GRK 1004 Ancient Greek Level IV
http://myweb.ecu.edu/stevensj/GRK2004/2017Syllabus.pdf

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Objectives. Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

- read an original literary text in Ancient Greek, explain the grammar and syntax of a passage, answer questions about content, and translate it into cogent English.
- analyze the literary qualities of a passage of classical Greek, commenting on its vocabulary and mode of composition, using appropriate citation of the original literary source as evidence, correct understanding of passages cited, multiple modes of analysis (word choice, imagery, and where appropriate, metrical scansion); and a persuasive interpretation of the passage
- locate, organize, and evaluate information in Classics to investigate complex, relevant topics and address significant questions through engagement with and effective use of credible sources

We will be reading Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, probably the most famous Greek tragedy, for all the wrong reasons. We all know that it is a tale of how man cannot escape fate, no matter how hard he tries. It is not. Aristotle used it as the model play for his *Poetics,* in which he said that its plot was ideally constructed to bring about pity and fear, and that character is of less importance, since its only function is to elicit pity and fear. This is not the best statement of Sophocles' moral purpose for the play in any way. Aristotle's argument, however, led to Enlightenment misinterpretations that have brought about our modern notions of heroes and villains that shape all our movies. For the 18th c. Germans like Lessing and Schlegel, it was the perfect tragedy, and Sophocles was a sort of Aristotelian mean between the exaggerated emotions of Aeschylus and the occasionally passionless aesthetic of Euripides. From Freud we get the Oedipus complex and from it, Woody Allen (https://goo.gl/tC3Mhf) and Tom Lehrer (https://goo.gl/o7ASLI). Freud's implicit claims are that our subconscious knows things our conscious mind does not know, such as that we all secretly desire sexual intimacy with our opposite sex parent, that Oedipus' act of self-blinding is a sexual gesture because the eyes are like testicles, and that we need a new kind of science, psychology, and a new kind of expert, the psychologist to explain us to ourselves, so that we do not suffer from living under the fear of pointless taboos. Sophocles argues that even the greatest intellect fails because of the blindness from which ambition makes us suffer, the reality of which Oedipus demonstrates at the end of the play, and which a Greek audience would have associated with the theory of the sexualized face dating to Homer's *Odyssey*; and he asserts that what is objectively abhorrent to the gods in fact matters more than what we intend.

We do not know exactly when the play was staged, but, as you may read in Jebb's introduction to the myth, it seems that the plague was not a traditional element. Its addition suggests a date after

the onset of the plague in Attica during the Peloponnesian war in 430, and so is traditionally dated to 429 (https://goo.gl/3pZhBH), though that date would be shifted by factors like whether Pericles is Oedipus and should be thought of as alive or dead (*d.*429), and whether such a theme would be more appropriate after the first, second, or third onset of the illness (430, 429, 427/6), which arose from Pericles' policy to abandon the countryside and evacuate surrounding towns and farms to the city. During the first Spartan siege, Athens' population surged and refugees camped inside Athens' 'long walls' that connected it to the port of Piraeus.

The theme of divine knowledge expressed as oracles (fate conceived as something 'spoken' before it happens), and Delphic maxims (https://goo.gl/jpP7MX) such as 'nothing in excess' (*μηδέν ἄγαν*), 'know thyself' (*γνῶθι σαυτόν*), 'the middle path' (*ἡ μέση ὁδός*), along with others like 'govern your anger', 'avoid evil' and 'revere the gods' shape the background ironies of the play. But in the foreground there is a subtle portrayal of arrogance: the king who does not know his origins, slays his father in anger as he approaches from the middle road of a Y, and becomes so confident of his own abilities after solving the riddle of the sphinx that he is blind to his own human excesses. Jokasta exposes Oidipous, and he in turn flees Corinth in attempts to 'refute' the oracle and prove the god wrong, an offense to which Socrates will allude in his presentation of the political consequences of *elenchos* in *Apology* (20e ff). And something in Oidipous knows what he has done: when Creon returns with the god's reply about how to remove the plague, he says the only thing known about the death of Laius is that he was attacked by 'murderers' (pl.); Oedipus consistently replies with promises to apprehend and exile the 'murderer' (sing.).

If we begin with the assumptions above – that the play was written just after the start of the Peloponnesian War, and comments upon how its ruler brought plague upon the city, that Oedipus has some knowledge of having offended the gods, the most promising interpretive avenue is political. Sophocles appears to be indicting Pericles for getting Athens into the Peloponnesian War, but implies causes beyond the immediate responsibility of Pericles that go back to a previous generation. The ultimate cause of the war was Athens' reaction to the Persian War in 478, and the formation of the Delian League, which became and empire it did not want to give up. This led Athens to force members to remain in the league and to pay tribute after they wished to leave. It created a 'tyranny' (hence the name of the play) and led directly to strategic conflict with Sparta.

Textbooks:

- Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, ed. Richard C. Jebb. Bristol Classical Text 2004, from Bloomsbury Publishing (ISBN 9781853996436). http://goo.gl/1ynuPJ
- Vocabulary, by Geoffrey Steadman. http://goo.gl/Q4QcWh
- Liddell-Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford U. Press 1945 (ISBN 9780199102068)

Grading:

Attendance, Class Participation, and Homework	30%
Midterm	30%
Research presentation	10%
Paper 6-7 pages due April 26	30%

You will be graded largely on the degree of your preparation. You are expected to have read each assigned passage 2 or 3 times, to have identified every word carefully and to be prepared to translate and discuss the passage. At first this will be difficult. But with application, facility will come. One or

more homework assignments will be recitation. There will be a midterm on the grammar, translation, meter, and significance of a passage we have read. There is a bibliography of articles on this play that are available online. You will be asked to give a report on one of them, or a book or other article of your choice. Your final paper should deal with a significant thematic problem from the play, make use of at least two books or articles, and follow the mode of argument and citation found in a journal article. No particular mode of citation is required. The best thing to do is to pretend you are submitting an article to that journal: find its online instructions to contributors and imitate the directions you find. Your paper should specify which instructions you are following and where you found them (e.g., URL).

Internet sites of interest:

- Bio of Sophocles: https://goo.gl/sTP0rH
- JSTOR Bibliography: http://myweb.ecu.edu/stevensj/GRK2004/OedipusBibliography.pdf
- Theatre of Dionysos: http://people.hsc.edu/drjclassics/sites/athens/SouthSlope/lecture.shtm
- Books on the play: https://goo.gl/BcHz2m

Meter:

The spoken parts of Greek tragedy are written in Iambic Trimeter. An iamb is a short followed by a long, and trimeter should mean that there are three such units. But the standard iambic foot of tragedy actually has two iambs, the first of which may be resolved into a spondee (two longs). Thus the first beat of an iambic foot may be long or short (X, meaning anceps, latin for "uncertain"). The last beat of the line is also anceps:

x – ⏑ – / x – ⏑ – / x – ⏑ x (Iambic Trimeter)

Always short	Always long	Long or short (look up)	Diphthongs always long
ε, ο	η, ω	α, ι, υ	αι*, αυ, ει, ευ, οι, ου, (υι)

Open syllables that end in α, ι, or υ may be long or short and would have to be looked up in a dictionary since they vary word by word. * The -αι diphthong is short in the nom. pl. of 1st decl. nouns and 1-2 adjectives. For -α endings, in 3rd decl. acc. sing., it is short; In 1st decl., the nom. and acc sing. are short; the rest are long. But it is very rare that you cannot reason out the line by checking all the known quantities first. Thus the word ἐπαγγελοῦμεν would be syllabified as follows:

ἐ-παγ-γε-λοῦ-μεν. The second and last syllables are closed and thus long. The fourth syllable is open and ends in a diphthong and thus is also long. The first and third which end in a vowel that is always short are short syllables: ⏑ – ⏑ – – .

Note: Certain combinations of consonants may be left together or split as the meter demands, the so-called "mute-liquid rule". Any two of the following may be split or left together as needed:

	Mutes			Liquids
	palatal	dental	labial	λ, μ, ν, ϱ
voiceless	κ	τ	π	
voiced	γ	δ	β	
aspirated	χ	θ	φ	

sibyllated	ξ	(σ)	ψ	

The chart is arranged in this way to show the linguistic relationships between these consonants. When a closed syllable is needed, the sibyllated version of the consonant may be regarded as two letters and split in half: $\xi = \varkappa + \varsigma$; $\psi = \pi + \varsigma$. There are also instances of elision that affect consonants. The final vowel of prepositions and conjunctions is dropped before another vowel: thus for *ἐπί ὁ*, the final -ι is dropped; as a result, then -π will be affected by the rough breathing of ὁ and move to the aspirated form -φ, producing *ἐφ' ὁ*. It is important to be aware of such changes especially with prefixed verb forms (e.g., *ἐπὶ + ἵστημι = ἐφίστημι*). In past tense indicatives, however, an augment will come between the prefix and the stem, and is not aspirated, so the prefix will change betweeen tenses (aor. *ἐπέστησα*).

As for pronunciation: at first, simply work on correct pronunciation and accent. Then add longs and shorts as a subtle feel beneath the pronunciation, and in the end make accents musical (raise your voice a fifth) rather than stressed. The effect should be to turn the Greek first into poetry, then into song.