SYLLABUS FOR CLASSICS 120 (#20689)
ENGLISH WORDS FROM LATIN & GREEK

Fall 2010 Semester, San Diego State University
Brett Robbins, PhD., Department of Classics & Humanities
Class Hours: T 4-6:40 PM, Classroom: AH-3113
Office Hours (AL-669): T & Th, 3-4 PM (or by appointment)
Phone: 619-594-5186, E-Mail: brett@brettrobbins.com

1) COURSE DESCRIPTION

If you wish to increase your English vocabulary, you're in the right place. Since nearly 80% of the words we use are derived from Latin and Greek elements (prefixes, suffixes, and roots), there is no better way to compile a workable vocabulary than to learn these elements, for they enable us not only to improve our ability to understand what we read but also to express ourselves well through speaking and writing.

In this course, however, we're going to do more than merely memorize long lists of words, which results in our retaining a relatively small percentage of the words we've acquired in this manner. Rather, we're going to approach vocabulary acquisition from the ground up, learning building-blocks that enable us to "recognize" words we may never have encountered before. Once we've acquired a sufficient store of such building-blocks, it's amazing how many words we realize we already know before even knowing them yet!

But acquiring word-forms can be a tedious process if approached haphazardly, by merely memorizing long lists of roots. Thus, in this course we will adopt a thematic approach to learning word-roots, breaking them down into real-world categories to understand them better (Physical World, Mental World, Number, Actions, and Qualities). This adds a kind of narrative dimension to our etymological project, so that the roots (and, by extension, the words built from the roots) we learn over the course of the semester will arise in logical fashion, and by the end of the course our newly acquired inventory of word-roots will read like a kind of story we've understood and lived. Who said learning vocabulary can't be fun?

2) INTERNET COMPONENT

We'll be making frequent use of the Internet, and in particular Blackboard and e-mail, to carry out various activities necessary for conducting this course. For that reason, to participate in it you must have access to the Internet (either on- or off-campus) and must check your e-mail at least once a day (in case I make changes or clarifications or the like) and your Blackboard account at least a few times a week or whenever an e-mail message I send you urges you to log onto it (for more on the integral role Blackboard will play in this course, see ASSIGNMENTS below). Then again, these days isn't requiring you to have regular Internet access like requiring you to breathe?

"This course is one of nine courses that you will take in General Education Foundations. Foundations courses cultivate skills in reading, writing, research, communication, computation, information literacy, and use of technology. They furthermore introduce you to basic concepts, theories and approaches in a variety of disciplines in order to provide the intellectual breadth necessary to help you integrate the more specialized knowledge gathered in your major area of study into a broader world picture."

H1-H4: "This course is one of four Foundations courses that you will take in the area of Humanities and Fine Arts. Upon completing of this area of Foundations, you will be able to:
1) analyze written, visual, or performed texts in the humanities and fine arts with sensitivity to their diverse cultural contexts and historical moments;
2) describe various aesthetic and other value systems and the ways they are communicated across time and cultures;
3) identify issues in the humanities that have personal and global relevance;
4) demonstrate the ability to approach complex problems and ask complex questions drawing upon knowledge of the humanities."
3) OBJECTIVES FOR THIS COURSE

You will acquire a knowledge of 1) the most essential word-forms from ancient Greek and Latin, 2) hundreds of English words derived from these ancient Greek and Latin word-forms, and 3) the conceptual processes through which these word-forms were utilized to construct the English words built from them. On the two exams and five quizzes administered during the semester, you will be expected to provide, with a high rate of accuracy, the definitions of the English words encountered in classroom lectures and discussions as well as the meanings of the word-forms they were built from.

4) CLASS FORMAT

We'll rely on both lectures (Powerpoint and old school) and classroom discussions to come to terms with the English words, and the Latin and Greek components they're built from, that we learn in class. I expect you to come to class prepared, which means you've compiled the portion of your notebook pertaining to the previous week's lesson and reviewed it BEFORE YOU COME TO CLASS (see item 2 under section 6 [ASSIGNMENTS/GRADING] below for information about this notebook you'll be keeping throughout the semester and handing in at the end of it).

5) REQUIRED READING

Although I welcome and encourage as much outside reading as you'd like to do to help you learn the material we cover in class and in our readings (for example, Wikipedia tends to do a pretty good job of providing you with background information about the figures and events we'll be encountering in our readings), the only reading you will be expected to do before attending class each week is to review the portion of your class notebook you prepared from the week before so you're equipped to do well should there be a quiz on the day in question (see item 2 under the "ASSIGNMENTS/GRADING" section below), as well as to retain the material for the next exam and to consolidate what you learn in class so it remains with you once the semester is over. As you'll see in the next section ("ASSIGNMENTS/GRADING"), you'll be compiling this notebook and will hand it in for credit at the end of the semester. So think of it as a kind of reverse textbook, a textbook you yourself will create and, hopefully, take with you into your post-college life and add to when you find new words you want to add to it. This is the sort of organic, homemade textbook most appropriate for a class of this sort, and I hope you'll take pride in it and see the point in creating it as you fill it up with the hundreds of word-forms and words you'll be adding to it over the course of the semester. If you must be absent on a given day, have a friend take notes for you: although I will post on Blackboard each week a list of the word-forms and words we covered in the previous week, it will be less comprehensive than the lecture it corresponds to and the class discussion about the various topics we discussed.

6) ASSIGNMENTS/GRADING

Your grade for this course will be based primarily on your ability to demonstrate a mastery of objective information you've acquired from the lectures you've attended and discussions you've participated in throughout the semester. Due to the relatively small size of our class, we will have occasion to discuss many of the word-forms, words, and corresponding concepts that we'll be covering in class, for it's through experience with words rather than merely memorizing lists that we retain the words in our memory-bank for longer than the semester they're learned in. To reflect the priority I give to this sort of class experience, 10% of your grade will consist of participation, as is normally the case in language courses. If you're planning on getting by in this course without attending class, let me assure you from the outset that it's highly unlikely you'll do very well, due to this participation component as well as the fact that if you don't come to class you'll have to depend on nothing more than lists of words to study from, which is much more difficult than relying on the lists to remind you of words you've already encountered in class, often quite extensively. Fair warning.
Here’s the breakdown:

1) 2 non-cumulative exams (including the Final) each worth 25% of your total grade and requiring both passive and active recall of the vocabulary you’ve learned in class in the following manner:

Passive: I provide you with a sentence containing a vocabulary word and ask you to a) define the word ("dictionary meaning"), b) break it down into its etymological elements, 3) define its etymological elements, and 4) explain how its etymological elements give it its meaning.

Active: I provide you with a sentence missing one specific word and you produce it. I provide you with the word's etymology (i.e., affix(es] and root(s]) and you recall the word via its etymology.

2) You’ll keep a notebook throughout the semester which you’ll bring to class EACH DAY and use to a) record ALL of the word-elements and words we learn in class, and (more importantly for your grade) b) construct a sentence using twenty of the words we learn in class each week (you may want to do three sentences a day, to spread out your work-load), so that by the end of the semester you will have constructed 260 sentences in this manner (there are 15 class-sessions in the semester, minus the first day of class and the day of the midterm, leaving 13 days x 20 sentences a day = 260 sentences). This notebook, which must be in hardcopy (i.e., not on disk or hard-drive or Blackboard, etc.) and which you will hand in on December 7 (NOT on December 12, the day of the Final Exam), will be worth another 15% of your total course grade.

3) 25% of your grade will consist of weekly quizzes, which will include five questions each, requiring passive and/or active recall of the previous week’s information. The format will be similar to that found on the exams (see item 1 above)

4) Last but not least, the remaining 10% of your grade will consist of participation, the effort you put into contributing to class, especially in discussions about how words mean what they do based on their etymological components (which usually involves some degree of subjectivity). I don't normally include participation in my grading, but this course (and language courses in general) cries out for it, for it's primarily by using the words we learn in class that our experience with them translates into the sort of understanding of them that leads us to retain them, not just for the semester in question, but for the rest of our lives as English readers, speakers, and writers. Word to the wise: this does not mean that the more you talk in class, the better your participation grade will be: quality will be more important than quantity in this respect. But rest assured: if you come to class regularly and contribute regularly to our discussions about the word-elements and words we learn, you should receive an easy "A" on this portion of your course grade.

So there it is: that makes 100%. Obviously (and predictably) the exams will weigh most heavily in your final grade, but by doing well in the other areas of the course you'll compensate for weaknesses on one or more exams. But keep in mind: the ultimate goal here is to learn; think of doing well on the exams and in other course assignments, not as your main motivation for doing well in class, but as a reward for doing well, as icing on the cake. It's the doing well itself that will benefit you in more than a grade-getting way: it will be reflected in your improved vocabulary and understanding of how words mean what they do that will, if you apply yourself in class, remain with you for the rest of your life!

And now, onto the CLASS SCHEDULE...
7) CLASS SCHEDULE

Tuesday, August 31

4-5:15 PM: Intro to the course; the value of etymology, etc.

Tuesday, September 7

LESSON ONE: Prefixes and Suffixes (don't panic: you already know most if not all of them)

re, un, trans/tran, in/im, en/em, ad, il/ir, di, in/im, ex/e, dis, non, ad/abs, be, con, pro, ante, de, circ/circum, bi/bin/bis, inter, an, anti/ant, apo, per, pre, peri, super/supr, para, amb/ambi, sub, post, mon/mono, mal, hypo, sys/syl/sym/syn, ana, epi, se, cata, hemi/demi/semi, sur, intro, amphi, eu, ob, intra, macro, pseudo, ultra, dia, dyn/dynamo, hyper, sesqui

y, ar/er/or, less, ly, ness, ful, an/ian, able/ible, ite, al, en, ion/sion/tion, ic, age, ment, ary/ery/ory, ate, ity/ty, ous, ship, ance/ancy, ence/ency, ize, ad/ade, tude, ive,icle/icle/ling, ure, ish, dom, cian, ist, ile, cide, oid, ism, fy, ee, ine, osis/esis/asis, ology

Tuesday, September 14

LESSON TWO: Roots

A) Physical World

the/theo GOD
hum EARTH
germ SEED

B) Mental World

vis/vid SEE
chrom COLOR
spec/spect/spectro WATCH

C) Numbers

number/numer NUMBER
meter MEASURE
chron TIME

D) Actions

Cub/cumb LIE
Sta/stit/sist/stet STAND
Sume/sump TAKE

E) Qualities

rect/recti STRAIGHT
mis/miso HATE
force/fort STRONG

---

1 I reserve the right to change anything in this schedule—or, for that matter, in this syllabus as a whole—during the semester for whatever reason. If I do so, I'll be sure to inform you of it via e-mail, Blackboard announcement, and in class at least twice, so you can make the appropriate changes to this syllabus.
Tuesday, September 21

LEsson Three: Roots

A) Physical World
nasc, nat BIRTH
bio LIFE
viv vivi vita LIFE
vic vicis CHANGE
B) Mental World
scope WATCH
aud,aus HEAR
tact tang tig tag ting TOUCH
C) Numbers
tempo tempor TIME
anni, annu, enni YEAR
D) Actions
fer BEAR
ten, tent, tain, tinu HOLD
port CARRY
E) Qualities
fortuna CHANCE
mal BAD
grav gravi gravito HEAVY

Tuesday, September 28

LEsson Four: roots

A) Physical World
ge geo EARTH
loc loco PLACE
silic FLINT
coni koni DUST
B) Mental World
put THINK
intellect intellig POWER TO KNOW AND THINK
mem REMEMBER
C) Numbers
portion PART, SHARE
plu plur plus MORE
D) Actions
gest CARRY
cap, cep, cept TAKE
hab habit HAVE
E) Qualities
ali allo alter OTHER
simil simul LIKE, RESEMBLING
acer acid acri BITTER, SOUR, SHARP
Tuesday, October 5

LESSON FIVE: roots

A) Physical World
    fila fili THREAD
    helio SUN
    vulcan vulcan FIRE
    fumi SMOKE
B) Mental World
    roga rog ASK,BEG
    gnos,cognosc KNOW
    test TO BEAR WITNESS
C) Numbers
    hemi demi semi HALF
    medi HALF,MIDDLE,BETWEEN,HALF-WAY
D) Actions
    pos pon pound PUT
    fac, fact, fic, fect MAKE
    fix FIX
E) Qualities
    micro SMALL,MINUTE
    stereo SOLID
    liber liver FREE

Tuesday, October 12

LESSON SIX: roots

A) Physical World
    calor HEAT
    luc lum lun lus LIGHT
    photo LIGHT
    aster astro STAR
B) Mental World
    cred BELIEVE
    phil phila philo philic LOVE
    ridi risi ri LAUGH
C) Numbers
    uni ONE
    mon mono ONE
D) Actions
    junct join JOIN
    pend pen HANG
    mob mot mov MOVE
E) Qualities
    cycl cyclo WHEEL,CIRCLE,CIRCULAR
    eu PLEASANT,WELL,GOOD
    ver veri TRUE, GENUINE
LESSON SEVEN:

A) Physical World
   mar mari mer SEA
   hydro hydra hydr WATER
   anthrop HUMAN
   corpor corp BODY
B) Mental World
   feder,fide,fid,feal FAITH
   soph WISDOM
   cause cuse CAUSE
C) Numbers
   prim prime FIRST
   aut aut SELF
D) Actions
   pel puls PUSH
   jac jec ject THROW
   tract trah PULL
E) Qualities
   bene bon WELL,GOOD
   grat PLEASING
   nov NEW

Tuesday, October 19

MIDTERM EXAM

Tuesday, October 26

LESSON EIGHT:

A) Physical World
   capit,capt HEAD
   cor, cour, cord HEART
   voc vok VOICE
   dent,dont TOOTH
B) Mental World
   claim,clam DECLARE,CALL OUT,CRY OUT
   dic dict SAY,DECLARE
   loqui loc SPEAK
C) Numbers
   sesqui ONE AND A HALF
   bi bin bis TWO,TWICE
D) Actions
   flect,flex BEND
   tend tens tent STRETCH
   vers vert TURN
E) Qualities
   pac plais PLEASE (PEACE)
   vale vali valu STRENGTH,WORTH,VALOR
   sat satis ENOUGH

Tuesday, November 2:
Tuesday, November 9:

LESSON NINE: roots

A) Physical World
man, mana HAND
oss osteo BONE
hema hemo BLOOD
sanguis BLOOD
B) Mental World
logo log WORD
punct POINT
monstr monstri SHOW
nunc nounc DECLARE, WARN
C) Numbers
amphi TWO, BOTH
poly MANY
D) Actions
trib DRIVE
cise CUT
cide KILL
E) Qualities
vac EMPTY
macro LARGE, EXCESSIVE
magna magni GREAT

Tuesday, November 16:

LESSON TEN: roots

A) Physical World
neur NERVE
pneumon pneumon LUNG
ped pod FOOT
matri matric matro MOTHER
B) Mental World
tui tuit tut GUARD, TEACH
spond spons PLEDGE, ANSWER
crea CREATE
pict picto PAINT
C) Numbers
multus, multi MANY, MUCH
omni ALL
D) Actions
stru struct BUILD
claud, clus SHUT
agio ago ag LEAD
E) Qualities
mega megalo LARGE
pseudo FALSE, UNTRUE
LESSON ELEVEN: roots
A) Physical World
   pater patr FATHER
   pop PEOPLE
   dem demo PEOPLE
B) Mental World
   sign signi SIGN, MARK, SEAL
   graph WRITE
   scrib scrip WRITE
   litera liter lit letter LETTERS
C) Numbers
   pan ALL
D) Actions
   duc duce duct LEAD
   vinc, vict CONQUER
   mitt miss SEND
E) Qualities
   sphere BALL, SPHERE

Tuesday, November 30:

LESSON TWELVE:
A) Physical World
   gen RACE
   greg CROWD
   civ CITY
B) Mental World
   opus, oper WORK
   techni techny technic SKILL, ART
   arch RULE
   poten potes posse POWER
C) Numbers
   ultima LAST
D) Actions
   grad gred gress STEP
   cede cceed cess GO
   fluc flu fluv flux FLOW
   migra WANDER
E) Qualities
   dyn dynamo POWER
Tuesday, December 7

LESSON THIRTEEN: roots

A) Physical World
dorm SLEEP
hypn hypno SLEEP
mors mori mort DEATH
B) Mental World
leg LAW
jus jur RIGHT
jud judi judic JUDGE, LAWYER
lic, licit ALLOW
C) Numbers
fin finis END
D) Actions
drome dromos RUN
ven veni vent COME
lav lut laut lot WASH
vest CLOTHE
E) Qualities
neo NEW, RECENT

Tuesday, December 14

4-6 pm: Final Exam (in AH-3113)