Take-Home Essay on Seminar Texts

For this exercise you are asked to write an essay of not more than 3,000 words on one of several short topics that will be available from noon on Thursday 23 April from the Departmental Secretary (2nd floor, Faculty of English) and also by email. You are required to discuss at least three of the texts read in the MPhil seminar this year, including at least one from List B (the Bible, Virgil, Eusebius, early hagiography, Einhard and Suetonius). Each text you use must have been discussed in a separate seminar. Only basic references are required, and quotation from the translations used in the seminars is acceptable.

The exercise is designed to test a variety of skills which complement other components of MPhil assessment; these include the capacity to assimilate new information (including relevant comparative material from across the range of ASNC subjects), the ability to apply theories and methods of working to new material and to marshal evidence thoughtfully in order to test ideas, the ability to think creatively in response to a proposed topic or theme, to formulate and justify an argument efficiently and to prioritise research time in pursuing relevant background scholarship. There is no single correct way of writing the essay. It is up to you to decide, for example, whether to discuss the texts in succession or to consider different aspects of the topic in each text.

If you have read the texts during the year, done some of the background reading (either as preparation or as follow-up to issues raised during seminars), participated in the weekly discussions and thought about the connections between texts, the four-day period will be ample time to write the essay. It should be stressed that the focus of your work over the Easter vacation should be on your dissertation.

Clarity of expression and accuracy in referencing are regarded by the Department as essential qualities in all submitted work for assessment. (Don't forget to number the pages of your essay and to proof-read it carefully before submission.) The first page of your essay should indicate your candidate number, the topic you have chosen and the texts you are considering, as well as the final word-count of your essay. Two copies should be submitted to the Degree Committee Office on the first floor of the Faculty of English, by 4.00pm on Monday 27 April. (If you wish to submit a hand-written essay, a photocopy is acceptable as the second copy.)

All written work towards the MPhil is double-marked, and you will be given your mark and feedback on the essay early in Easter term. It is worth 10% of the final mark.