

Paper #1: Analysis of the Phaedrus

Due: Sept. 18, 2007---No Late papers will be accepted.

You should write 2-3 pages of lucid, well-crafted, thoughtful, well-organized, prose (12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins) on one of the following questions. I do not expect you to do research for this assignment. The Phaedrus itself plus your own thinking will supply you with everything you need. If you want good background, use the excellent introduction to our translation.

1. Explain how Socrates distinguishes between good and bad communication. Go beyond the lecture and substantiate with some details from the Phaedrus what Socrates's principles are. How might these principles be applicable to the world of communication today?
2. At 264C Socrates says that every speech should be like a living creature--that is, it should be unified organically. Do you think the Phaedrus itself meets the criterion of organic unity? How would you explain the unity of the dialogue?
3. Explain Socrates's criticism of writing and apply it to other, more recent forms of communication. What does it mean that Plato wrote down a criticism of writing?
4. Choose any section of the dialogue and explain its relevance for conceptualizing communication today. This can be a big section (e.g. Socrates's second speech) or a short passage (e.g. the myth of the cicadas)--it's up to you to choose.

Your papers should:

- * Have a thesis, a central point or argument they wish to make
- * Be proofread.
- * Avoid comma splices and other grammatical diseases.
- * Be compact and concise. Cut out the deadwood. No need for foreshadowing in a 2-page paper!
- * Go through several drafts. Nothing comes out right the first time!
- * Have evidence to substantiate your points, whether quoted, paraphrased, or simply mentioned. You should plan on having some selected quotations from the Phaedrus, for instance.
- * Argue rather than simply assert. An argument gives reasons and evidence; an assertion just states something without any backing.
- * Be creative and imaginative.
- * Even though you are using one source, you still must have a bibliography in MLA or APA style.

You'll be graded holistically on such dimensions as the clarity of the writing, the coherence of the argument, the organization of the essay, excellence in style, and creativity and originality.