As an academic discipline, history is often described as the study of change over time. In depicting such change, scholars have often found it useful to divide history into epochs, and so we have in the case of Europe the formulation of categories such as Ancient, Medieval, and Renaissance. However, as the instructor of this course attempts to illustrate, these dividing lines have to be treated with some degree of care if we are to obtain a fuller picture of how change occurs over time and the ways in which the innovators of any particular age built upon the labors or traditions of those who came before. With these thoughts in mind, please take approximately one hour to think through and write a two-paragraph answer for each of the following questions:

1) What are some of the issues the instructor would like us to be aware of when using terms such as Ancient, Medieval, and Renaissance to discuss the history of Europe?

2) Citing examples from the course, how would you characterize the approach of Renaissance authors and artists toward religion?

**Answer Guidelines**

1) One of the pitfalls of dividing history into sections is that it sometimes gives the impression of sharp ruptures or cleavages in the human record and, as the designer of this course tries often to show, obscures the contiguities that link one generation to the next. See, for example, the instructor’s comments in the introduction to unit 5 on the subject of the “dark ages.” What are some of the events and developments described in the subunits and resources which follow that may serve to alter the popular understanding of the period?

2) One of the ways you might explore this question is to use the famous examples of art and literature found in units 8 and 9 to consider how the authors of these works expressed their religious convictions or their view of the role that religion should play in the life of society. How would you characterize their position toward the traditions, values, and institutions inherited from the past—hostile, enthusiastic, reformist? Did they continue to find religion as a source of inspiration? In which sense were they breaking with tradition? Give particular thought to the manner in which these attitudes were expressed in the concept of “humanism” in the writings of Petrarch and Erasmus or the portrayal of Christian themes and imagery in the art of Giotto. In addition to using these primary source materials, compare the arguments presented by scholars in the various secondary sources and include your analysis of them in your answer.