

Oedipus: A Survey of the Myth from Antiquity to Freud

CLASSICAL HUMANITIES 190:356; Fall 2010

Time: 9:50-11:10 MTh (HH-B3)
Instructor: Mike Sampson (msampson@rci.rutgers.edu)
Office: Ruth Adams Bldg 012 *Hours:* TTh 11:00-12:30

In this course students survey the Oedipus myth in its earliest, pre-Sophoclean form; in Greek and Roman tragedy; in the Middle Ages and Renaissance; and in the 19th and 20th centuries. Particular emphasis will be placed on dramatic and contemporary interpretations of Oedipal themes.

Required Texts and Materials:

- Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*. Trans. by Eamon Grennan & Rachel Kitzinger (Oxford: OUP, 2004) ISBN: 978-0-19513-504-6.
- (Ahl) Frederick Ahl, *Two Faces of Oedipus: Sophocles' Oedipus Tyrannus and Seneca's Oedipus* (Ithaca: Cornell U Press, 2007) ISBN: 978-0-80147-397-5.
- (ED) Lowell Edmunds & Alan Dundes, edd. *Oedipus: A Folklore Casebook*. (Madison: U Wisconsin, 1983) ISBN: 0-299-14854-8.
- (CP) Coursepack: readings from Freud, Hegel, Aristotle, Segal, Cocteau, Berkoff, etc.
- (Sakai): readings from Lévi-Strauss, Rukeyser, Voltaire, Dryden & Lee
- Films: *Back to the Future*, *the Matrix*, *Gospel at Colonus*, and *Minority Report*

Course Requirements & Notes: Students will be evaluated on the following scale:

- **Poster/Powerpoint Presentation (15%):** This is a creative assignment to be completed in groups of two.
 - With a collaborator, brainstorm about people or scenarios (real or fictitious) that involve Oedipal themes or are comparable to elements of the Oedipus myth. [NB: fictitious individuals or circumstances should be familiar enough (i.e. pop-cultural) and not simply invented.]
 - Select one such scenario or individual(s), and design a poster or Powerpoint presentation introducing it and the gist of the story. Be creative, and be sure to employ visual as well as textual elements in your presentation! (Past examples have been drawn from the spheres of advertising, electioneering, or pop-culture spoof).
 - Each pair of collaborators will briefly (i.e. 20 minutes) present their posters/Powerpoints in class on September 30 or October 4.
- **Poster-based narrative (15%):** independent of your collaborator, produce a narrative account of your presentation's subject (i.e. the 'myth' or story at stake), paying particular attention to its Oedipal elements (as well as whatever aspects of the story you wish). The narrative cannot be more than five double-spaced pages and not less than four. When crafting the account, take especial care to imagine the context in which it occurs (i.e. era- or location-specific details). Narratives are to be submitted electronically (as .doc or .docx Word files) to Sakai, where they will be available for the rest of the class (see below).
- **Essay: Poster-based analysis (15%):** Browse your classmates' poster-based narratives on Sakai, and choose one that strikes you as particularly rich in its implementation of Oedipal themes (do not choose your own narrative). Write a short essay on the narrative, exploring

and interpreting the myth's particular variations and their significance in context. The central question that each essay should attempt to answer is: "how are the narrative(s)' particular choices significant vis-à-vis other versions of the Oedipus myth we have studied?" The target length for the paper is six double-spaced pages, and must be uploaded to Sakai before the start of the last day of class (Dec. 13).

- **Attendance and participation (20%):** self-explanatory—come to class with the day's reading/film assignment completed, and contribute to the discussion.
- **Midterm Exam (20%):** The midterm will take place in class on Thursday, Oct. 21.
- **Individual Presentation (15%):** Choose two sections of Ahl's introductory essay, and prepare a 15-minute presentation for the class. Ahl's interpretations can be bold, and it is worth paying attention to what he stresses—and why.

Letter Grades correspond to the following numerical values:

100-90%:	A+, A, A-
89-80%:	B+, B, B-
79-70:	C+, C, C-
69-60:	D
< 60:	E

Lates: For every day that the final paper is late, a third of a letter grade will be taken off.

Class Schedule:

Week	Monday	Thursday
Week 1 (Sept. 2)		Introduction
Week 2 (Sept. 6, 9)	Labor Day: No Class	Sophocles' <i>Oedipus</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sophocles, <i>Oedipus Tyrannus</i> (Ahl)
Week 3 (Sept. 13, 16)	Freud and the Complex <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freud, <i>The Interpretation of Dreams</i> (CP) • Film: <i>Back to the Future</i> • Choose a collaborator for Poster/Powerpoint project 	History and Folklore <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propp, "Oedipus in the Light of Folklore" (ED) • Frazer, "The Legend of Oedipus" (ED)
Week 4 (Sept. 20, 23)	Folklore and Structuralism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth" (Sakai) • Peradotto, "Oedipus and Erichthonius: Some Observations on Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Order" (ED) 	Knowledge and Oracle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film: <i>The Matrix</i> • Rukeyser, "Myth" (Sakai)
Week 5 (Sept. 27, 30)	The Riddle of the Sphinx <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hegel, "Lectures on Fine Art" (CP) • Edmunds, "The Sphinx in the Oedipus Legend" (ED) 	Poster/Powerpoint Presentations
Week 6 (Oct. 4, 7)	Poster/Powerpoint Presentations	The Death of Oedipus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sophocles, <i>Oedipus at Colonus</i>

Week 7 (Oct. 11, 14)	For 20 th Century America <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Film: <i>Gospel at Colonus</i> 	Sin and Redemption <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Lives of Judas and St. Gregory (CP) Poster-based Narrative due
Week 8 (Oct. 18, 21)	Dread and Disease <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seneca, <i>Oedipus</i> (Ahl) Including Ahl pp.11-22 	Midterm Exam
Week 9 (Oct. 25, 28)	An Elizabethan Oedipus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dryden & Lee, <i>Oedipus</i> (Sakai) Individual Presentation topics due 	Dryden & Lee, Voltaire <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finish Dryden & Lee, <i>Oedipus</i> (Sakai) Begin Voltaire, <i>Œdipe</i> (Sakai)
Week 10 (Nov. 1, 4)	Modern Rationalism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voltaire, <i>Œdipe</i> (Sakai) 	Sophocles' <i>Oedipus</i> Redux <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sophocles, <i>Oedipus Tyrannus</i> Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i> (CP)
Week 11 (Nov. 8, 11)	The Sophoclean Oedipus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Segal, "Life's Tragic Shape" (CP) 	Individual Presentations
Week 12 (Nov. 15, 18)	Individual Presentations	Individual Presentations
Week 13 (Nov. 22, 25)	Individual Presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion: What does Oedipus represent, and why? 	Thanksgiving: No Class
Week 14 (Nov. 29, Dec. 2)	Contemporary Re-imagining <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cocteau, <i>the Infernal Machine</i> (CP) 	Contemporary Re-imagining 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Berkoff, <i>Greek</i> (CP)
Week 15 (Dec. 6, 9)	Contemporary Re-imagining 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Film: <i>Minority Report</i> 	The Theban Saga: Ancient Sources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ancient Testimony (Sakai)
Week 16 (Dec. 13)	Conclusion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Essay Due at start of Class 	