How should one live? What is the best life? The thinkers of Ancient Greece contemplated these questions in different ways, and their responses have powerfully influenced subsequent political and social philosophies. In this course, we will examine four ways in which the Greeks thought about and articulated the idea of the good life—the heroic, which understands the good life as striving for distinction and lasting fame through great deeds; the tragic, which sees the pursuit of happiness as fraught with conflict, ambiguity, and finitude; the philosophical, which prizes contemplation and the quest for truth; and the political, which emphasizes the contribution of collective life to individual happiness. Texts will include Homer's *Iliad*, selected plays by Aeschylus and Sophocles, Plato’s *Republic*, and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*. We will explore the visions of the good life these texts present, their possible points of overlap, the internal tensions that complicate them, and their continuing relevance and impact on modern ethical and political ideals.

Our objectives in this course will be both to develop an understanding of Greek literature and philosophy and to engage in ethical reflection using these texts as a touchstone. The course will be reading-intensive and sessions will focus on discussion. In particular, the course aims to develop the following skills:

- Close reading
- Writing
- Oral communication

**Assignments:**

You are expected to come to class (1) having completed the assigned reading for the session, and (2) prepared to discuss what you have read. Class participation is an important part of your grade (see “grading” and “attendance” below). In addition, you will be expected to write four short papers of 5-6 pages, in response to prompts that I will provide. There will be no exams. A detailed course schedule, including all assigned readings and due dates for the papers, is included below.

Essays must be submitted using the “assignments” tool on the course Blackboard page. You must upload your paper, in Microsoft word .docx format, by the start of class (9:30 AM) on the
day the assignment is due. Failure to upload your paper by the deadline will result in a lateness penalty (see “late assignments” below).

GRADING:

Each of the four papers will count for 20% of your final grade. Participation and attendance account for the remaining 20%. Grades will be calculated using a weighted point system. Each assignment is graded on a 100-point scale, and the point value is then weighted according to the percentage of the final grade that assignment represents. Each 10 points corresponds to letter grades in the following formula: 7-9 = X+, 3-6 = X, and 0-2 = X-. 90-100 is the A range, and each set of 10 below that is the next lowest letter grade, with anything below a 60 counting as an F.

Your essays will be graded using the following criteria: coherence and structure of the argument, use of appropriate evidence (and consideration of counter-evidence), and how well you respond to the prompt. Excessive grammar and spelling mistakes can hurt your grade, so you should carefully proofread and edit your essays before handing them in.

ATTENDANCE:

Regular attendance is part of your participation grade. Missing more than one class session without an excuse will result in a reduction of your participation grade—2 points will be deducted for each additional unexcused absence. Excused absences are available if you have a legitimate reason and notify me at least 48 hours in advance (an exception on advance notice may be granted in cases of sudden health problems or family emergencies).

Classes will begin promptly at 9:30, and you should arrive on time. If you are late by more than 10 minutes, you will be marked absent. Habitual lateness will hurt your participation grade.

Note that, although failure to attend hurts your participation grade, you will not earn an “A” in participation just for showing up. A high grade for participation requires active involvement in class discussions.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

As stated above, all paper assignments must be submitted in digital format using the “assignments” tool on Blackboard. Specific entries will be created for each assignment. Submissions are time-and-date-stamped, and your file must be uploaded by the deadline (9:30 AM on the due date) in order to be considered for full credit. Late assignments will receive a deduction of 5 points (half a letter grade) for each day late.

Extensions may be requested under extenuating circumstances, but there is no guarantee that they will be granted.

IMPORTANT: When submitting your files on Blackboard, be sure to click “submit,” and not just “save.” Files are not sent to me until you click “submit.”
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM:

As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website [http://www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html] for a full description of the academic integrity policy.

INCOMPLETE GRADES:

Incomplete grades will be handled according to the official Gallatin policy. See the information at http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/grades/incompletePolicy.html for details.

Requests for an Incomplete must be submitted to me by the last class session, December 12, 2012.

POLICY ON LAPTOPS AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Laptops are permitted only for taking notes. Any other use is not permitted during class time (trust me, I can tell when you're not engaged, and it will affect your participation grade). Cell phone use is not permitted, and if you are carrying a phone, it must be set to “off” or “silent” during class meetings. Other electronic devices, such as tablets, are also not permitted.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

The following texts are required and are available at the NYU Bookstore:


Other readings will be posted or linked to on Blackboard.
**CLASS SCHEDULE:**

9/5: Introduction

9/10: *The Iliad* Book I, Book II lines 1-493, Books III-IV

9/12: *The Iliad* Books V-VI, Book IX

9/17: *The Iliad* Books XVI-XIX

9/19: *The Iliad* Books XXI-XII, Book XXIV


9/26: The Oresteia: *Agamemnon*

10/1: The Oresteia: *The Libation Bearers*, **First Paper Due**

10/3: The Oresteia: *The Eumenides*


10/10: *Oedipus the King*

10/15: **NO CLASS, FALL RECESS**

10/17: *Antigone*


10/24: *The Republic* Books I-II; **Second Paper Due**

10/29: *The Republic* Book III start-398b, 412a-end, Book IV, 427d-end, Book V

10/31: *The Republic* Book VI, Book VII start-521d, 531d-end, Book VIII start-555b
11/5: *The Republic* remainder of Book VIII (555b-end), Books IX-X


11/14: *The Nicomachean Ethics* Books I-III

11/19: *The Nicomachean Ethics* Books V-VI, Book VII sections 1-4; **Third Paper Due**

11/21: No additional readings, continued discussion of Aristotle

11/26: *The Nicomachean Ethics* Books VIII-IX, X sections 6-9


12/3: *The Politics* Book I

12/5: *The Politics* Books III-IV

12/10: *The Politics* Books V-VI