General. I recommend aspects of the introductions by Bernard Knox, the general one and his particular introductions to the *Oedipous the King* and the *Oedipous at Colonus*. Although written much later and not performed until after Sophocles' death, the *Oedipous at Colonus* is helpful for understanding the *Oedipous the King*. I shall cite these introductions by Knox and a page number. Crucial to any right understanding of Sophocles' dramas is Knox, 19: the theatre "was from the beginning a sacramental area, a place where divine forces were invoked and put to work, where the performance was, for actors and audience alike, an act of worship." Equally important and related to this are Knox's remarks at 21 on the political aspect of drama. Indeed these could be much expanded.

1. The telling of the story, the myth, is not Sophocles' aim; all those present in the theatre would have known it intimately. See Knox, 24.
2. Sophocles is interpreting the myth but *crucially* the interpretation takes the form of *something done*, a drama.
3. In it the action must result from the characters, or principles of motion, set in play.
4. What Sophocles sets in play are diverse, indeed, opposed forms of knowing. Two forms of knowing, both of which give truth, are in conflict. They are equally necessary, so the conflict is not between good and evil but within the good; the good is in conflict with itself under two forms. Another way of saying this is that the gods or the divine are in conflict among humans. Knox on Hegel on the *Antigone* at 41 is useful.
5. As with Homer the destructive conflict between principles equally necessary and active in life emerges when there is a practical crisis, in this case plague—students might be referred to the beginning of the *Iliad*.
6. The thing done in Sophocles' *Oedipous Tyrannos* is the discovery of their inner connection, a connection hidden from, or even hidden by, the characters. Iocasta flees the knowledge which she foresees will destroy herself and Oedipous. Oedipous is heroic because he demands to know what he foresees will destroy him. He is totally moved by his principle.
7. The two forms of knowing in conflict are those of Teiresias, the blind prophet, whose wisdom as an immortal principle is certainly and explicitly Apollo's. By way of his self blinding, Oedipous will become a blind prophet and will function as one in the *Oedipous at Colonus*. In this sense Teiresias the prophet triumphs; Oedipous is correlative defeated.
8. Throughout the drama Apollo’s efficacy, help and worship are issue. By the
time we get to the crux in the exchanges between Oedipous and Iocasta, the
issue appears as the worship of Apollo or a practical atheism. Oedipous 1054:
Why look to the Prophet’s hearth”? [the prophesies] “are nothing, worthless”
(1063) carried to Hades [παρ᾽ Άιδῃ Πόλυβος ἄξι᾽ οὐδενός]. “Chance
rules our lives” (Iocasta 1070).

9. The other side, that of Oedipous in opposition to Teiresias can also be
represented by Apollo who is the god of light and of enlightening
knowledge. This appears immediately when Oedipous presents himself in
the blaze of the altar fires and it makes itself clearer as he takes upon himself
the task set by the oracle of Apollo at Delphi and then undertakes to bring
light on the forgotten past. He will certainly become the voice of Apollo in
the Oedipous at Colonus.

10. However, in the Oedipous at Colonus, he becomes a protecting spirit of Athens
and here in the Oedipous the King it may also be useful to understand him
through Athena, who, in the Homeric / Hesiodian theology which Sophocles
inherits, is Effectual Intelligence. Born without a mother from the head of
Zeus, she is wisdom as the civilizing arts but including those of the warrior.
She is contrasted with Ares, as she is in the Oedipous the King, as well as with
Apollo. I find it easiest to represent her in Oedipous by way of knowing as
“problem solving” or the mentality of the engineer. For a good example of it
you might read President Richard Florizone’s 2014 Convocation Address (on
line at Dalhousie: http://www.dal.ca/news/2014/05/29/on--intention-and-
possibility---read-dr--florizone-s-convocation.html).

11. Because students are reading the Odyssey this year it may help to look at how
Athena is manifest in Odysseus. See for example, XIII, 287ff (Athena speaks)
“‘He must be indeed a shifty and deceitful person,’ said she, ‘who could
surpass you in all manner of craft even though you had a god for your
antagonist. Daring that you are, full of guile, unwearying in deceit, can you
not drop your thievish stories and the deceitfulness which is close to your
very nature, even now that you are in your own country again? We will say
no more, however, about this, for two of a kind are we, deceivers both—you
are the best counsellor and orator among all humankind, while I for
diplomacy and crafty ways have fame among the gods. Did you not know
Zeus’ daughter Athena - me, who have been ever with you...’.”
κερδαλέος κ᾽ εἰη καὶ ἐπίκλοπος ὡς σε παρέλθοι ἐν πάντεσσι δόλοις, καὶ εἶ θεὸς ἀντιάσει.

σχέτλιε, ποικιλομῆτα, δόλων ἀτ᾽, οὔκ ἄρ᾽ ἐμελλες, οὐδ᾽ ἐν σῇ περ ἑων γαῖη, λήξειν ἀπατάων 295μύθων τε κλοπίων, ὦ τοι πεδόθεν φίλοι εἰςίν.

ἀλλ᾽ ἄγε, μηκέτι ταῦτα λεγόμεθα, εἰδότες ἀμφὸ κέρδε᾽, ἐπεὶ σὺ μὲν ἐσσὶ βροτῶν ὁχ᾽ ἀριστος ἀπάντων βουλῇ καὶ μῦθοισιν, ἐγὼ δ᾽ ἐν πάσι θεοίσι μήτι τε κλέομαι καὶ κέρδεσιν: οὐδὲ σὺ γ᾽ ἐγνως 300Παλλάδ᾽ Ἀθηναίην, κούρην Διός, ἥ τε τοι αἰεὶ ἐν πάντεσσι πόνοισι παρίσταμαι ἥδε φυλάσσω,

12. Oedipous has the same endless confidence in his own proper possession of practical problem-solving wisdom. As in the Odyssey this can appear as a kind of atheism and must be corrected. That the knowledge by which he solves problems and became king when he defeated the “riddling” Sphinx, who reappears as riddling in Teiresias in this play, is his own and enables him to be free or self-moved is shown in the speeches beginning at 70 and going on to the chorus at 170. It is essential that in these he curses himself, although he does so unknowingly. His identification of himself with the polis as king, and his interest with its, has this consequence.

13. Knox 140-142 is excellent on Oedipous as representing, in his practical rationality, the progressive spirit of 5th century Athens whose hubristic praise Thucydides puts in the mouth of Pericles. It is crucial to understand that Thucydides’ Peloponnesian War is an extended tragedy as history (one Sophocles experienced) in which this spirit is defeated as it is in the Oedipous the King. See G. McGonagill, "A Note on Thucydides 2.41.4…” Dionysius XXII (2004): 7-18.

14. If the two forms of knowing are contrasted as receptive intuition and reflective reasoning (as they will be in the Greek philosophers, especially Plato and Aristotle), then the Oedipous Tyrannos is about the discovery by practical reason of its ground in receptive intuition. However, because self-movement or freedom requires the truth of reflective reasoning, the play also concerns its necessity and this is vindicated in the Oedipous at Colonus and the
justification of the worship of Oedipous as hero of Athens. It is not perhaps insignificant that Sophocles was born in Colonus.

15. The forms of knowledge and freedom in the sense of self motion or the lack of it are indissolubly connected. Teiresias like the oracle herself, responds to questions, he is not self-moved but stimulated from outside so as to know or uncover what is given him to see. Oedipous is self-moved in his self-destruction as well as his demand to know.

Apollo, friends, Apollo
he ordained my agonies—these my pains on pain!
But the hand that struck my eyes was mine,
mine alone—no one else—
I did it all myself.  
p. 241, lines 1467-1471.

16. Knox 134-138, is good on the centrality of prophesy in antiquity generally, and in Greek society particularly, and on how this is in question when the two Oedipous plays were written and performed. It is crucial to understand that although, in virtue of his self-motion, there is an epiphany of the ruined Oedipous in the Oedipous at Colonus he becomes the voice of the god as a daemonic hero. Knox 257, 270, and especially 275-276 is excellent on what a daemonic hero is. His doctrine here is that of Proclus, an irreproachable authority on Greek religion.

17. Aristotle on tragedy from the De Poetica[1449β] 

ἔστιν οὖν τραγῳδία μίμησις πράξεως
σπουδαίας [25] καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἔχουσης, ...
Tragedy is the imitation of an action that is serious and with a size complete in itself.

δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι᾽ ἀπαγγελίας,
A drama not a narrative

δι᾽ ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαινοῦσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν,
with incidents arousing pity and fear in such a way as to purify these emotions.

[35] ἐπεὶ δὲ πράξεως ἔστι μίμησις, πράττεται δὲ ὑπὸ τινῶν πραττόντων.
οὓς ἀνάγκη ποιούς τινας εἶναι κατὰ τὸ ἣνδος καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν διὰ γὰρ τούτων καὶ τὰ πράξεις εἶναι φαμεν ποιάς τινας.

The imitation is of an action; the actions must follow necessarily from the characters of the actors. [paraphrase]

[1450] β πρὸς δὲ τὰ μεγίστα οίς ψυχαγωγεῖ η τραγῳδία τοῦ μύθου μέρη ἐστίν.

The action (or story or plot) is the soul of tragedy. [paraphrase]

[1453] ἔλεος μὲν περὶ τὸν ἄναξίου,
φόβος δὲ περὶ τὸν ὅμοιον, ὠστε οὐτὲ ἔλεεινον οὐτὲ φοβερὸν ἐσται τὸ συμβαῖνον.

Our pity is aroused by the suffering of those who are not unworthy, good people. Fear is aroused by the suffering of those like ourselves. [paraphrase]

Thus, in order to arouse pity and fear and to effect their purification, which is the purpose of tragedy

ὁ μεταξὺ ἄρα τούτων λοιπός. ἐστὶ δὲ τοιοῦτος ὁ μήτε ἀρετῇ διαφέρων καὶ διὰ καισάμη μήτε διὰ διὰ ὅσια καὶ μοχθηρίαν μεταβάλλων εἰς τὴν δυστυχίαν ἀλλὰ δι᾽ ἁμαρτίαν τινας, τῶν ἐν μεγάλῃ δόξῃ ὅντων καὶ εὐτυχίᾳ, οἷον Οἰδίπους …

Thus, in order to arouse pity and fear and to effect their purification, which is the purpose of tragedy

ὁ μεταξὺ ἄρα τούτων λοιπός. ἐστὶ δὲ τοιοῦτος ὁ μήτε ἀρετῇ διαφέρων καὶ διὰ καισάμη μήτε διὰ διὰ ὅσια καὶ μοχθηρίαν μεταβάλλων εἰς τὴν δυστυχίαν ἀλλὰ δι᾽ ἁμαρτίαν τινας, τῶν ἐν μεγάλῃ δόξῃ ὅντων καὶ εὐτυχίᾳ, οἷον Οἰδίπους …

Thus, in order to arouse pity and fear and to effect their purification, which is the purpose of tragedy

ὁ μεταξὺ ἄρα τούτων λοιπός. ἐστὶ δὲ τοιοῦτος ὁ μήτε ἀρετῇ διαφέρων καὶ διὰ καισάμη μήτε διὰ διὰ ὅσια καὶ μοχθηρίαν μεταβάλλων εἰς τὴν δυστυχίαν ἀλλὰ δι᾽ ἁμαρτίαν τινας, τῶν ἐν μεγάλῃ δόξῃ ὅντων καὶ εὐτυχίᾳ, οἵου ἔρηται ἢ βελτίον ἢ μᾶλλον ἢ χείρονος, πράξεως ἐστι μίμησις, πράττεται δὲ ὑπὸ τινῶν πραττόντων,

Thus, in order to arouse pity and fear and to effect their purification, which is the purpose of tragedy

ὁ μεταξὺ ἄρα τούτων λοιπός. ἐστὶ δὲ τοιοῦτος ὁ μήτε ἀρετῇ διαφέρων καὶ διὰ καισάμη μήτε διὰ διὰ ὅσια καὶ μοχθηρίαν μεταβάλλων εἰς τὴν δυστυχίαν ἀλλὰ δι᾽ ἁμαρτίαν τινας, τῶν ἐν μεγάλῃ δόξῃ ὅντων καὶ εὐτυχίᾳ, οἵου ἔρηται ἢ βελτίον ἢ μᾶλλον ἢ χείρονος, πράξεως ἐστι μίμησις, πράττεται δὲ ὑπὸ τινῶν πραττόντων,

Thus, in order to arouse pity and fear and to effect their purification, which is the purpose of tragedy

Thus, in order to arouse pity and fear and to effect their purification, which is the purpose of tragedy