HON 171 – Spring 2008 – Paper #1

Due date: Saturday February 16th by 8:00am using BlackBoard. No late papers will be accepted. By submitting your paper, you are certifying that the work is wholly yours and that you are aware of the penalties for plagiarism. Further instructions are provided on the class webpage.

Length: Papers should be 1500 to 1750 words in length (i.e. approximately six to seven pages in length) and no longer. Your paper must present a clearly organized and persuasive argument relating to the material we have read. Your argument must go beyond class discussions. You must develop an stance on the work and use evidence from the text to substantiate your claims. In all cases, make sure you are not summarizing the texts but analyzing them. As this course aims to have you think critically about primary sources, i.e. our assigned readings, no secondary material may be utilized in your papers.

You are being judged on the quality of your ideas, the form in which you present those ideas, and your use of textual evidence.

Prompts: The prompts below are just that, prompts. They are not points to be argued, and certainly not theses. They are suggestions for getting you thinking about writing your paper.

1. The Greek poet and philosopher Xenophanes wrote: "Homer and Hesiod have ascribed to the gods all that is shameful and reproachful among mortals: stealing, adultery, and deception. Mortals think that gods are born and have clothes and a voice and a body just like them. But if cattle and horses and lions had hands and could create with their hands and achieve works like those of human beings, horses would render their conceptions of the gods like horses, and cattle like cattle, and each would depict bodies for them just like their own." Develop a thesis from this prompt. A good paper will discuss both Greek and Hebraic conceptualizations of the divine.

2. Does the Iliad glorify war? If so, in what ways and to what purpose? If not, how does the Iliad present war (in what ways and to what purpose)? And in either case, how does the concept of “honor” in the text help shape the Iliad’s presentation of war? Please make sure you go beyond our in-class discussion.

3. Looking at Genesis and Job, how does God act as a teacher? What is the content of His teachings? How do His pedagogical methods reflect the relationship between the human and the divine within Judaism? How do the objects of His instruction (e.g., Adam, Cain, Job, Abraham) serve as a greater representations of humanity in general?
4. Ancient literature contains numerous examples of characters who must negotiate complex and often conflicting moral codes when their individual responsibilities or philosophies come up against their community commitments. Considering a single character from the *Iliad*, analyze these conflicts and demonstrate how his or her choices reveal the qualities or things that Homer values at the most profound level.

5. If, as *Genesis* tells us, God is good, as is His creation, how are we to explain the existence of evil? In other words, how does Judaism defend God's goodness and his omnipotence in view of the existence of evil? What does *Genesis* and *Job* imply about human nature? human freedom? the nature of sin? Remember these are Hebraic texts – don’t smuggle Christian theology into your paper.

6. Develop your own paper using any combination of *Theogony*, *Iliad*, *Genesis* and *Job*. Please be sure you discuss your ideas with me before proceeding.