

Close Reading: Caesar's *Civil War*

Due date: Nov. 21, 2016

Length: ca 1,000 words

Goal

Analyze critically a section of Caesar's narrative of the *Civil War* and a comparison text, drawing out implicit ideas, values, and lessons.

Research

- Read around in Carter's translation of Caesar *BC*.
- Pick a short section you find interesting, and that has parallels in Plutarch, Suetonius, and/or Appian
- Read Caesar's version in Latin (full text is on PHI)
- Read closely the parallel passages in Appian, Suetonius and Plutarch.
- Read the relevant commentaries.¹

Writing

You do not need to have a single thesis, and no particular structure is required. Keep introductory remarks to an absolute minimum, and get straight to the analysis. Make sure to back up all your points with evidence from the texts. Please address the following at some point:

- Summarize briefly. How is your section organized and structured?
- What lessons or ideas are we meant to draw from the narrative?
- What can you infer about Caesar's aims in writing the episode in the manner he did?
- Are there any dominant themes or leading ideas?
- Are any distinctively Roman values involved?
- Can you connect this passage to other texts and ideas we have encountered this semester?

Citing

When citing or quoting Caesar or Appian, give the book and chapter numbers in parentheses (3.85), not page numbers. The same goes for Plutarch and Suetonius: cite chapter numbers, not page numbers.² When you quote, make it clear once whose translation you are quoting from, e.g., "as Caesar had foreseen would be the case" (3.76, trans. Carter); or, "*dignitas*, 'status' in Carter's translation (1.10)." If the translation is your own, no such credit is necessary.

¹ Especially the notes in Edwards' ed. of Suetonius; J.M. Carter, *Julius Caesar: The Civil War, Books I-II* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1991), *Book III* (1993); Christopher Pelling, *Plutarch Caesar: Translated with an Introduction and Commentary* (Clarendon Ancient History) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). These are all on reserve.

² For the first reference, and later ones only as clarity requires, give the author and work name, like so: Caesar, *BC* 3.112; Appian, *The Civil Wars* 2.42; Plutarch, *Caesar* 69; Suetonius, *Divus Julius* 89.

Roman Historians, Caesar (Latin 233) Francese

Rubric

- A Excellent grasp of main points and details in Caesar and the compared text; perceptive and subtle eliciting of ideas/values/lessons from texts; comments well backed up with evidence from the texts; apt connections with ideas encountered earlier in the course and readings. No significant inaccuracies.
- B Good grasp of main points and details in Caesar and the compared text, or excellent on one but weak on the other; substantive eliciting of ideas/values/lessons from texts; comments backed up with evidence from the texts; some connections with ideas encountered earlier in the course and readings. May contain some inaccuracies.
- C Basic grasp of texts, or else good on one but little on the other; some eliciting of ideas/values/lessons; some backing up of ideas with evidence from the texts; some significant inaccuracies.
- D Poor grasp of main points and details and larger context. No substantive eliciting of ideas/values/lessons. Substantial inaccuracies.
- F No evidence of substantive engagement with the texts.