**Sophocles, *Oedipus The King***

Essay Topics

Arts One, Seeing and Knowing, Fall 2016

**Please note:** be sure to read and utilize the text as a whole in framing your responses, even in instances where you are invited to look at particular passages, themes, examples, and so forth.

1. Do the supporting characters in *Oedipus the King* play a fundamental role in our understanding of the central character and his confrontation with fate? Please confine yourself to a maximum of two supporting characters.

2. Using direct evidence from the text, discuss the function and significance of the Chorus in the play.

3. Write an essay that examines literal and metaphorical blindness, and/or images of light and darkness, in *Oedipus the King*. In your essay you might consider the way in the inability to see connects to matters such as knowledge, ignorance, and punishment.

4. If Oedipus is innocent, why does he not curse the gods? If guilty, what are his sins?

5. Are there reasons for Oedipus's self-blinding—thematic, symbolic, narrative and so forth—beyond those he gives himself?

6. Sight and blindness are obviously central themes in *Oedipus the King*. Explore the use of other sensory images and their connection to knowledge in the play.

7. How might the play’s many instances of dramatic irony (give examples) relate to and shape the major themes of *Oedipus the King*?

8. Apollo Apollo

 it was Apollo, always Apollo,

who brought each of my agonies to birth,

but I,

nobly else, I,

I raised these two hand of mine, held them above my head,

and plunged them down,

I stabbed out these eyes.

 — Oedipus (Sophocles 85, lines 1329-1332)

In your opinion, is Oedipus’s fate determined by divine influence or his own human agency? Answer with reference to evidence from the play.