

## ENGL 201: World Literature

### Essay Topics

Your essay should begin with a strong thesis paragraph, and your arguments and claims should be supported by a careful analysis of specific episodes and passages in the texts we've read. Please use MLA format for all citations. You do not need to consult secondary literature in your paper. There are a number of useful handouts and links for writing about literature in the "handouts" section of my web page (<http://www.longwoodshakespeare.org>). Consult *The Grainger Review* for model essays. I am always happy to look at a draft of your paper before the due date.

#### ESSAY 1

- Using examples from the *Iliad* and/or the *Aeneid*, describe how Homer and/or Vergil represent relations between mortals and gods. Make sure you address each of the following questions: (a) How do the two interact? How do mortals and gods perceive each other? (b) What powers or characteristics are unique to each? What powers or characteristics are shared by the two? (c) To what degree are mortals or gods responsible for particular events in any given situation? You may also want to consider the ways in which the eastern tradition depicts relations between gods and mortals using examples from the *Bhagavad Gita*.
- The *Iliad* and *Aeneid* were written by men, and are the products of patriarchal cultures in which the freedom of women was severely limited by law and custom. In what ways do the *Iliad* and *Aeneid* represent women in conventional social and cultural roles, and in what ways do they depict women who push the limits of, and perhaps transcend the restrictions that ancient society and law placed upon them? Do you feel that these ancient male authors have given us realistic and believable female characters, or have they missed something?
- Achilles is, in many ways, the archetypal hero of the western tradition. Compare and contrast his heroism with that of Aeneas in the *Aeneid* and/or Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*.