

## CLS137(F11): Project 1 (part 1) requirements and guidelines

**Due: Monday, September 26, 2:00 p.m.**

Late work and incomplete work policies for all written work assigned in this course:

- You cannot expect to pass the course without completing all four project assignments.
- All assignments must be turned in on time. No work will be accepted more than seven days after the original due date. Late work is penalized by a full letter grade for the first day late and 1/3 of a letter grade for each subsequent day late.

Length and format:

- 1250-1600 words.
- Logged in under your username, create a new page linked from [http://wareh.wikia.com/wiki/Biography \(F11\)](http://wareh.wikia.com/wiki/Biography_(F11)) that will contain your project (and eventually your classmates' responses for part 2).
- The page should include your name and a title that clearly conveys the big idea of your work.
- Use paragraph divisions and (sub)section headers (this means learning them from the Wikipedia syntax cheatsheet!) to make your work clearer.
- Prepare *in advance* to edit the wiki. Practice by editing your user page or project page (you can always change the content and even rename the page later). Ask me questions as needed, in class, by email, or in my office.



Project requirements:

- Begin by reading the description of the project in the course syllabus.
- This is **not** an exercise in “compare and contrast” between two lives (though brainstorming about, and searching for, connections and differences can be a good first step before you begin writing). Instead, you must come up with your own ideas about how the form, style, technique, purposes, themes, and questions of the ancient biographers you’ve read could be applied to give a distinctive meaning to the life of the ancient Roman woman you have chosen.
- The result will be an argument explaining **your own proposed literary interpretation of a life** that differs both from the interpretation given in *Roman Women* (though it uses the historical material from that source) and from the life-interpretations created by our ancient course readings (though it uses the ideas, approach, and form/style of one of those readings).
- One way of thinking of this is, “**What would a biography of [my Roman woman] by [one of the ancient biographers] look like and be trying to do?**” The result, of course, would not be a carbon-copy or a life that had exactly the same meaning. The same author will have similar interests and a similar way of writing and thinking in works on different subjects, but the differences between the subjects dictate lots of differences in the result! (We’re not doing anything like, “Reimagine a Vestal Virgin as a wisecracking Aesop/Diogenes”; the Vestal Virgin needs to remain herself, not take on the beliefs and behaviors given in your ancient biography!) But **[a]** your take on the Roman woman’s life will be informed by the same interests and questions you find in your chosen ancient author, and **[b]**

it will also take up the form, style, techniques, etc., of the ancient author. For example, if you chose to use the approach of *The Passion of SS. Perpetua and Felicity*, then you would imagine and discuss [a] how the life could be understood through some of the same topics/questions about family relationships, gender, religion, politics, commitment, teaching, etc., and [b] what kind of meaning(s) of your Roman woman's life would/could emerge from treating it in the *Passion's* literary form (first-person diarist account of crisis and conflict, framed by the compiler's interpretive accounts of Perpetua's experience and the lives of her fellow martyrs) and style.

- **It is essential that all your arguments be based on specific citations from the texts** (page numbers and, where applicable, section/book numbers). Bring in specific cited details from the presentation in *Roman Women* (though you may also discuss the limitations of this material for your genre that lead you to invent additional matter). Even more importantly, bring in specific quotations from the ancient biographer whose approach you are using. In other words, it is not acceptable just to generalize (“Diogenes Laertius presents a jumble of sayings from which we infer Diogenes the Cynic’s character. Applying that approach to my subject, I argue that her life takes on the following meanings...”); you must use and cite specific passages/phrases/etc. from your model biographer and explain what kind of treatment and life-interpretation you find there and how you are adapting and transforming it to fit your subject.
- The syllabus says “one of the ancient biographical genres.” In fact, you are permitted to consider multiple ancient biographical techniques if that helps you, but you should explore only one of them fully and use your consideration of the other ones (if at all) to develop your main points in a more complicated or interesting way. (In other words, you should *not* divide up your paper into several superficial mini-papers considering different “versions” of the life.)
- Review carefully the syllabus statement about academic dishonesty. For this assignment, it is especially important that you give clear credit to any idea about the significance of your Roman woman's life that belongs to the *Roman Women* article author. Remember that the purpose of the assignment is to get you to apply new and different layers of meaning to the Roman woman's life, though you may certainly use the article author's ideas as a (clearly credited) starting-point. If you consult *any* source (online, print, etc.) besides the one *Roman Women* article and the primary sources, you must be absolutely sure that *anything* you take from it is clearly and specifically credited.

Executive summary. **You will be graded on:**

1. the care with which you choose and interpret/apply specifically cited details, both from your *Roman Women* chapter and from the ancient biographer(s) whose approach you are applying to your Roman woman;
2. the strength and interest of the argument you create for how your Roman woman's life would be given a particular (and new) set of **meanings** through the application of the literary form & interests/attitudes of the ancient biographer(s). You are not actually writing a biography, but the reader should come away with a clear and specific understanding of what the proposed “mash-up” would be like, and why.