Mosaic I, Spring 2015 Midterm Study Guide

The midterm will be separated into two sections: short answer questions and essay questions. Each short answer question will require two or three complete sentences. Your responses will be evaluated based on the extent to which they demonstrate mastery of the topic under consideration. There is a sense in which these responses can approximate a “correct” answer, because responses should be rooted in a firm understanding of the text.

Essays will be evaluated based on 1) your understanding of the text, 2) clarity and originality of your thesis, 3) logic and structure of support for your thesis, and 4) use of the text to support your thesis. The length of the essays will vary, so I do not have a word count expectation. I suggest that you think in terms of time, not word count.

This is how the exam will work. Everyone is required to respond to question A. For your second essay, you will be given a choice between two questions. The two questions from which you can choose will be from the list below, but I will not reveal which questions will be on the exam until the time of the exam.

I will permit you to bring a “reference page” of quotations and textual references to support your essay responses. The reference page must meet the following criteria: it must be on a standard 8.5x11 sheet of paper; only one side can be used; all material must be in 12 point font; only quotations and close paraphrases should be included. Students whose reference pages do not meet these standards will not be allowed to use a reference page. Note also that you will not be permitted to use the quotations during the short answer portion of the exam.
Short Answer Guide

- Socrates’ definition of wisdom
- Haemon’s argument against Creon
- Socrates’ teaching method
- Hospitality in *The Odyssey*
- Antigone’s responses to Creon and Ismene
- Odysseus’ attempts to save his shipmates
- The gods’ decisions about Odysseus’ fate
- Odysseus and the suitors
- Creon’s edict
- Socrates’ view on the afterlife
- Socrates’ view on god
- Poseidon’s role in *The Odyssey*
- Socrates’ response to Meletus
- Athena’s interventions
- Socrates’ view on god
- Odysseus’ mistreatment of crewmates

Essay Questions

A. Each text we’ve studied so far presents complex ideas about how to live and how to understand ourselves. Socrates argues that self-understanding and philosophical reflection are the most important things we can do. Antigone and Creon both live by a strict code of ethics. Odysseus uses his broad range of skills to overcome a variety of dangerous and traumatic events. If you had to adopt one of these characters’ way of living which would you choose? Why do you think your character’s values and way of living is best suited to living a good life? Be sure to use the text to support your claims. **Note:** You don’t have to take on the character’s problems or relive their actions. In this thought experiment, you just have to adopt the character’s way of life and apply it to your own life. Think about how each character would deal with, for example, the stresses of college or your job.

B. Commentators have suggested many interpretations of Socrates’ last words, but there is no consensus. What do Socrates’ final words suggest about how he views his life, his worldview, and how he chose to live? Be sure to use specific passages from the text to support your answer. (Keep in mind his conduct during the *Apology*, his claim that he was called by god to do philosophy, and his views on the possibility of an afterlife.)

C. I take it that Socrates’ claim that the unexamined life is not worth living is *the* central value by which Socrates chooses to live—and to die. Likewise, Antigone chooses to live and die by
her values. While Socrates’ claim that the unexamined life is not worth living is an explicit statement of his most fundamental value, Antigone does not give us such a clear statement of her most fundamental value. Using specific examples from the text, construct a clear and complete statement of Antigone’s core value. **Note:** You’ll need to demonstrate that the value you identify is the most important value Antigone holds. There is no “correct” answer here. Your job is to provide a *reasonable and well-supported* argument in support of your view about Antigone’s most fundamental value.

D. In class we discussed at length the claim that Creon undergoes a significant change of character. It is clear that Creon expresses remorse, grief, and guilt, but it is unclear whether those sentiments are genuine. Present an argument that either supports or denies the claim that Creon actually changes. Does Creon act in accordance with a different set of values prior to the suffering caused by his actions? Or, does Creon only recognize the implications of his decisions after he has to face the personal consequences of them? **Note:** It will be helpful for you to point to a specific issue or event that prompts Creon’s change, if you argue that he does change.

E. Odysseus’ character is quite difficult to define, and even more difficult to evaluate, because his actions seem to reflect a variety of values, some of which are in direct conflict with one another. Do you see a general trend in Odysseus’ values over the course of his journey? If so, what does that trend tell us about Odysseus’ development—for better or worse—as a person? If you don’t see a trend in Odysseus’ values, what does Odysseus’ lack of growth tell us about his character? In any case, which events, characters, or problems contribute to your conclusion?