Classics

The major and minor in classics is administered by the Department of Classics and Italian: Professors Debnar (on leave Spring 2016), Sumi; Associate Professor Arnold.

Overview

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 (c. 476 CE). 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.

The department offers courses in ancient Greek and Latin at all levels (for Sanskrit, see Asian Studies), as well as a wide array of courses (in English) approaching the culture and history of Greek and Roman antiquity from a variety of perspectives. Majors have the opportunity to spend part or all of their junior years abroad (e.g., in Rome, Athens, or Great Britain).

The department offers four majors. The classics major is a 40-credit major combining the study of both ancient Greek and Latin with a variety of courses in ancient history, art, philosophy, politics, or religion. Students who declare a classics major automatically fulfill the College’s “outside the major” requirement.

Students may also major in Greek or in Latin or in ancient studies.

Contact Info

Kristin McMillan, senior administrative assistant
Geoffrey Sumi, professor of Classics

Requirements for the Major

Credits

- A minimum of 40 credits, including:
  - At least 8 total credits in each language at the 200 level or above.
  - At least 20 credits at the 300 level, 12 of which must be in Latin or Greek.
  - After consulting with her 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 normally do not count toward the major; however, in the case of second (or third) languages, 8 credits of Greek, Latin, or Sanskrit at the 100 level may count toward the major.

Students anticipating graduate work in classics should begin the study of both Greek and Latin as soon as possible.

Requirements for the Minor

Credits

- A minimum of 16 credits in the ancient languages, including at least 4 at the 300 level
- The 16 credits must include courses in both languages; 4 credits at the 100 level in the second language may count toward the minor.

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. For information about the requirements for the minor in education, please consult “Teacher Licensure” in the Other Degree and Certificate Programs chapter and 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. Licensure application information and materials are available in the Department of Psychology and Education.

Study Abroad

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

Course Offerings

CLASS-205 Cleopatra: “The Not Humble Woman”

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
B. Arnold

Notes: Taught in English
Credits: 4

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

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
P. Debnar

Advisory: Most seats will be reserved for first-years and sophomores
Notes: Taught in English. Optional screenings of films related to ancient myth.
Credits: 4
CLASS-212 Greek Tragedy, American Drama, and Film
Not Scheduled for This Year
This course examines the critical influence of the three most important Athenian dramatists, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, on the works of modern dramatists and filmmakers, including Eugene O’Neill, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Roman Polanski, Woody Allen, Ridley Scott, Jules Dassin, Theodoros Angelopoulos, and others. Attention is given to the different concepts of tragedy underlying the genre, such as the tragedy of self-knowledge and illusion, the tragedy of desire, the tragedy of sin and redemption, and tragedy as protest against social injustice.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
B. Arnold
Notes: Taught in English. 2 meetings (75 minutes) plus 1 screening
Credits: 4

CLASS-225 Athenian Democracy and Its Foes
Spring
Democracy first took root in Athens in the late sixth century BCE and flourished, with only brief interruptions, until the city came under the power of Macedon in the latter part of the fourth century BCE. This course will trace the development of Athenian democracy and examine such topics as citizenship; the role of women, the family, and non-citizens in Athens; the legal system; education; and public entertainment. It will also compare democratic Athens with Sparta, its antithesis in the classical period. Sources will include Herodotus, Thucydides, Aristophanes, Plato, Aristotle, Demosthenes, and others.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
P. Debnar
Credits: 4

CLASS-228 Ancient Rome
Fall
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: History 228
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
G. Sumi
Credits: 4

CLASS-260 Knowing God
Spring
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 Judaico-Christian value systems.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
B. Arnold
Credits: 4

CLASS-295 Independent Study
Fall and Spring
The department
Instructor permission required.
Credits: 1-8
Course can be repeated for credit.

CLASS-329 Politics and Greek Tragedy
Not Scheduled for This Year
Students in this course will explore ancient Greek tragedy as a way of thinking through such central problems of political life as freedom, identity, responsibility, and justice. The course will place the ancient texts in their particular historical context, while also attending to the material as a springboard for confronting contemporary political questions. The course will also address the broader implications of turning to ancient material and to literature as sources for political theorizing.
Crosslisted as: Politics 329
Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences
E. Markovits
Prereq: 8 credits in Politics or Classics.
Credits: 4

CLASS-349 Socrates Against the Sophists
Not Scheduled for This Year
In a number of Plato’s dialogues we find the character Socrates debating various sophists— itinerant teachers-for-hire whose views were often diametrically opposed to Socrates’ own. This seminar is structured around a close, careful reading of three such dialogues: the Euthydemus, the Protagoras, and the Gorgias. These dialogues will offer a general introduction to Socratic philosophy, but we will also focus on a few issues in much greater detail. Chief among those special topics will be questions about the nature and value of moral knowledge, the possibility of moral education, and the efficacy of the Socratic method of inquiry.
Crosslisted as: Philosophy 350NT
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
D. Hagen
Prereq: 8 credits in Philosophy or Classics (or in a combination of Philosophy and Classics).
Credits: 4

CLASS-395 Independent Study
Fall and Spring
The department
Instructor permission required.
Credits: 1-8
Course can be repeated for credit.

See Also
- Ancient Studies
- Greek
- Latin