

Drama 397 – Seminar in Drama Theatre, 3hr, 3cr. Prereq: permission of department. Topic: *The Rest of Oedipus* by Robert Montgomery in light of *Oedipus at Colonus* by Sophocles.
Crosslisted with **Comp Lit 335**

Professor Robert Montgomery
Study Abroad, June-July 2009

Course description: This course looks at how *Oedipus at Colonus* by Sophocles inspired *The Rest of Oedipus* by Robert Montgomery. We will study theater's great beginnings in the world around Athens, how it served the community, and then compare this with our own purposes in theatre. Field trips to the classic theatres in the area will be an indigenous part of our search for the modern relevance of the ancient Athenian genius. In class, we will study the differences and similarities between *Oedipus at Colonus* and *The Rest of Oedipus* – in story and structure, in purpose and effect, and in its use of music and the Chorus. Students will discuss and try their own hands at the process of adapting and being inspired from the classic text – in dialogue as well as choral lyric. Professor Constance Tagopoulos of Indianapolis University in Athens will read portions of *Oedipus at Colonus* in its original Greek, for us all to hear the original music Sophocles still sings today. Major themes of *The Rest of Oedipus* – inspiration, attention, the dramatic action of “sitting” meditation – will be explored in the text as well as with some theatre exercises.

Requirements:

Reading: *Oedipus at Colonus* by Sophocles, translated by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald (recommended to be read before first class); *The Rest of Oedipus* by Robert Montgomery (to be provided).

Writing: A one-page paper; a free adaptation of a segment a Sophoclean ode; and a final assignment of either 7 pages of adaptive script or a 7-page essay on a topic approved by the professor.

WEEK ONE

Day 1: Background: Greek theater – its origins and ritual role in the Athens community. Sophocles and the Theban plays (Oedipus cycle).

Assignment for next class: read *Oedipus at Colonus* by Sophocles, translated by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald.

Day 2: The importance of the translation in *Oedipus at Colonus*. Professor will bring in examples from other translations to show how wide they can vary. The story of *Oedipus at Colonus*. Breaking it down into scenes and beats.

Day 3: Discussion of *Oedipus at Colonus* – what in the play gets to you? Its theme of inspiration. Meaningfulness and points of interest. How the play bridges to today. The role of the Chorus.

Weekend assignment: Read *The Rest of Oedipus*, by Robert Montgomery.

WEEK TWO

Day 1: Background: history of *The Rest of Oedipus*, including excerpts from *Oedipus at the Holy Place*, the professor's first produced adaptation of *Oedipus at Colonus*, and how it evolved into *The Rest of Oedipus*.

Day 2: The story of *The Rest of Oedipus*, and how it does and doesn't follow *Oedipus at Colonus*. Discussion of collaboration, rewriting and rehearsing as crucial to the playwriting process.

Day 3: MIDTERM EXAM – in-class essay test: “How does *The Rest of Oedipus* go about making *Oedipus at Colonus* meaningful today.?” Reading and discussion of the essays in the second half of the class.

Weekend assignment: Pick part of an ode from *Oedipus at Colonus* that gets to you. Write a page on how and why. (Bring taping device to next class.)

WEEK THREE

Day 1: Presentations and discussion of students' paragraphs. Professor Constance Tagopoulos reading the chosen lines in Greek (to be taped by the individual student). Music in theatre, its role in catharsis. Making a line “sing”: rhythm, rhyme, euphony. Examples from *The Rest of Oedipus* (song and dialogue). Weighing inspiration from the text with devotion to the text. Originality and rigor. Examples from *Oedipus at the Holy Place* and *The Rest of Oedipus*.

Assignment: Write your chosen ode segment as song or Choral Recitation. Find another translation (internet has a number of them) to help get at the core gist of the original.

Day 2: Presentation of students' lyric work and responses to it. The issue of musical accompaniment.

Day 3: Presentation of students' lyric work and responses. The idea of freedom from the adaptive text, a freedom actually urged by *Oedipus at Colonus*.

Weekend assignment: read assigned sections from Aristotle's *Poetics*, translated by S. H. Butcher.

WEEK FOUR:

Day 1: Discussion of the *Poetics* material, and how it applies or doesn't apply to *Oedipus at Colonus* and *The Rest of Oedipus*.

Assignment: Muse on the questions posed for next class (Day 2).

Day 2: What is the “blessing” Oedipus bequeaths in *Oedipus at Colonus*? In *The Rest of Oedipus*? What “blessing” might theatre bestow? Who is Oedipus for you? In *The Rest of Oedipus*, how is he like the individual audience member? Where in the work is this amplified, and what is the dramatic structure of this subconscious plot?

Day 3: “Sitting on the rock”: attention, *Oedipus*-based theater exercises based on the action of stillness.

Final assignment:

Either: at least 7 pages of script (dialogue and/or ode) adapted or inspired by the Oedipus works discussed during the course;

or: a paper (at least 7 pages) on a topic approved by the professor.