

CLASSICS

Overview and Contact Information

The discipline of classics comprises the study of the language, literature, history, culture, and society of the Greeks and Romans and of the ancient Mediterranean world from about the eighth century BCE to the fifth century of our own era. Literary genres (such as epic poetry, drama, and historiography), political institutions and ideals (such as democracy and free speech), as well as principles of philosophy and science are all part of the rich legacy that the ancient Greeks and Romans bequeathed to western Europe. Many of their ideas and institutions were consciously revived in the Renaissance and Enlightenment and remain with us today.

Classics combines the study of both ancient Greek and Latin with courses in ancient history, art, philosophy, politics, and religion. The department therefore offers courses in the ancient languages at all levels as well as a wide array of courses (taught in English) approaching the culture and history of Greek and Roman antiquity from a variety of perspectives.

In addition to classics, the department offers majors in Greek, Latin, and ancient studies. Ancient studies approaches Greek and Roman civilizations from an interdisciplinary perspective with less emphasis on the ancient languages. There are also minors related to each of these majors.

Study Abroad

The department encourages study abroad. In recent years a number of students in the department have spent part of their junior year at the Intercollegiate Center for Classical Studies (ICCS) in Rome. Some have pursued their studies at Oxford, Saint Andrews, and other institutions in United Kingdom. College Year in Athens also offers one-semester programs in Greece. Students who anticipate taking an advanced degree in archaeology, ancient art history, ancient history, or classics can apply to summer sessions of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

See Also

- Ancient Studies (<http://catalog.mtholyoke.edu/areas-study/ancient-studies/>)
- Greek (<http://catalog.mtholyoke.edu/areas-study/greek/>)
- Latin (<http://catalog.mtholyoke.edu/areas-study/latin/>)

Contact Information

Ombretta Frau, Chair

Geoffrey Sumi, Professor of Classics

Denise Falk, Academic Department Coordinator

112 Ciruti Center

413-538-2885

<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/academics/find-your-program/classics>

(<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/academics/find-your-program/classics/>)

Learning Goals

Learning goals for students of classics and ancient studies are:

- To analyze critically ancient Greek and Roman texts, in their original languages and in translation, within their literary, philosophical, and historical contexts.

- To understand major monuments and artifacts within their historical and cultural settings; to develop a visual literacy of ancient art and sharpen the ability to see and express what one sees.
- To imagine fully and creatively ancient cultural communities when relying on limited written and material remains.
- To deepen the understanding of current problems by studying the responses of ancient Greeks and Romans to questions about the human condition, including, how to live well, and how to govern.
- To write and speak more confidently and effectively, and to develop well-reasoned arguments using primary evidence and/or secondary material, including print and digital resources.
- To expand intellectual breadth through studying the ancient Greek and Roman worlds through different disciplines and modes of inquiry.

Faculty

This area of study is administered by the Department of Classics and Italian. Classics faculty include:

Paula Debnar, Professor of Classics on the Alumnae Foundation, Teaching Spring Only

Geoffrey Sumi, Professor of Classics, Teaching Fall Only

Bruce Arnold, Associate Professor of Classics

Catherine Baker, Visiting Lecturer in Classics

Requirements for the Major

A minimum of 40 credits:

Code	Title	Credits
At least 8 credits in Greek at the 200 level or above		8
At least 8 credits in Latin at the 200 level or above		8
12 credits at the 300 level in Greek or Latin		12
At least 8 additional credits at the 300 level in approved coursework ¹		8
At least 4 additional credits at the 200 level or above in approved coursework ¹		4
Total Credits		40

¹ After consulting with the student's advisor, a major may choose from a variety of related courses (p. 2) in art history, Asian studies, classics (in English), history, politics, or religion at the 200 level or above. Courses at the 100 level do not count toward the major.

Additional Specifications

- Students anticipating graduate work in classics should begin the study of both Greek and Latin as soon as possible.
- Students who declare a classics major automatically fulfill the College's "outside the major" requirement.

Requirements for the Minor

A minimum of 16 credits:

Code	Title	Credits
4 credits from Greek or Latin at the 100 or 200 level		4
8 credits from Greek or Latin at the 200 or 300 level		8

4 credits from Greek or Latin at the 300 level

Total Credits

4

16

Additional Specifications

- The minor must include courses in both Greek and Latin.

Teacher Licensure

Students interested in pursuing licensure in the fields of Latin and classics can combine their course work in Latin and classics with a minor in education. In some instances course work in the major coincides with course work required for licensure; in other cases, it does not. For specific course requirements for licensure within the majors of Latin and classics, please consult your advisor or the chair of the classics department. Further information about the minor in education (<http://catalog.mtholyoke.edu/areas-study/psychology-education/#minortext>) and the Teacher Licensure program (<http://catalog.mtholyoke.edu/areas-study/psychology-education/#teacherlicensuretextcontainer>) is available in other sections of the catalog, or consult Sarah Frenette in the psychology and education department.

Licensure also requires a formal application as well as passing scores on the Massachusetts Test of Educator Licensure (MTEL) in both the literacy component and the subject matter component. Copies of the test objectives for the MTEL are available in the classics department and in the Department of Psychology and Education.

Additional information about the Licensure Program, including application materials, can be found on the Teacher Licensure Program website (<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/academics/find-your-program/teacher-licensure/>).

Course Offerings

CLASS-205 Cleopatra: The Not Humble Woman

Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4

In this course Cleopatra will be considered both as a political figure of importance in her own right and also as an enemy queen, representing a presumptuous challenge to the political hegemony and cultural values of the Romans. She may serve, therefore, as a lens through which one may view social and political tensions within Roman society over the nature of authority and empire. Readings include Vergil, Horace, Propertius, Lucan, Caesar, Sallust, Plutarch and the plays of Shakespeare and Shaw, where she is ambivalently portrayed as a woman who desires power or, contrariwise, as a romantic idealist who scorns temporal powers in fulfillment of private desires.

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities

B. Arnold

Notes: Taught in English.

CLASS-211 Gods and Mortals: Ancient Greek and Roman Myth

Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4

We will accompany Odysseus on his return from Troy, retrieve the Golden Fleece with Jason, and race with Ovid through his witty – and often troubling – retelling of Greek myths from a Roman perspective. This course examines how Greek and Roman authors and artists from very different periods used myth to explore questions about life, art and politics. Works may include: Homer, *Odyssey*; Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica*; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides*; Greek tragedy, and ancient images representing myths.

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities

P. Debnar

Restrictions: This course is limited to first-years and sophomores.

Advisory: Juniors and seniors should contact the professor for permission.

Notes: Taught in English. Optional screenings of films related to ancient myth.

CLASS-212 Greek Tragedy, American Drama, and Film

Spring. Credits: 4

The Greeks, beginning with Homer, saw the world from an essentially tragic perspective. The searing question of why human societies and the human psyche repeatedly break down in tragic ruin and loss, particularly in the conflicts of war and in the betrayal of personal bonds of love and friendship, fascinated them as it still does us. The most consistent themes that emerged from such examination are the tragedy of self-knowledge and illusion, the tragedy of desire, the tragedy of crime and guilt, and tragedy as a protest against social injustice. This course examines the critical influence of the three most important Athenian dramatists, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, on the works of Nobel winner Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller and important filmmakers, who have tried to recreate the powerful atmosphere and impact of the Greek tragic theater or reworked the tragic themes of classical myth for their own purposes in the modern age.

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities

Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive

B. Arnold

CLASS-226 Bread and Circuses: The Politics of Public Entertainment in Ancient Rome

Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4

Bread and circuses (*panem et circenses*) was a catchphrase in the Roman empire that described the political strategy of controlling an unruly populace through free bread and public entertainment. Against a backdrop of Roman social and political institutions, this course focuses on the imperial ideology, aristocratic ethos, and cultural practices that underpinned this catchphrase, as well as questions concerning the careers of entertainers—gladiators, charioteers, and actors—who were at once celebrities and social outcasts; the rules of spectatorship at the games; the use of these games as a form of social control; and the logistics of feeding the city population.

Crosslisted as: HIST-226

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities

G. Sumi

CLASS-227 Ancient Greece*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

This course will trace the emergence and expansion of Greek civilization in the Mediterranean between the Bronze Age and Alexander the Great. Among themes to be explored are political structures, trade, slavery, gender relations, and religion, as well as the contributions of ancient Greeks to literary genres (drama, rhetoric, historiography, philosophy) and to the visual arts. Throughout we will consider how the history of the ancient Greeks can speak to modern concerns. Sources will include works of ancient Greek literature and history (e.g., Homer, Herodotus, Thucydides, Aristophanes, Plutarch) as well as archaeological and epigraphic evidence.

*Crosslisted as: HIST-227**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities**G. Sumi***CLASS-228 Ancient Rome***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Ancient Rome and its empire can be viewed both as a measure of human achievement and a cautionary tale of the corrupting effects of unbridled power. This course covers the history of Ancient Rome from its mythologized beginnings (753 BCE) to the rise and spread of Christianity under the Emperor Constantine (312 CE). Topics include the creation and development of Rome's republican form of government as well as its eventual transition to monarchy, the causes and consequences of the acquisition of empire, the role of the army in administering the provinces and defending the frontiers, the image of emperor, the economy, and religion.

*Crosslisted as: HIST-228**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities**G. Sumi***CLASS-229 The Tyrant and Gladiator: Bad Roman Emperors from Caligula to Commodus***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Caligula was a god (or so he thought); Nero fiddled while Rome burned; Commodus dressed as a gladiator and fought man and beast in the arena. The history of the Roman empire is replete with scandalous stories about eccentric and even insane emperors whose reigns raise questions about the nature of the emperor's power and his role in administering the empire. In this course a close study of Roman imperial biography and historiography—the source of so many of these stories of bad emperors—will be weighed against documentary and archaeological evidence in order to reveal the dynamic between the emperor, his court, and his subjects that was fundamental to the political culture of imperial Rome.

*Crosslisted as: HIST-229**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities**G. Sumi***CLASS-239 Topics in Classics****CLASS-239HE Topics in Classics: "The Hellenistic World from Alexander to Cleopatra"***Fall. Credits: 4*

An introduction to the history and legends of Alexander the Great and Cleopatra VII through an analysis of the surviving historical and literary evidence. By spreading Greek culture from northern Greece as far as modern Pakistan, Alexander transformed much of the known world, which witnessed changes in politics and imperialism, literature and science, as well as in the lives of women. This diverse and dynamic world produced Cleopatra VII who endeavored to preserve her dynasty amid the growing power of the Roman Empire. This course concludes with the enduring legacies of Alexander and Cleopatra in modern times.

*Crosslisted as: HIST-253HE**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities**G. Sumi***CLASS-239RA Topics in Classics: 'Roman Art and Archaeology'***Fall. Credits: 4*

This course provides an introduction to the art, architecture, and archaeology of the ancient Romans. At its height, the Roman Empire controlled much of the ancient Mediterranean. As Roman power spread, so too did Rome's art and architecture. This course examines the major developments in Roman archaeology from the foundation of Rome through the growing Republic of Pompey and Caesar, the Rome of the emperors, and the rise of Christianity. We will explore how material culture, from tombs and temples in Rome to the urban planning of provincial cities, can help us to better understand the connections between material culture and history, politics, religion, and daily life in the Roman world.

*Crosslisted as: ARTH-290RA**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities**C. Baker***CLASS-239VA Topics in Classics: 'Ancient Greek Vases and Vase Painting'***Spring. Credits: 4*

Greek painted vases are some of the most recognizable artifacts from the ancient Mediterranean. In this course, we will situate Greek vases and the scenes painted on them within Greek culture and its artistic production. We explore these vases, produced from the Minoan period through the Hellenistic age, from a variety of perspectives. Themes will include the artisans and workshops who produced these vases, the consumers – from ancient buyers to modern museums – who purchased them, the traders who moved them, the variety of styles and scenes, from mythological to daily life scenes, which decorated them, and the approaches to these vessels employed by current and past scholars

*Crosslisted as: ARTH-290VA**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities**C. Baker*

CLASS-242 Sicily: Crossroads of the Mediterranean*Spring. Credits: 4*

Its long history as the locus of collisions among cultures – Greek, Roman, Arab, Norman, Spanish, and (northern) Italian – has earned Sicily a special place in Mediterranean studies. One product of these clashes is that for millennia Sicilians have confronted questions of identity. More recently, because of immigration waves from North Africa, Sicily is once again at the center of the Mediterranean cultural debate. This course will cover almost three thousand years of Sicilian life, as we explore the role of material culture and literature in shaping Sicilian identities. Readings (with related films) may include selections from such authors as Virgil, and Ovid; Ibn Hawkal and Al-Idrisi; Lampedusa, Pirandello, Giordana, and Maraini.

*Crosslisted as: ITAL-242**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities**P. Debnar, O. Frau**Notes: Taught in English***CLASS-253 The Spartans: Myth and History***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

In contrast to democratic Athens, oligarchic Sparta was renowned for its secrecy and skillful use of propaganda. Thus, it presents difficult challenges for historical study. In this course we will try to peer behind the "Spartan mirage" to determine how much the Spartans really differed from other ancient Greeks. We will then try to understand the use of Spartans as models for later polities and for groups like the Nazis and Alt-right. Topics: government, education, and citizenship; the role of women, eugenics, and slavery; the use and misuse of the image of Sparta. Readings will include Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Plutarch, and modern scholarship on specific topics.

*Crosslisted as: HIST-253SP**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities**P. Debnar**Notes: With permission of the instructor, this course may be taken by juniors and seniors for 300-level credit in Classics.***CLASS-260 Knowing God***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

This course examines the following key texts from the ancient world that treat significantly the problem of knowing God and the mystery enveloping such knowledge: Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, Plato's *Phaedo*, Cicero's *Concerning the Nature of the Gods*, Job, Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*, and others. Attention is also given to the different ways of thinking about the divine and human natures in these works, which are broadly reflective of Graeco-Roman and Judaeo-Christian value systems.

*Crosslisted as: RELIG-225KG**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities**B. Arnold***CLASS-262 Kingdoms Human and Divine***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

How political authority is wielded is a theme of some of the greatest works in the Greco-Roman philosophical tradition: Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Politics*, and Augustine's *City of God*. Authority exercised well gives rise to good order and human flourishing, but abusive authority results in the opposite: injustice, conflict, and ultimately destructive violence. In this course we will compare how these philosophers addressed the problem of political authority in the human realm with the theme of the kingdom of God in the Bible, especially as found in *The Gospel of Matthew* and *The Book of Revelation*.

*Crosslisted as: RELIG-225KH**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities**B. Arnold***CLASS-295 Independent Study***Fall and Spring. Credits: 1 - 4**The department**Instructor permission required.***CLASS-395 Independent Study***Fall and Spring. Credits: 1 - 8**The department**Instructor permission required.*

Courses in Other Departments Counting toward the Major and Minor in Classics

Code	Title	Credits
Art History		
ARTH-290RA	Issues in Art History: 'Roman Art and Archaeology'	4
ARTH-290VA	Issues in Art History: 'Ancient Greek Vases and Vase Painting'	4
Classics		
CLASS-205	Cleopatra: The Not Humble Woman	4
CLASS-211	Gods and Mortals: Ancient Greek and Roman Myth	4
CLASS-212	Greek Tragedy, American Drama, and Film	4
CLASS-226	Bread and Circuses: The Politics of Public Entertainment in Ancient Rome	4
CLASS-227	Ancient Greece	4
CLASS-228	Ancient Rome	4
CLASS-229	The Tyrant and Gladiator: Bad Roman Emperors from Caligula to Commodus	4
CLASS-239HE	Topics in Classics: 'The Hellenistic World from Alexander to Cleopatra'	4
CLASS-239RA	Topics in Classics: 'Roman Art and Archaeology'	4
CLASS-239VA	Topics in Classics: 'Ancient Greek Vases and Vase Painting'	4
CLASS-242	Sicily: Crossroads of the Mediterranean	4
CLASS-253	The Spartans: Myth and History	4
CLASS-260	Knowing God	4
CLASS-262	Kingdoms Human and Divine	4
CLASS-295	Independent Study	1-4
CLASS-395	Independent Study	1-8
Greek		
GREEK-101	Elementary Greek: Homer's <i>Iliad</i>	4
GREEK-102	Elementary Greek: Homer's <i>Iliad</i>	4
GREEK-250	Intermediate Greek Tutorial	2-4
GREEK-350	Advanced Greek Tutorial	2-4
History		
HIST-226	Bread and Circuses: The Politics of Public Entertainment in Ancient Rome	4
HIST-227	Ancient Greece	4
HIST-228	Ancient Rome	4
HIST-229	The Tyrant and the Gladiator: Bad Roman Emperors from Caligula to Commodus	4
HIST-253HE	Topics in History: 'The Hellenistic World from Alexander to Cleopatra'	4
HIST-253SP	Topics in History: 'The Spartans: Myth and History'	4
Latin		
LATIN-101	Elementary Latin I	4

LATIN-102	Elementary Latin II	4
LATIN-201	Intermediate Latin I	4
LATIN-202	Cicero and the Enemies of the Roman Republic	4
LATIN-209	Vergil: <i>Aeneid</i>	4
LATIN-213	Myth, Memory, and History: Writing the Past in the Roman Republic	4
LATIN-302	Cicero and the Enemies of the Roman Republic	4
LATIN-307	The Slender Muse	4
LATIN-309	Vergil: <i>Aeneid</i>	4
LATIN-310	Ovid: <i>Metamorphoses</i>	4
LATIN-313	Myth, Memory, and History: Writing the Past in the Roman Republic	4
Philosophy		
PHIL-201	Philosophical Foundations of Western Thought: The Greek Period	4
Religion		
RELIG-225KG	Topics in Religion: 'Knowing God'	4
RELIG-225KH	Topics in Religion: 'Kingdoms Human and Divine'	4