Course Title: Aeschylus, Oresteia  
Course Code: CLA 107  
Instructor: Marsh McCall

Course Summary:

The three tragedies Agamemnon, The Libation Bearers, and The Eumenides that form Aeschylus’ Oresteia constitute what is probably the most monumental theatrical achievement in the entire sweep of Western drama. In this course, we will read and discuss the trilogy with intense care. Issues of divine and human justice, gender conflict, cycles of vengeance, and hopes of reconciliation will swirl around us constantly. We will meet one of the most unforgettable female characters in dramatic history in the person of Clytemnestra, Agamemnon’s queen, a role that our poet Aeschylus may well have given to himself. In the third play of the trilogy, The Eumenides, we will meet a Chorus of chthonic female deities, the Furies, older than the Olympian gods and immovable in their passion to pursue and punish Orestes for his crime of matricide. We will see the Olympian goddess Athena resolve Orestes’ case in the first-ever law court of Athens, and we will see her transform the Furies into the Kindly Ones, the Eumenides. We will explore the immense power and complexity of Aeschylean poetry, and we will try to experience the action and staging of these seminal dramas as closely as possible to the ways in which they were experienced in the Athenian theater of Dionysus in 458 BCE.

*Please see course page for full description and additional details.*
Grade Options and Requirements:

- **No Grade Requested (NGR)**
  o This is the default option. All the reading assignments will be done and class participation will be encouraged, but no paper is expected.

- **Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)**
  o This is for students who want to write a five-page paper and receive credit for the course but who do NOT wish to receive a Letter Grade.

- **Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, No Pass)**
  o This is for students who want to write a five-page paper and receive credit for the course and who DO wish to receive a Letter Grade.

*Please Note: If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose either the Letter Grade or Credit/No Credit option. Courses taken for NGR will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.*

Weekly Outline:

**Week 1:** Introduction to the theater and festival of Dionysus in Athens; introduction to the life and career of Aeschylus; introduction to how to read an Aeschylean tragedy. No reading assignment, but both required books are to be brought to class.

**Week 2:** The issues and rich complexities of *Agamemnon*, the first play of the *Oresteia* trilogy. Part 1.

**Week 3:** Exploring *Agamemnon*, part 2. Starting exploration of the second play, *Libation Bearers*.

**Week 4:** The issues and rich complexities of *Libation Bearers*, part 2. Starting exploration of the third play, *Eumenides*.

**Week 5:** The issues and rich complexities of *Eumenides*, part 2. Where has the entire trilogy taken us?