse alternative arguments to your own. Indeed, it is impossible to argue a strong case without rebutting threats to its validity. For each of your main points you should discuss what your critics would say and show why their solution to the problem in hand is flawed in comparison to your offering. If you can quote existing scholarship, all the better. By doing this you can show the reader your knowledge of the literature and explain how your argument makes a contribution.

Make sure that your voice comes across loud and clear. The reader wants to know your argument, and does not want a narration of the different schools of thought. You need to have the courage to stake your claim with vigour and you should not hide behind the existing literature. Never forget that the key skill that is being tested is your ability to analyse a problem in your own words, and thus your argument is the critical element.

Whilst clarity and boldness are important, be sure to avoid a brash or condescending tone when reviewing the literature. The scholars you are critiquing are highly regarded in their field, and to disdain their work is arrogant.

A balanced argument does not mean that you are impartial, it means that you understand the literature and you have confidence in your conclusions.

#### **4) What evidence do I have to support my contentions?**

You cannot simply assert that your argument is true, you need to prove it. Therefore, you need evidence to support your contentions. Evidence comes in all sorts of forms. Some evidence will be in the form of an ancient text, but evidence can also be archaeological. The key to good evidence is to explain to your readers why they should be persuaded by it. Think about a criminal trial. There will be a lot of conflicting evidence, some of which could exonerate the accused and some of which could damn the accused. The only way to win the case is to make clear that one set of reasons and evidence is stronger than the other. So, if

you decide to draw on archaeological evidence you need to explain why it is the 'smoking gun' that solves the mystery. Likewise, if you think focussing on ancient texts in detail is better then you must say so. Of course, it is possible to use texts and archaeological evidence together. Ultimately, the type of evidence you use will depend on your argument.

Think carefully about the evidence you need to convince your readers. Ineffective evidence is that which does not convincingly support your claims. Random examples are often poor evidence. You cannot support a contention by drawing on a randomly selected illustration.

### **5) Is my argument original?**

The best marks for essay writing are awarded where essays display independent thought. Developing original arguments is difficult, and it can backfire. The risk is in creating an argument that is original but ill-thought through. To be original you do not need to be radical. Instead you might offer a nuanced development of an existing theory or offer new evidence to the debate. Nevertheless, you should have the confidence to develop new and creative ideas. The only reliable means of generating original academic insights is through hard work. You need to read and understand the vast majority of the readings recommended for a given topic and contribute your own insights. Whilst reading, critique and challenge the arguments presented and see if you can come up with something new.

### **7) Does my conclusion wrap up my argument into a coherent whole?**

The conclusion to an essay is there to wrap up all of the points that you have made into a coherent whole. It should not contain any new information not considered elsewhere in the essay. Make sure that you plan carefully to avoid missing a killer point in the main body of the essay that you then feel obliged to squeeze into your conclusion. Remember that your introduction should tell the reader what you will say; the main body of the essay says it; and the conclusion repeats what you have said.

## SELF ASSESSMENT

Read through your essay and try and assess your own work by answering the following questions:

Have I answered the question in the introduction?	
Have I defined all of the unclear elements in the question?	
Do I have a logical structure that is clearly set out in a “road map”?	
Have I balanced my argument?	
What evidence do I have to support my contentions?	
Is my argument original?	
Does my conclusion wrap up my argument into a coherent whole?	

If you have any difficulties completing the work, ask your student ambassador or a member of the summer school staff, who will be able to help.

# APPENDIX: READING

see attached file