Classics, Archaeology & Ancient History (CAAH) Essay Guidelines

Introduction: Writing a CAAH Essay

The study of Classics, Classical Archaeology and Ancient History may have similar research methodologies. However, the way in which you write an essay and interpret a material for the study of classics can sometimes be very different to the study of history. The study of Classics refers to the study of ancient languages and literature; material culture of ancient Greece and Rome falls under classical archaeology whilst ancient history focusses also on ancient Greece and Rome, extending to neighbouring cultures around the Mediterranean and Near East mostly where they interacted with the classical world. Classical studies covers cultural studies, such as philosophy. CAAHs is, therefore, highly interdisciplinary and an essay question will often require you to touch on many different areas of the ancient world.

Research Preparation:

1. Allow yourself plenty of time to do the research. The research groundwork very much dictates the quality of your CAAH paper.
2. Start with your lecture notes on the topic, then look for some general background information either in your textbook or recommended readings in MyUni. This provides basic background and context.
3. Read the required primary source material/evidence.
4. Read the required secondary (modern) works. Remember, using the reading list provided is a minimum (adequate): to do better, strategically use key citations/footnotes and the bibliographies in these readings and then search for the books and articles in the library (they may not all be available). Make notes, and as you do, always note the page numbers of the references to avoid having to go back and find them later (for your footnotes/citations). Don't forget to jot down your own evaluations of the arguments: Does it make sense? Is there missing data? What primary sources are your readings using; do you need to go away and find out the meaning of any key terms? Before you sit down and write, you must ask yourself: What exactly are you being asked to examine? Any answer you give will only be assessed in relation to the exact question which has been set. If you do not answer the right question, it does not matter how good your answer is.
5. If there are any key terms or concepts to be discussed, make sure that you know what they are. We have recommended some specialist works (such as the Classical Dictionary) which might help you to understand technical, Greek, or Latin terms.

What does a Good CAAH Essay Look like?

1. The essay will answer the question(s) clearly and concisely.
2. The essay will argue using scholarly evidence (secondary sources) and ancient sources (sources written at the time) or commonly known as "primary sources".
3. The essay will "stick to the point" i.e. discuss the question and not go off topic. Tutorial papers in classics are generally between 1,000-1,500 words, so you need to stay on track.
4. The essay will use the correct referencing style and/or a consistent referencing style.

Common Difficulties with CAAH Essays:

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- Does not strike a good balance between primary source (ancient texts) and secondary scholarship (source material).
- Does not use secondary sources specified for the question, but finds dubious sources on the internet.
- Does not reference secondary source material properly.
- Does not reference primary source material correctly.

Different types of sources used in Classics:

1. **Literary sources:** A literary source in the ancient world is any source that has come down to us through the manuscript tradition or through archaeological excavations. Literary sources can come to us as books, poems, letters, etc. Literary sources can also fall under a number of categories such as single works, handbooks, and collections:

    1.1. **What is a single work?** A single work is a text such as Plato's *Timaeus* or Homer's *Odyssey;* these works come to us through translation (**for what translations to use see section 3).**

    1.2. **What are handbooks?** Handbooks usually focus on particular topics; for example, Greek mythology, or the Roman economy. Usually these handbooks will be in either the original language or in a translation.

    1.3. **What are collections of text?** Collections gather together various inscriptions, papyri etc. from the ancient world. These collections are highly specialised and generally organised by geographic area.

Here is a list of websites that are commonly used for literary sources:

[Loeb Classical Library](#)

Highly recommended resource. The Loeb Classical Library online reproduces every Loeb volume in print. This database contains the original Greek and Latin alongside English translations of key works by ancient Greek and Roman writers. The Loeb editions are preferred by many academics and librarians at the University of Melbourne as they are renowned worldwide for their accurate translations and reliability.

[Internet Ancient History Sourcebook](#)

[Perseus Digital Library:](#)

[Scaife Viewer:](#)

Scaife viewer is a reading environment for pre-modern text collections in both their original languages and in translation. It is the first phase of work towards the next version of the Perseus Digital Library 5.0 and it has an excellent text search.

[Corpus Scriptorum Latinorum: A Digital Library of Latin Literature:](#)

Aims to be "a single, centralized resource for locating Latin literature on the internet". Includes English translations, generally from older Loeb editions.

[Lacus Curtius:](#)

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Includes text of forty-five Greek and Roman texts, often with an English translation (usually from an older Loeb edition).

[LATO: Library of Ancient Texts Online](#):

Ancient Greek texts only

[Internet Classics Archive](#):

Includes more than 400 works of classical literature by fifty-nine mainly Greek and Roman authors.

2. Archaeological sources

Classicist do not always refer to literary sources when studying the ancient world. Sometimes we must also rely on archaeological evidence as well as art. In some essays, you will be asked to evaluate a body of archaeological evidence or particular artefacts and draw conclusions. Archaeological evidence comes to us in a variety of different forms:

- Archaeological excavations
- Architectural remains (the Roman forum)
- Coins
- Inscriptions such as we find on tombstones (epithets) as well as graffiti
- Papyri
- Pottery
- Ostraka (shreds of pottery, stone etc. with writing)
- Glass
- Metal objects (jewellery, weapons etc.)
- Sculptures and paintings
- Utensils and tools
- Animal remains and or any types of organic and or inorganic matters preserved in the soil that can be retrieved and analysed, such as mummifies and bones.

All of the above constitutes "primary" evidence because it was created at the time.

So where do you find information regarding the above?

2.1 Archaeological Reports: These reports usually present a summary of what was found during the "dig" excavation of the site. These reports can appear in multiple-volume series of books and/or journal articles, both online and in print. [Perseus also has the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Classical Sites* (Browse alphabetical list for summary of the site)](#): the [BSL also provides access](#)

2.3 Medium: These are collections of inscriptions or papyri, collections of coins, pottery etc. A good source is Perseus Art and Archaeology.

2.4 Handbooks: Much like literary handbooks, you will find most art and sculptures from the ancient world in handbooks. Handbooks are technically classed as secondary sources. However, because they contain photos of the objects and basic information you can use them as primary evidence.

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3. Translations

Picking the right translation is very important when writing your essay. Here are two translations of the same original text; notice how they are the same but slightly different in their interpretation of the Greek:

Homer, Iliad 1.1-7: translation by Peter Green	Homer, Iliad 1.1-7 translation by Robert Fagles
Wrath, goddess, sing of Achilles Pēleus's son's calamitous wrath, which hit the Achaians with countless ills— many the valiant souls it saw off down to Hādēs, souls of heroes, their selves left as carrion for dogs and all birds of prey, and the plan of Zeus was fulfilled from the first moment those two men parted in fury, Atreus's son, king of men, and the godlike Achilles.	Rage— Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus' son Achilles murderous, doomed, that cost the Achaeans countless losses. hurling down to the House of Death so many sturdy souls, great fighters' souls, but made their bodies carrion, feasts for the dogs and birds. and the will of Zeus was moving towards its end. begin, Muse, when the two first broke and clashed Agamemnon lord of men and brilliant Achilles

Both Fagles and Green have interpreted the original text in different ways and used different English verbs and nouns which can have implications in how YOU interpret the text. Below is the literal word-translation of the original text, notice how different it is to the English translation:

Homer, Iliad 1.1-7: Original Greek	Literal for word-translation
μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρί' Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκε, πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν ἡρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἑλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν οἰωνοῖσί τε πᾶσι, Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή, ἐξ οὗ δὴ τὰ πρῶτα διαστήτην ἐρίσαντε Ἀτρεΐδης τε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν καὶ δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.	Anger sing, goddess, of Peleadeian Achilles destructive, which countless to the Achaeans ills cost and many strong souls to Hades it despatched of heroes, themselves as prey made for dogs and for all the carrion birds, of Zeus was fulfilled the plan from when firstly they parted after quarrelling Atreides lord of men and god-like Achilles.

When choosing a translation for your essay make sure to account for the following:

1. If your tutor/lecturer cites a specific translation (and they usually will!), make sure to use that.
2. If possible, try to compare that translation with another translation and see how the translators have interpreted the original.
3. If it is a verse that you are examining, is the translation line for line?
4. What is the date of the translation? This is particularly important when you are reading a text that has a sexual content - e.g comedy, love, poetry, invective - as an older translation may be 'bowdlerised'.

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4. Secondary Sources: What are they and how to use them?

A secondary source presents a scholar's interpretation and conclusions regarding a particular text(s) or a body of archaeological evidence, or sometimes both. Secondary sources will help you to evaluate the topic as well as understand the direction of scholarship regarding the essay question. Also note that in the fields of Classics, Archaeology and Ancient History we recognise that there are particular areas that have not been studied for quite some time. For example, Hans Lewy's work on the Chaldean Oracles was written in 1976 but is still cited today because it is currently the only comprehensive work written on the topic. Therefore, if you are noticing that many journal articles on your essay question are from the 1970s-1990s rather than the early 2000s-2020s, it may be because that particular area is understudied.

5. Examining the Sources: Consider the following when writing your notes and essay

5.1. Primary Literary Evidence:

When? What period was your evidence written or created? Note also the usage of these familiar abbreviations: 44 B.C. = before Christ 450 B.C.E. = before the Common Era; you will find this abbreviation instead of B.C. in recent scholarly works. A.D. 455 = Anno Domini (in the year of our Lord); as you can see the abbreviation is placed before the year. 105 C.E. = Common Era: again, you will find this abbreviation instead of A.D. in more recent publications.

In some cases, we do not have literary material that is produced in the period that your essay question may be set. For example, the majority of our knowledge regarding early roman history comes from Livy who wrote in the Augstuan period. The Augustan period was centuries after the early Roman period. Additionally, our knowledge regarding the life of Julius Caesar (100 BCE-44BCE) comes to us through Tacitus and Suetonius who were both alive 100 years AFTER the death of Caesar. Showing that you are aware of this is helpful for your essay.

Who and for whom? Who has written this piece of evidence? Why were they writing it? Under what circumstances were they writing it? Think of tyrannical leaders; would a Roman writer who was living under the rule of a tyrant be able to express their opinions without consequence? Is there something that can be gleaned if we analyse our primary literary evidence by 'reading between the lines'?

What and how? What is the genre? Is it history? Is it comedy? Prose? Biography? What is the purpose of the piece? Is it a court speech, like we see with Cicero's works or is it philosophical, like the works of Plato?

5.2. Archaeological Evidence:

When? When was the evidence built/created/made? How long did this take to create? For example, a monument can sometimes take years and years to build; think of the Pyramids of Giza or the Roman forum, whereas a ritual object can be made in a matter of days or hours.

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Who and for whom? We do not always know who created the object/monument but if we do, it is good practice to name the person in your essay. When determining for whom an object or monument was created, it is important to consider where it was found. For example, something in a grave would be for the person in the grave, whereas something such as a statue is likely built for the community.

What and how? Consider what the object/monument is made of? Is it a special type of material that is local to the area? Do they use a specific technique that helps to create the specific shape/structure/colour? For example, the majority of our Roman structures are made from a specific type of roman cement that lasts years.

Creating a Structured Argument: Steps to follow:

Introduction

1. Start with an introductory paragraph that outlines the key elements of the topic (don't just rehash the title of the paper). Do not substitute a different question by beginning: 'In order to answer X (the question asked), it is necessary first to write about Y (some other issue)'.
2. Include here any constraints on the evidence and show how you plan to approach the topic. There may well be ambiguities or just plain missing evidence that affects what anyone - yourself included - can say on a topic. Here is where you warn the reader of these, because your reader needs to know in advance why you might be omitting some points, or avoiding what otherwise might be a logical avenue to explore. For example, if you were asked "Why didn't Mark Antony take Cleopatra back to Rome with him?" you would firstly note that since you don't have his version of events, you cannot "know" his motives, but you might reasonably be able to draw deductions about his motives from his behaviour and that of others.
3. Remember that you are introducing only your paper, not the subject as a whole, and so do not begin with a string of irrelevant general statements. There is no need to explain who people were, what the work is about etc.: that can all be taken for granted. Avoid weak and/or over-formulaic introductions, for example beginning with a dictionary definition ('X is defined by the Pocket Oxford Dictionary as...'), quotation, over-generalization or something trivial ('X was born in...').

Paragraphs:

1. Ensure that each paragraph opens with a sentence that contains the key terms/topic of that paragraph. New idea, new paragraph. This prevents overlong paragraphs that make it difficult to follow your argument.
2. Each paragraph should form a logical unit in itself and the argument should be connected by transitions between paragraphs. Remember that you cannot assume your reader will follow your own sequence of thought if you have not made all the logical steps explicit. You should signpost all the logical connections so that it is clear to the reader where you are in the argument, how you reached that point, and where the argument is going next.
3. To do this, consider creating a "skeleton" - or essay-plan - for how you think your answer should best flow. This could be done separately on a piece of paper (or on the screen), where you play first with dot-points in sequence, to see where you should best use key primary evidence, or

arguments which you support, which have been culled from secondary readings. Refer to it when you write your final draft. The Writing Centre has an online essay planning tool that you might find useful.

4. You also need to be able to balance statement and evidence: show you know how they relate to each other. All key statements that you make in a paper should be supported by evidence (no notional, sweeping, glib comments).

5. Lastly, always make sure to follow through with an argument. Tute papers tend to be a response to questions that are usually contentious in that there is no right or wrong answer and historians have long debated the topics you must address. For this reason, your writing needs to balance counterarguments, to plot a course through conflicting theories. The key point, however, is that you need evidence to support your statements.

Additional Sources:

1. First and foremost, use the advice provided for you in MyUni for all CAAH courses about citations, biobliography, and formatting. This is often accessed under "Assessment" from a Home Page. If in doubt, ask your CAAH tutor.
2. https://www.canterbury.ac.nz/media/documents/Classics-full_writing_guide.pdf
3. https://www.otago.ac.nz/classics/otago055218.pdf
4. https://www.sydney.edu.au/arts/classics_ancient_history/docs/WritingGuide_Classics_Ancient_History.pdf