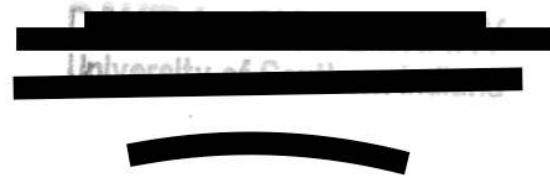


Essay Question for the film: "Gladiator" #1
Length: 3 pages minimum
Due at the end of the semester



Russell Crowe: Maximus
Joaquin Phoenix: Commodus
Connie Nielsen: Lucilla
Oliver Reed: Proximo
Richard Harris: Emperor Marcus Aurelius
Derek Jacobi: Gracchus
Djimon Hounsou: Juba
Directed by Ridley Scott
Music by Hans Zimmer

The persons of Socrates, as presented in *Apology*, and Maximus, as presented in *Gladiator*, at first glance, seem to be, completely, unrelated. However, upon further consideration, the two characters have significant commonalities: each, in their own way, was a 1) *man of conscience* and 2) each man's conscience was considerably influenced by their sense of duty. Each one struggled to realize freely chosen ideals and live a life consistent with those ideals, even in the face of danger and death. In this essay, compare and contrast the figures of Socrates, as presented in *Apology*, and Maximus, as presented in *Gladiator*, exploring both of them as "men of conscience."

1) When discussing Socrates, focus upon his piety and explain how his piety (as manifest in his divine mission) compels him to walk the streets of Athens inquiring about the nature of the human good. In a word, Socrates idealized moral self-reexamination (along with what he took to be its natural consequent: moral improvement); thus, at his trial, he never regretted nor apologized for choosing to live in accord with this divine mission. After all, it was the case that for Socrates, "the unexamined life was not worth living" for man. And in the end, this divine mission proved to be the demise of Socrates; in other words, unwavering devotion to his conscience and its ideals will cause him to be executed, and he will accept this fate peacefully. Explain, and cite from the text.

2) Next, consider the character of Maximus. Although maybe not motivated by piety, still, Maximus proved himself to be a man who struggled with his own set of moral beliefs, however, moral beliefs arising out of Stoicism's moral ideals and cosmological underpinnings. Hence, as with Socrates' struggle, Maximus too struggled with his own conscience, but for him, a "Stoic informed conscience." Describe the uniquely Stoic beliefs, both moral and cosmological, illustrated by the character of Maximus in his story as told in *Gladiator*. Next, at the conclusion of the film, was Maximus true to his conscience? Did Maximus' journey in the film end with the integration of Maximus in both Stoic belief and act? If so, how? If not, how? Explain.

Do you identify with the ideals of either of the 2 characters? If so, which, and why?