

## **Undergraduate Assessment**

Department of Classics  
University of Wisconsin  
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Annual undergraduate assessment in Classics consists of three parts: 1) evaluation of our students' progress in learning the original languages, 2) consideration of their research skills in the capstone seminar, and 3) exit surveys of all graduating majors in Classical Languages and Literature, and Classical Humanities. As evidenced by faculty reports below, current Classics students are performing admirably across all three categories.

### *Course Sequences in the Language Programs*

A faculty committee consisting of Professors Will Brockliss and Grant Nelsestuen evaluated student progress in two intermediate language courses, Greek 306 and Latin 302 (as below).

#### *Latin 302: Literature of the Roman Empire*

Latin 302 is the second semester reading course, in which students read a substantial amount of Latin poetry (Vergil's *Aeneid*). In addition to reading and comprehending the text, students are expected to scan the meter and to engage the text in a critical and meaningful way. Assessment of students' performance and progress was assessed through the use of 5 quizzes and 3 exams, all of which asked students to translate passages of Latin that they had already seen. In addition, each of the tests required students to translate increasingly difficult, longer, and more heavily weighted unseen passages, so as to assess their sight translation skills. Out of the ten students enrolled, nearly two-thirds of them are majors. Four of them will be continuing to the next level. With but one exception (a student who has stopped attending the class and communicating with the instructor despite numerous emails), all of the students have performed quite well and will receive the grades of either A or AB.

#### *Greek 306: Homeric Greek*

Greek 306 is the second semester reading course. The class enrolled sixteen students: one freshman, two sophomores, six juniors, three seniors, three graduates (one from political science; two from art history), one returning adult (comparative literature). All of the undergraduates enrolled were declared Classics majors bar one, who was intending shortly to declare a Classics major. Joint majors included psychology, art history/ anthropology/ classical humanities, classical humanities/ history, zoology, journalism/ English. The class read all of Book 1 of Homer's *Iliad*, and around 100 lines of Book 24 for their prepared translation; for sight translation we covered around 15 lines a week from various parts of the epic. The students began with assignments of 10 lines per meeting and progressed to around 25 lines per meeting. At the same time they read the whole epic in translation, and

discussed themes from it in class. On the linguistic side of things, they studied Homeric forms and syntax, as well as reinforcing their knowledge of Attic syntax. They also became proficient in reading aloud and scanning dactylic hexameter – which several students were able to do spontaneously by the latter part of the course. All of the students have performed well and passed the class. Most are expected to get A's or AB's, and no student is expected to score below C.

### *Classics 591: Capstone Seminar*

A committee consisting of Professor Jim McKeown and Assistant Professor Grant Nelsestuen reviewed randomly selected term papers from Classics 591, the undergraduate capstone seminar, for the spring semester, 2013. The topic for the seminar was Roman Life and Literature.

The seminar required students to read about 700 pages of primary texts in translation. In addition, the seminar asked students to write a substantial final paper on a topic of the students' own choosing and inspired by ideas that arose during the semester. Topics selected were diverse, sophisticated, and included: Roman cuisine, prostitution, magical papyri, medicine, children, life in Oxyrhynchus, Alexandria, the Jewish revolt, Boudicca, and Roman attitudes to foreigners. The papers tended to be based on substantial amounts of primary material in translation: e.g. the whole of Soranus's *Gynecology* or of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In general, the topics selected entailed a substantial amount of reading and research of texts not read in the class, the standard of writing was gratifyingly high, and the students' commitment and enthusiasm to their projects was evident in the quality, care, and nuance. It would thus seem that the Seminar successfully offers a "capstone" experience to students and is successful in its contribution to teaching in the University.

### *Exit Surveys*

In late April 2013, Classics administered a survey to seniors with a major in Classical Humanities or Classics, or a Certificate in Classical Studies. The survey asks for responses to questions about overall program quality, quality of instruction, registration and enrollment procedures, and quality of departmental advising. Sixteen students responded (out of 25 graduating majors and nearly as many Certificates in our programs). All expressed great satisfaction with their undergraduate experience in the Classics department.

Gateway-to-the-major experiences identified by respondents included high school Latin and inspiring faculty (Professors Aylward, McClure, Dressler, and Beneker are frequently named). Many had taken some Latin in high school, but a few did not begin study of ancient language until their sophomore or junior year at UW. Most students had taken modern languages at UW, with Spanish and French being the most popular choice. About half of the respondents planned to go on to graduate study. Classical Myth was named most frequently as the most favorite course,

though there was a wide variety of other courses mentioned once. The least favorite course was second-semester Greek, with its emphasis on memorization, drilling, and quizzes. The greatest concern expressed by students was the paucity of archaeological courses and the lack of systematic regional variation in the courses offered each semester (e.g. there were three courses on Rome this spring, but none on Greece). It was encouraging to learn that many undergraduate majors and certificate students are participating in the Classics Society (a registered student organization) and attending lectures by speakers invited by the department. Moreover, it was great to find out that most students were aware of these opportunities, which perhaps corroborates the efficacy of the department's recent adoption and use of Facebook to advertise events. At the same time, however, it was unfortunate that scheduling issues (esp. part-time jobs) often precluded students' attendance at these events.

Our graduating seniors will go on to a variety of jobs and career tracks. Many will attend graduate school in the fall, including (among others): Anthropology at UW-Madison; Classics at Bryn Mawr; a M.A. program for Speech-Language Pathology at the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities; law school at UW-Madison; a Masters program in Museum and Field Studies at the University of Colorado – Boulder. Two students have jobs at Epic Systems. Several other students plan to take some time off, work, and decide on their next step (e.g. seminary, graduate school).