



LATIN LIVES ON! CLASSICAL AND POST-CLASSICAL LATIN

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This project developed a new and exciting introductory Latin course integrating classical and post-classical Latin for undergraduates studying Ancient History, Archaeology, History and English. In addition to a firm grounding in basic Latin grammar, the module explores how Latin lived on in many forms beyond the Roman Empire up to the twentieth century. Intertextuality between classical texts (e.g. Virgil) with the post-classical texts they inspired (e.g. Alcuin, Milton) forms a key component of the module. Readings are drawn from a wide range of sources beyond standard 'texts' including coins, graffiti and inscriptions. This module provides a valuable skill for students studying and researching historical, literary and historical archaeological topics. Themes covered include: history writing, letters, biography/hagiography, letters, student writing, pastoral poetry, legal texts, mythology, geography and travel writing, erotic/love poetry, satire and humour, oratory/rhetoric and sermons.

1. BACKGROUND

Because there is no Classics department at Leicester, students in Humanities degrees, notably Ancient History, Archaeology, History and English found have it difficult in the past to acquire Latin. For many topics in these fields knowledge of Latin is a key research tool, and is essential for students who plan to undertake further study. It is important not only for those wishing to undertake academic research at postgraduate level, but also for students seeking careers in areas such as museums, libraries, archives and a wide range of jobs in the heritage sector. Therefore, this project filled a need for broad-based teaching in Latin as a key academic and research skill which both

enhanced the learning experience by allowing students to access important documents and sources in the original language, and increased their employability and skills for further training.

2. PROJECT AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

As noted in section 7, Latin is a key skill for humanities study and research across a broad range of disciplines. With no Classics department in the university, students had little or no access to the subject within the university before this module was developed.

The module design and course materials on Blackboard were developed by three core members of staff with the assistance of two postgraduates. Other staff and postgraduates helped out at various points, and it is currently taught by a range of academic staff and postdoctoral fellows from all three departments. Latin grammar teaching is bought-in, and is currently taught by a recent A&AH PhD graduate. Coordination of the module circulates between the three departments. The module is open to yr2 students in A&AH and History and to year 3 students in English, and at present we can accommodate about 40 students per year. Demand is outstripping the number of places available, so it is clearly filling a major need in the teaching portfolios of all three departments.

Initially it was envisaged that assessment would be purely on the basis of coursework, but this was not entirely successful since it did not allow us to test students' translation skills. To correct this an unseen translation examination (for which students may use a dictionary and a grammar book) has been introduced this year.

3. PROJECT OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The work undertaken was as follows:

1) Development of key themes, topics and curricula. It was always envisaged that the module would be structured as 2 hours per week of Latin grammar classes, with weekly seminar-based discussion classes organized thematically and by genre, but covering a broad chronological time span. This model has worked extremely well on the whole, and students gain a much better appreciation of the importance of Latin as a medium of communication over the centuries than is the case with conventional 'classical' or 'medieval' Latin classes.

2) Materials developed and Blackboard site populated.

3) Teaching of the module commenced on Spring 2008-09 and has continued and expanded since then.

There is now an exceptionally successful module running (AH2027/EH3148), organized jointly between A&AH, History and English. We are now teaching about 40 students per year (this year it has had to split into two groups), and there is considerably more demand for the module than we can presently accommodate. In addition, we have expanded post graduate provision of Latin on the back of this, and starting in October, Latin for postgraduates and others will be available via 'Languages at Leicester'. This is a huge success story: thanks to this grant we have radically widened access to this important skill at Leicester.

4. EVALUATION

This was not a project which demanded data collection and analysis. The most important 'data gathering' consisted of assembling appropriate bibliographies and reading lists, exploring and making available the range of excellent electronic resources available (including now an iPhone app for the standard Latin dictionary, available at £1.79!), and writing appropriate exercises and course materials. The most important lesson learned was that there is a huge need for Latin language skills across the College. Although our project has gone some way towards filling this need, there is more to be done. Cooperation at College level will be critical for sustaining the teaching of Latin at Leicester in the future.

5. CONTINUATION OF THE PROJECT

Outcomes are already embedded and expanding. Plans to develop a DL version are at an early stage of development. We would also like to be able to grow the Latin-teaching capacity to expand access to this module to other departments in the College which currently do not take part in it: History of Art, Law, Modern Languages. Ideally, a year 3 follow-on module in Latin, jointly run across the College, should be developed in the medium term: certainly there is considerable student demand for this.

If the 'Languages at Leicester' Latin is successful, we would like to add ancient/ New Testament Greek to the LaL portfolio. There appears to be a strong demand for Greek, among the same student community and for the same reasons, as for Latin.

'Languages at Leicester' is open to those outside the immediate academic community at Leicester. A DL version of the module has potentially even greater reach.

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