

Cultures and Traditions 201 Fall 2005

Format for the Final Examination

The final examination in C&T 201 will be given on Monday, December 12th, at 9:00 A.M. Accompanying the exam will be a copy of the course syllabus to aid your memory. The exam will consist of three parts.

PART I

Identifications

(4 questions each worth 10 points = 40 points)

In Part I, you will be given a list of 7 pairs of items—names, terms, ideas, etc. You will be asked to pick FOUR of the pairs, identify each item in the pair (who, what, where, when), and state a *significant* or *interesting* relationship between them. You will be graded on two things: how accurate you are in identifying the two items in the pair, and how intelligent you are in stating a significant or interesting relationship between them.

Example: Athena in *The Odyssey* and Dionysus in *The Bacchae*

Athena: the Greek goddess of wisdom, daughter of Zeus. She is Odysseus' patron in *The Odyssey*, both helping him in person and plotting against Poseidon for his well-being while on Olympos.

Dionysus: god of wine and ecstasy. He is the son of Zeus and a human mother. He has a cult who worship him by dancing out in the woods, wearing animal skins and eating raw flesh. His symbol is the thrysus. In *The Bacchae*

Here are a few possible relationships. *Developing* one of these in detail over a page or more would be a sufficient answer:

(a) Both Athena and Dionysus are gods who take direct interest in human's lives. Athena protects and guides Odysseus, while Dionysus seduces and humiliates Pentheus. (b) Both gods are good examples of the Greek tendency to anthropomorphize their deities. Both have human emotions – Athena's admiration of and love for Odysseus, Dionysus' anger at Pentheus. Crucially, though, Dionysus has an "animal" side (the bull) as well, so he is a more alien figure than Athena. (c) Athena represents rationality and trickery in Greek culture; Dionysus represents the irrational – wine, violence, mystery.

PART II

Analysis of Quotations

(2 quotes worth 15 points = 30 points)

In Part II, you will be given six quotations from different parts of the course. Each quotation will be identified on the exam as to its author and source. You will be asked to pick two of these quotations (from different modules) and analyze each one. In your analysis, you should explain how the main issue raised or explored by the quotation fits into the larger context of the module, referring to other works in the module to support your view—does it represent continuity of an idea within a given culture, or change? As you write, please do not merely *paraphrase* the quotation in different words. We know what the quotation says. What we want to know is why it's significant, or what it means, and how it fits with or differs from other ideas presented in the module.

Example: "For my part, I did not come forward to speak about Mytilen with any purpose to contradict or to accuse. Our dispute, if we are sensible, will concern not their injustice to us, but our judgment as to what is best for us. Even if I prove them guilty of terrible injustice, I still would not advise the death penalty for this, unless that was to our advantage. Even if they deserved to be pardoned, I would not have you pardon them if it did not turn out to be good for the city." Diodotus' speech from the Mytilenean Debate in Thucydides.

Answer: This quote shows Diodotus' taking a highly pragmatic attitude towards justice. This attitude is not unusual in the Greek works we have studied, but it is by no means universal. Diodotus' attitude contrasts with his opponent's insistence on strict justice, which, ironically, is part of a call for a genocidal act that seems to us very unjust. Diodotus' speech can also be contrasted with Creon's strict approach to justice, which overlooks political realities (the populace may sympathize with Antigone) as well as unadvantageous outcomes (his son and wife commit suicide). It is quite different from Euphiletus' argument, which rests on the idea that law must be followed strictly. Although Euphiletus does argue in terms of the city's benefit (we must punish adulterers or all will suffer) he overlooks the practical threat to society of allowing murder in cold blood out of revenge. In *The Republic*, the closest position to Diodotus is probably Thrasymachus, who says justice is the advantage of the stronger. In *The Clouds* we see Strepsiades try to learn how to use argument to avoid justice and pursue his own advantage, but he is punished in the play, so Aristophanes seems to reject that idea. Finally, Socrates is interesting in that he refutes the very premise of Diodotus' position. In *The Apology*, Socrates argues that the "good" of the state cannot be separated from the just, and that it is in the best "interest" of the state that they recognize that he is right and his accusers wrong. Socrates would not accept that an unjust act can be to one's advantage, probably because he defines advantage so narrowly (that is, in terms of moral growth, not financial gain or power). In general, we can see Diodotus as representing the pragmatic side in an on-going debate in classical Greece over the role of justice.

PART III
Comprehensive Essay
(30 points)

In Part III, you will be asked to write an essay which addresses ONE of the three questions below—A, B, or C. (Only two of the questions will appear on the final; you must choose between those two.) The purpose of this part of the exam is to let you put the pieces of the course together in a way that helps you reflect on an important theme. In your essay, be sure to draw on a wide range of authors and texts from different parts of the course. For each author or text, be sure to clearly state or paraphrase the ideas he or she presents. In addition, be sure to state a clear thesis. This should be a significant statement, which is open to reasonable debate, and for which one could give reasons or evidence on either side. It should take the form of a sentence that states the idea you want to defend or take a position on. It should also include the word “because” or its equivalent (e.g. “I think x is so because...”). You should try to state your thesis somewhere in the first paragraph of your essay. You should also remember, at various points throughout your essay, to “situate” your thesis by comparing and contrasting it, as is appropriate, with the ideas of the authors or texts you’re discussing. You may study for the comprehensive questions in any way you like, but on the day of the exam, you will not be allowed to use any notes.

A) A chance meeting: Through some cosmic twist of fate, Penelope, Nnu Ego and Antigone are brought together for one hour. They decide to discuss their lives as a way of investigating what makes each of the cultures they come from distinctive (remember, *The Odyssey* is several hundred years older than Sophocles’ play, and Greek society changes over that span). Write a paper exploring what each person has to say about the limits and possibilities of the society in which she lived. Your thesis should address which of the three societies the group, in your opinion, would decide offers the most opportunity. Rely on events from the texts, not generalizations about society, to create each person’s responses.

B) Strong leaders have appeared in all of the cultures we have studied. What means did these individuals use to become and/or remain strong? What similarities and differences do you see among the leaders and their styles of governing? Remember that leadership can be defined in many ways and takes place in many contexts: national, local, and familial. Your answer should draw on texts from three of the cultures that we have studied.

C) Peoples in many cultures believe that extra-human forces – including but not limited to gods, spirits, and destiny – have some influence on the decisions humans make in their day to day lives. Discuss how this connection is represented in texts from each unit this semester. Which culture seems to stress extra-human forces the most strongly? Which the least strongly? Use specific examples from individual texts to support your generalizations, and be ready to discuss differences between texts in the *same* unit as well as *across* all units.

Some General Tips on Writing the Exam

1. It should be possible to tell from the answer what the question was. Sometimes students write answers to questions that were not asked. Please answer the questions on the exam.
2. It should be possible to tell from the answer that you’ve learned something from the course. Please do not base your answers solely or mainly on items of general knowledge which anybody might reasonably be expected to have known before taking C&T, whether from the media, or family and friends, or high school, or your freshman year at Wabash.
3. Back up what you say with specific examples, but in a way that shows you know what you’re talking about. For instance, don’t just say, “This is clear if you look at how Antigone disobeys Creon.” Say precisely how it is that she disobeys him. Or don’t just say, “We see this in Chuang Tzu’s story of the butterfly.” Say precisely what the story is, and what it means. In other words, don’t just toss in a snippet, or make vague references to an author in passing, without further explanation.
4. Organize your answers. Don’t just meander from point to point like a lost puppy, or give the impression that you’re making it up as you go along. Have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Put in transitional phrases like, “On the other hand” or “In contrast to this” or “To sum up.”