Assessment of Student Work on Writing Assignment 1.

General observation: scores were lower if students did not include statement about what this showed us about Greek ideas about the role of the gods in the lives of mortals. There does not seem to be a correlation between high scores on the online assignment and high scores on the writing assignment, although I suspect that scores across the board on the writing assignment would have been lower without the preliminary assignment.

Low-scoring student (7.5/10). This is a student who received 3/3 on the preliminary online assignment and participated in the in-class discussion, so she had done the preparatory work. When it came to writing the paper, however, she received a deduction in points for 1) neglecting to use a second citation of evidence from the text to complete her argument (-1), and 2) leaving out a discussion of what the chosen passages reveal about Greek attitudes towards the intervention of the gods in the lives of mortals. This was the portion of the writing assignment that asked the students to think about the primary source in terms of its broader implication for Greek culture, something we had not discussed in class. Her concluding sentence continues to focus on the Odyssey, rather than on Greek culture outside of the poem.

Mid-level student (8.5/10). This is a student who received 3/3 on the preliminary online assignment and did not participate in the in-class discussion. Thus he had done some preparatory work for the paper. His paper is well written and contains both of the required citations from the text. He receives 1 point off for Argument, because he does not speculate about the relevance of the passage for our understanding of Greek attitudes towards the interventions of the gods in the lives of mortals. The GTA who graded this assignment also deducted .5 pt. for style, presumably because the paper generalizes and uses vague language (“of some sort,” p. 2) and does not flow – it is all one paragraph, with no distinction between ideas presented.

High-level student (10/10). This is a student who got 3/3 on the online assignment and participated in the in-class discussion. This student’s essay exceeded the page limit, but the extra work displayed her sophisticated engagement with the text and careful thought about the prompt. There was no penalty for going over limit, although guidelines specified that full credit would be given for a word count of 300. The essay is well-written but errors such as dropped quotations are neither noted nor penalized. The student selects two examples for evidence that complement each other nicely, by both showing two diverse aspects of divine intervention, and by focusing on the varying roles of Poseidon in the poem. Although longer than it needs to be, comparison between the two intervention episodes is thorough and nuanced, exploring how the gods’ “personalities” govern their interactions with Odysseus. Student gives careful though to how to use the chosen examples to illustrate Greek attitudes towards the divine (even though she generalizes about “us” rather than specifically about the Greeks. This student was a freshman, so it is all the more impressive that she wrote with such sophistication.