Course Title: Great Greek Tragedies
Course Code: CLA 55
Instructor: Barbara Clayton

Course Summary:
This course is intended to be a short introduction to ancient Greek tragedy. After covering the fundamentals of history and performance in the first week, we will focus on four of the most long-lived of all extant Greek tragedies: Sophocles’s *Antigone* and *Oedipus the King*, and Euripides’s *Medea* and *Trojan Women*. All four of these plays are literary masterpieces, rich in poetic complexities. At the same time, all four plays are dramatic masterpieces, created to be realized in live performance. Lecture and discussion will seek to do justice to both aspects of these tragedies. (Study questions will be available for each play.)

Grade Options and Requirements:
No Grade Requested: This is the default.

Credit/No Credit (C/NC): Submit a one-page reader’s response to each of the 4 plays

Letter Grade: Write a 5- to 6-page paper on a topic of your choosing. You need not limit yourself to a traditional interpretive essay.
- You may do a comparison and critique of several translations of a particular passage.
- You may watch a dramatization of a play and submit a report on how successful you felt it was.
- You may write about an “adaptation” of one of the plays (Jean Anouilh’s *Antigone* for example).
- I am open to any other ideas you may have!

Tentative Weekly Outline:

Week 1
*Introduction to the basics of Greek tragedy*
What do we know about its origins?
What would a performance have looked like? What were the conventions of Greek tragedy?

Week 2
*Antigone*: A tragedy of conscience
What are the fundamental characteristics of a Sophoclean hero/heroine?
How do we deal with the choral odes?
Week 3
Oedipus the King: A tragedy of self-knowledge
Why would Aristotle declare this play to be the most perfect of tragedies?
What is Sophoclean irony?

Week 4
Medea: Taking tragedy in new directions
In what way is Medea an unconventional tragic heroine?
How does Greek tragedy put Greek identity on display?

Week 5
Trojan Women: Tragedy responds to war, and the moral ambiguity of power
How is it that tragedy, based in the male-centered world of 5th-century Athens, speaks so powerfully to women?