

Reflections: Kinship, Politics, and Tragedy in Sophocles' *Antigone*
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This summer, through reading more than 500 pages of academic research per week, analyzing Sophocles' *Antigone* through the lens of incest, and writing nearly 29 pages, I explored the intersection of politics, corrupted family dynamics, and tragedy in the Greek play *Antigone* by Sophocles. In tragedy, especially tragedy set in Thebes, the corruption of kinship is both a common and a dooming aspect. For example, in *Oedipus the King*, incest is the lynchpin of the family, which ultimately leads to the Theban royal family's collapse in the later plays. Combined with the overt political messaging of *Antigone* and its mediation on rebellion and civil disobedience, studying *Antigone*'s politics from this perspective allows us to conceptualize Antigone's character and political actions as both dynamic and complex, where role shifts and kinship bonds are continually in flux.

I spent half of the summer studying and researching with Professor Jennifer Kosak, including reading translations of *Antigone*, reading Classics papers on both *Antigone* and the other Theban plays, and watching performances of myriad Greek tragedies. Professor Kosak provided advice on researching from a Classicist's perspective, including details of translation and historical references. I spent the other half of the summer with Professor Aaron Kitch, who provided the bulk of revision during the period in which I was writing my summer thesis. By the end of the summer, I researched and wrote a 28 page essay that analyzes Thebes, the broader political impacts of the play, and Antigone herself through the lens of the fluctuating kinship bonds in the play. Below is the abstract of the finished paper:

Sophocles' *Antigone*, through entwining political and kinship complications, constructs a structure of power where the failure of kinship bonds necessitates a failure of political roles. Antigone, as a character, seems to take many roles over the course of the play, and her confounding motivations mirror the disintegration of political and social boundaries in Thebes, especially those of kinship bonds and gender. In particular, Antigone's potential incestuous bond with Polynices complicates her political and kinship acts, as well as the mores of political systems based on kinship bonds. However, this role confusion only comes about as a result of Creon's edict for Polynices to remain unburied—a boundary-crossing into the godly realm that spurs the destruction of the Theban royal family. Antigone thus acts as a cleansing force where the rupture of familial bonds, both through incest and misrecognition, reveals and carves away the broken foundation of kinship rulership.

Faculty Mentors: Professor of English Aaron Kitch and Associate Professor of Classics Jennifer Kosak.

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