

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

Geoff Sumi, Chair

Denise Falk, Academic Department Coordinator

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<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/classics> (<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/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

Bruce Arnold, Associate Professor of Classics

Martino Lovato, Visiting Lecturer in Classics and Italian

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 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 Ms. Lawrence 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/acad/teach/>).

Course Offerings**CLASS-205 Cleopatra: The Not Humble Woman***Fall. 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***Spring. 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***Not Scheduled for This Year. 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 redemption, 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***Fall. 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**P. Debnar***CLASS-228 Ancient Rome***Spring. 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-230 The City of Rome From Romulus to Constantine***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

A detailed survey of the archaeology of the city of Rome from its origin in the early Iron Age to the beginning of the fourth century CE. The principal monuments and architectural development of the ancient city will be discussed against a broader cultural and historical background, with an emphasis on the powerful families and individuals responsible for the shaping of the urban landscape, and the specific social and political circumstances that gave the monuments meaning.

*Crosslisted as: ARTH-290CR**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities**The department**Restrictions: Course limited to sophomores, juniors and seniors***CLASS-232 War and Imperialism in the Ancient World***Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Ancient Greeks and Romans viewed warfare as an abiding part of the human condition. The literature and artwork of the ancient world are filled with images of the two faces of war: it conferred great glory on the combatants but at the cost of tremendous horror and suffering. In this course we will examine warfare from archaic Greece and the rise of the city-state (ca. 800 B.C.E.) to the fall of the Roman Empire in the west (ca. 476 C.E.). We will consider such topics as the culture and ethics of war and imperialism, logistics and strategies of warfare, as well as armor, weaponry and battlefield tactics.

*Crosslisted as: HIST-216**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities**G. Sumi***CLASS-239 Topics in Classics****CLASS-239AC Topics in Classics: 'Development of Ancient Cities'***Spring. Credits: 4*

The world's first large, vibrant, and developed cities arose in antiquity, fundamentally changing the lives of those who inhabited these ancient urban centers. Cities became places not only with large populations, but also economic and religious centers, venues in which the powerful could communicate their authority, and loci of social change. This course provides an introduction to the urban centers of the ancient Middle East, Egypt, and Mediterranean and also interrogates processes of urbanization and how urbanization-affected residents of ancient cities. The city will be the lens through which we will investigate ancient politics, religion, social organizations, and cultures. We will study cities as dynamic environments, as places that were constructed by people but that also influenced the people inhabiting them. To accomplish these goals, we will make extensive use of archaeological evidence and will closely examine the public spaces, religious structures, houses, and infrastructures constructed in ancient cities. This course will begin with some of the earliest cities on earth, in Mesopotamia and Egypt, then will progress to cities of the Greco-Roman Mediterranean, and will culminate with the creation of Christian cities in late antiquity.

*Crosslisted as: ARTH-290AC**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities**K. Kriendler**Restrictions: Course limited to sophomores, juniors and seniors***CLASS-239QU Topics in Classics: 'Arts and Cultures Across Antiquity'***Spring. Credits: 4*

Ancient peoples produced some of the most striking and significant works of art known to man, architecture like the Great Pyramids at Giza, sculpture like the Aphrodite of Knidos and the Prima Porta of Augustus, and literature like *The Iliad* and *The Book of Songs*. We will examine materials that span the Neolithic Period to roughly 400 CE, approximately when three great empires, the Roman, the Gupta, and the Han, came to an end. We will cover a broad geographic area, including the Middle East, Egypt, Greece, Rome, India, and China. Our goal will not simply be to gain an appreciation for the aesthetic and technical excellence of works of art, but we will contextualize, analyze, and interrogate them to better understand the peoples who produced them, along with their institutions, cultures, and lived experiences.

*Crosslisted as: ARTH-290QU**Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives**K. Kriendler**Restrictions: Course limited to sophomores, juniors and seniors*

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

Spring. 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-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-290AC	Issues in Art History: 'Development of Ancient Cities'	4
ARTH-290CM	Issues in Art History: 'Classical Myth in Ancient Art'	4
ARTH-290CR	Issues in Art History: 'The City of Rome From Romulus to Constantine'	4
ARTH-290NE	Issues in Art History: 'Nature and Environment in the Ancient World'	4
ARTH-290PM	Issues in Art History: 'Pompeii'	4
ARTH-290QU	Issues in Art History: 'Arts and Cultures Across Antiquity'	4
ARTH-310BA	Seminar in Ancient Art: 'The Body in Classical Art'	4
ARTH-310CA	Seminar in Ancient Art: 'Collecting Global Antiquity'	4
ARTH-310GA	Seminar in Ancient Art: 'Designing a Global Gallery of Ancient Art'	4

ARTH-310LM	Seminar in Ancient Art: 'Love and Metamorphosis: Storytelling in Greek and Roman Art'	4
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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-230	The City of Rome From Romulus to Constantine	4
CLASS-232	War and Imperialism in the Ancient World	4
CLASS-239AC	Topics in Classics: 'Development of Ancient Cities'	4
CLASS-239QU	Topics in Classics: 'Arts and Cultures Across Antiquity'	4
CLASS-253	The Spartans: Myth and History	4
CLASS-260	Knowing God	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-216	War and Imperialism in the Ancient World	4
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-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-209	Vergil: <i>Aeneid</i>	4
LATIN-212	Roma Ludens: Comedy and Satire in Ancient Rome	4
LATIN-213	Myth, Memory, and History: Writing the Past in the Roman Republic	4
LATIN-250	Intermediate Latin Tutorial	2-4
LATIN-307	The Slender Muse	4
LATIN-309	Vergil: <i>Aeneid</i>	4
LATIN-310	Ovid: <i>Metamorphoses</i>	4
LATIN-312	Roma Ludens: Comedy and Satire in Ancient Rome	4
LATIN-313	Myth, Memory, and History: Writing the Past in the Roman Republic	4
LATIN-323	Petronius' Satyricon and the Roman Novel	4
Philosophy		
PHIL-201	Philosophical Foundations of Western Thought: The Greek Period	4

Religion

RELIG-225KG Topics in Religion: 'Knowing God' 4