Greek tragedy has had a string of remarkable philosophical afterlives over the last two centuries. Transposed into the idiom of philosophy, tragedy also complicates the distinction between the philosophical and the poetic. Eschewing the notion that Greek tragedy offers insight into a universal human condition, this class will examine a series of issues, conjunctions, and articulations related to various modern uptakes of tragedy. We will undertake close readings of Greek tragedy, with particular focus on Sophocles’ Oedipus cycle (Oedipus Tyrannos, Oedipus at Colonus, Antigone) and the Oresteia (Agamemnon, Libation-Bearers, Eumenides), and look at the shape of the “ancient quarrel” between philosophy and poetry in antiquity. We turn to the role and reception of Greek tragedy in 19th century German thought (Schelling, Hegel, Hölderlin, Nietzsche), and uptakes in 20th century French thought (Lacan, Irigaray, Cixous, Derrida). Some questions on the table will be: What constitutes the lure or persistence of these tales, and can we identify something called “the tragic” as such? Why does tragedy return so powerfully in post-Kantian thought, how is that transformed in 20th century French thought? How does this literary form animate philosophy, or become philosophical? How might Greek tragedy lend itself to nationalist narratives and projects? How does tragedy work to consolidate and/or undermine patriarchal gender relations? In the course of the semester a sense of tragedy’s political and philosophical plasticity will emerge, alongside a particular narrative of 19th and 20th century thought, glimpsed through a tragic lens.