

Oedipus: Prophecy, Sex, and Pollution



.25 Course
1st 8 Weeks
Fall Semester
9:30-10:45 TT
Instructor: Martinez



This course will focus on the myth of Oedipus, the Theban king who killed his father, married his mother and with her fathered four children. This will be a mostly discussion-based course in which your reading and interpretation of ancient texts in translation and modern texts and videos will take center stage. It's open to all students.

Oedipus' story begins in Greek pre-history, is a popular theme in the Classical period and then is transmitted through the Roman author Seneca to a long succession of playwrights including John Dryden. In the 20th century, the dramatic appeal of Oedipus' story motivated both Igor Stravinsky's secular oratorio *Oedipus Rex*, and Sigmund Freud's term **Oedipus complex**. We will pay special attention to the themes of prophecy, sex, pollution, and redemption, as well as fratricidal war and whether love, loyalty, and humanity outweigh duty to the state. We will also look at how the story of Oedipus appears in the folk traditions of non-Mediterranean cultures such as Finland. As an anti-hero whose greatest achievement is to vanquish in a duel of wits the Sphinx, the malevolent, monstrous maiden, an act that propels him into his mother's bed, Oedipus and his highly dysfunctional family provide fertile ground for multilayered discussions.

