Classics 101L: Introductory Latin

Texts


Course Description

Classics 101L is an introduction to Latin for the student with either general or specific motivations for studying this amazing ancient language. I assume no previous experience with an ancient language on the part of the student. And I do not assume that any experience you’ve had with modern languages predicts or foreshadows your experience with an ancient language. So, nothing will be taken for granted; everything will be explained. My goal is to offer any and all students the chance to succeed in the overarching objective in Latin: to transform you into a competent, confident, independent reader, first, of the simple Latin sentence (CLAS 101L), then of the complex Latin sentence (CLAS 202L), and finally of Latin literature (CLAS 303L and beyond).

A packaged textbook/workbook combination, available at Aztec Shops and through on-line retailers (links at Bb), will keep us busy the whole year (101L and 202L). Your nightly reading and writing assignments will come from this primer.

Objectives for 101L

The course objectives of the first semester are twofold: 1) to master the basic morphology of nouns, adjectives, and verbs, and 2) to become acquainted with syntax of the simple Latin sentence. The emphasis of the course is decidedly on the art of reading Latin. All skills are subordinate to that overarching syntactic objective. A student who passes this course will be able to move on to second semester Latin where we will spend the semester on topics related to the complex sentence. Along the way, we shall get to know someone named Cicero.

On the final for this course, you will demonstrate four skills which reflect mastery of the course objectives: 1) you will be able to write out the complete declensions of nouns (of the first three declensions) matched together with complex adjectives (such as demonstratives), 2) you will be able to write out the active voice of verbs of the four main conjugations in six tenses of the indicative, 3) you will be able to translate prepared passages of Latin with fluidity and precision of English expression, and 4) you will be able to parse the most common uses of six Latin cases for simple sentences. (Though it is not a course objective, by the end of the semester you will be able to define the key concepts mentioned in this paragraph and this of itself likely signals your readiness for second semester Latin.)

Methods, Measures, and Expectations

The course (like Latin itself and all languages for that matter) is a closed system of communication: you’ve got to learn Latin from someone who knows Latin. Paradoxically, you can’t learn to read Latin from *Learn to Read Latin* unless someone who knows how to read Latin is showing you how to read *Learn to Read Latin*. Paradoxically, you aren’t coming to class every day to learn to read Latin. (If that were really possible, you could just read *Learn to Read Latin.* ) Rather, you are coming to class every day to learn how to learn to read Latin. That’s a strange consequence of a “language” that only exists as a
literary relic.

And so...

Class attendance is essential; class attendance entails preparation for class; preparation for class entails coming to class to find out what and how to prepare. That’s how you stay in the loop, the closed system of communication. Don’t get stuck outside that loop.

Legal pads are indispensable for class and home work: most of our memorization, practice, and comprehension exercises will involve much table and chart writing. And the tables and charts tend to get long—as in legal pad long.

I’ll inundate you with handouts of great variety: a binder to organize paperwork will do you no harm.

Tests will be given on Mondays (about every two weeks) to give you maximum opportunity to review and revise assignments in manageable chunks. There are a variety of ways in which I can and do regularly check the quality of your nightly studies. Because of the nature of our daily work and the frequency of tests, there will be no midterm exam, and even the final will emphasize only the material from the very end of the semester (which, in a language class, makes it effectively comprehensive).

**Grading**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homework assignments, quizzes</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tests (6 hourly exams)</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Final Schedule**

(9:00am section): Wednesday, 17 December, 8:00-10:00  
(11:00am section): Monday, 15 December, 10:30-12:30

**Intellectual Properties**

All regular course work—graded assignments, quizzes, tests—will be handed back to you in class. I will return finals to you in the spring semester. Any unclaimed work will be discarded at the end of the academic year. I post your scores at Blackboard and make them available to you so that you can alert me to any miss-entered raw numbers. While it keeps accurate track of your raw scores, Blackboard does not weight your grade properly and, more often than not, does not accurately show your grade in the class (and usually keeps you under the impression that you are doing miserably).

Ask my permission to record the class; ask my permission to bring guests to the class. I reserve ownership of the class and the specific right to monitor and adjust course content to aide student progress toward becoming a Latinist.

You will notice immediately in this schematic that the study of an ancient language requires a monumental localization of material. Not pictured, though space has been provided, are the requisite carbohydrate rich brain foods (such as Smarties, Jolly Ranchers or black licorice Nubs) to revive flagging gray matter. The caffeine delivery system pictured here is intended for sinister manipulation and not recommended for the dexterously inclined.