In the face of the rising popularity of “new materialisms,” this class examines the emergence of the notion of “matter” in classical antiquity. In short, matter, from the Latin ‘materia’ (related to mater, mother) is transmitted from Aristotle’s Greek innovation hulê (literally, wood). We will undertake close readings of key ancient primary texts, including various Presocratics, Plato’s Timaeus, Aristotle’s Physics, Metaphysics, and Generation of Animals, and Lucretius’ De Rerum Natura, tracing the discourses of materiality that arise in concert with tropes of sex and gender. The guiding question here is: what can matter’s genealogical ties to the feminine tell us about the materialization of bodies and genders? At the same time, we will attend to the topographies and texture of ancient thinking about nature and materiality more broadly. Alongside a narrative of “emergence” we will also consider hermeneutic questions – what are the ethico-political stakes of a “retrieval” of antiquity and what is the nature of our relationship to these distant texts? How does such “retrieval” function to both conceal and reveal? Why “return” to antiquity and how might resuscitation of the canon contribute to contemporary theorizing? While ancient texts are undoubtedly “good to think with,” are they capable of displacing modernity’s epistemological binds in favor of ontological or material questions? How might a consideration of these texts enrich contemporary discourses of matter and gender? To help orient our study we will draw on contemporary feminist thinkers including Irigaray, Kristeva, Loraux and Cavarero, as well as critically engaging Bachofen’s 19th century conception of Mutterrecht. Some background knowledge of psychoanalytic theory is advised as is knowledge of Greek, however all readings will be in translation.