Second Take-Home Essay Topics. Choose ONE of the following. 5-7 pages. New Due Date: Wednesday, November 18th

1) Moral decay is one of the most frequently recurrent themes in the two great works of Hesiod, the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*. Trace this theme in several different episodes and characters from these works, and describe how it contributes to his works' larger religious and moral vision, as well as to his didactic literary project.

2) Milton's *Lycidas* clearly stands as one of the great monuments of pastoral elegy, a literary tradition begun in Hellenistic times by such poets as Theocritus, Moschus, and Bion. What are the standard elements of this literary form, and how does Milton ultimately challenge them in his Christianization of this genre?

3) In his celebrated essay "Short on Heroics," the classicist J.F. Carspecken states that Jason is "chosen leader because his superior declines the honour, subordinate to his comrades, except once, in every trial of strength, skill or courage, a great warrior only with the help of magical charms, jealous of honour but incapable of asserting it, passive in the face of crisis, timid and confused before trouble, tearful at insult, easily despondent, gracefully treacherous in his dealings with the love-sick Medea."

Such a reading of Jason's character prompts one to question just what a hero is. We have seen several different examples of them throughout our reading, yet Apollonios' *Argonautika* clearly challenges these pre-existing notions both regarding what heroic conduct is and how heroic character is revealed. How then does the heroism of Odysseus stand in relationship to that of Jason? How does it stand to that of Heracles? How do these different characters reveal their heroic character, and what might Apollonios be suggesting about his own times by his deliberate challenge to these norms?

4) Though the character of Heracles disappears at the end of the first book of the *Argonautika*, he continues to haunt the narrative as a background figure, glimpsed in the distance and reported as an active presence. Some have interpreted this fact as a symbol of the way in which traditional epic offers the poem a literary background, while all the bringing a very different sort of epic to the fore. For instance, the scholar M. Asper has recently put it, "this is just the way in which old epic with its generic conventions and its ideology is present in the *Argonautica*: dimly visible...but still present." In what ways is the *Argonautika* reminiscent of Homeric epic, indebted to its conventions, and influenced by its standard elements, and in what way is it a "Callimachean Epic," that is, allusive, polemical, and personal, striving at every turn to do something different?