Classics at Cambridge: Steps towards Greek and Latin
Free taster day

If before applying to university you would like to try your hand at learning Latin and studying the ancient Greeks and Romans, then sign up for our ...

CLASSICS TASTER DAY

on Saturday 22 June 2013.

The programme will include three Latin classes and two lectures by lecturers at the University of Cambridge.

Financial assistance with the cost of travel is available on a first come, first served basis.

For further details, see www.classics.cam.ac.uk/4year
At Cambridge, Classics is the degree that allows you to study the languages and cultures of the Ancient Greeks and Romans. It brings together the study of language, linguistics, literature, history, philosophy, art and archaeology.

Cambridge has some of the most committed teachers in the world. All believe strongly that the study of the ancient world is both fascinating in itself and provides knowledge and skills of life-long relevance for their students.

We shall come to the details of the course later, but, first, why might it be for you?

Dr Christopher Whitton teaching on the Faculty lawn
The Faculty of Classics at Cambridge wants the most intelligent and motivated applicants for its courses, whatever their background. Of course, entry to any top university is competitive, and we do not have the space to take all the students we should like to have. But if you have the drive and ability to make the most of our courses and to hold your own with other top students in the country, then we shall do our best to find a place for you.

You do not need to have studied Latin or Ancient Greek at school to study Classics at University. Cambridge has a four-year course in which you study both Greek and Latin from scratch. We enable those on this course to get beyond ‘A’ level standard in Latin by the end of their first year, and beyond ‘A’ level standard in Greek by the end of their second year. These students can then compete on level terms with those who have studied Latin to ‘A’ level at school (such students are eligible only for a three-year course). For more information on applications, see www.cam.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/apply/
Q: How do I know if I am good with languages?

A: If your school teaches French or Spanish or Italian or German, you may have studied one of these subjects already and know that you are good at languages. But if you have not had the chance to study any languages, or if you are uncertain about whether you will take to Latin, why not sign up for our taster day, on which we invite those interested to Cambridge? For more details see page 2 of this brochure.
Alex Rutterford, a 4-year student, asks:

In what University course could you, in the space of a single week, study poetry, politics, gender issues, war, prehistory, oratory, sculpture, the evolution of language, and the earliest theory of atoms? I think it is fairly safe to say that such a mix is unique to Classics. And the crowning glory of the four-year course, is that you learn two languages, in two years, from scratch, taught by world experts.

As a 6th former, making my University applications, I wondered if I was the right ‘type’ for Classics, but now I realise there’s no such thing. With a willingness to learn, a passion for the ancient world, and the amazing support you receive at Cambridge, the four-year course can give you access to so many things you’ve never had the chance to study before. I can’t pretend it’s not a challenge, but it’s definitely an enjoyable one.

Kerry Higgins is another current 4-year student:

Studying the 4-year course at Cambridge has opened up a whole new world to me. Literally. It’s challenging, but the course really is something unique and one to be proud of studying.

You get the opportunity to study Latin and Greek to the same level as people who’ve been doing it for years. It’s so rewarding for these ancient texts, previously inaccessible, to unfold before your eyes as you gradually get a grip on the language.

But you don’t just get that: art and architecture, philosophy, philology and history are also all wrapped up into one little/HUGE Classics bundle (as I said: challenging!). You’ll sit down one morning and translate Plato’s concept of the soul, then next you’ll be panicking about
dropping the ancient Mycenaean pot that's in your hands!

It really is an incredible, fascinating course and something I never thought I'd be doing. And your teachers give you all the support you need.

Being at the same college, Natalia Kim and Emily Schurr are regularly supervised together. They write:

Supervisions have been the most rewarding part of our academic experience of Cambridge.

You get a chance to voice your own opinions about issues raised in the lectures - it's a really important thinking process that prevents you from just writing down what other people think.

It's also essential to have a balance of contribution between the supervision partners - then you can really get a debate going.
Latin
Latin was the language not only of the Romans but of much literature and other writing until the sixteenth century. Without Latin no one can properly study the evidence for European history up to that time.

Ancient Greek
Greek is the oldest European language still spoken for which records survive. Many modern genres (e.g. tragedy, comedy, history, lyric) were founded by the Greeks.

Ancient culture
We offer a high-powered training in these languages to make them gateways to the whole of the ancient world. So much in ancient culture stimulates thought about matters acutely relevant today. Here are some examples.

Are there divine forces that control the universe?
Are they just? What if they are positively malevolent towards humanity? What then can humans hope to achieve? These are just some of the questions that arise from the study of Greek tragedy.

Will we be remembered after we have died?
Is the memorial that comes from being a hero worth the sacrifice of having a short life? Should a senior soldier put his army in danger because of a quarrel with its badly-behaving commander? These are some of the matters at issue in Homer’s magnificent epic, the Iliad.

Can imperialism be justified?
Are the sacrifices of a few worth while for the greater good of the many? These are questions one may ask from reading Virgil’s Aeneid. Was the great Greek philosopher Plato right to think that there is a fixed objective standard of goodness and justice? Or was he wrong, and do we define goodness and justice as suits us?
How should democracy function? How should municipal and local government relate to central government? Where better to start studying these important questions than with the Greeks, who first introduced rule by some of the people, and the Romans, who managed to govern their empire only because of the help of local authorities.

Don’t imagine that the world of the Greeks and the Romans occupied only a very restricted space and time-span. The Romans came to dominate the whole of western Europe. And a well-trained classicist is able to read Greek literature written between 700 BC and AD 600, that is a span of 1,300 years, longer than from today to Alfred the Great!
Teaching through the languages

If you come to study Classics at Cambridge you will have to take courses in Greek and Latin literature.

We believe that you cannot really get fully to grips with a culture unless you have learnt its language. Besides, the famous literature of the ancient world is appreciated better by reading it in the original, and historical evidence is evaluated better if you do not have to depend on the translations of others.

You will also be introduced to, and be able to take courses in, two of:

- Ancient History,
- Classical Art and Archaeology,
- Ancient Philosophy, and
- Classical Linguistics.
**Year 1**

Your first year is preliminary: in it you focus on learning Latin.

Teaching is intensive (it has to be!) but has been carefully designed for adult learners. As your skills improve, you will move from course books to Latin texts by authors such as Cicero and Ovid.

Crucially, learning the language is done within the context of learning about Roman Culture more broadly.

Towards the end of the year we shall start you off on learning Ancient Greek.

You will also attend lectures and supervisions (called ‘tutorials’ in many other universities) on Greek and Roman Literature, Ancient History, Art and Archaeology, Ancient Philosophy and Linguistics.

In the summer vacation we run a two-week residential course that will enable you to start moving forwards very briskly with your Greek.

**Year 2**

In the second year, you will join those who have newly arrived with A-level Latin or equivalent and take what we call ‘Part IA’.

You will continue to receive additional Latin tuition, and you will continue with the Ancient Greek that you have started: we shall be building up your reading skills in both languages through study of a selected schedule of ancient authors.

You will attend more lectures and supervisions on Greek and Roman Literature, Ancient History, Art and Archaeology, Ancient Philosophy and Linguistics and will decide which two of the last four options are for you.

**Year 3**

In your third year (Part IB), you will be reading a wider range of ancient authors in both Greek and Latin.

In addition, you will be deepening your study of whichever you have chosen from Ancient History, Ancient Philosophy, Art and Archaeology or Linguistics.

*Students taking part in excavations in Thwing, Yorkshire*
Year 4

For most students the fourth and final year (Part II) is intellectually the most exciting, because in this year it is possible to specialise and study in greater depth.

You have to take either four papers or write a thesis and take three papers. Most students now write a thesis, because it is a wonderful opportunity to explore in a 10,000 word extended essay almost any aspect of the ancient world that interests them.

And the number of options on offer among the papers is vast. There are always four on offer from the lecturers in Ancient Literature, Ancient History, and Art and Archaeology, while the Ancient Philosophers and Linguists offer three. Additionally, the Faculty has a long tradition of offering interdisciplinary papers that cut across the traditional boundaries of subjects within Classics.

Subjects currently on offer include: Homer’s *Odyssey*; Virgil’s *Aeneid*; Sophocles’ tragedies; Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*; the study of the manuscripts of Sophocles and Catullus; Plato; Aristotle; God and Anti-God in the ancient world; Greek democracy and its legacies; Carthage and Rome; Knowledge, Wealth, and Power in the Roman Empire; The Transformation of the Roman World, AD 284-476; The Art of Collecting (in) Greece and Rome; Aegean Pre-History; The Poetics of Classical Art; Cities in the Roman Empire; The Elements of Comparative Linguistics; Alexander’s Legacy: Greek as a world language; Latin and its neighbours; Idols? Imagining the gods and heroes in the Greco-Roman World; Prostitutes and Saints.

Or you may borrow a paper from another discipline: the Tragedy paper of the English Faculty has proved popular, as have papers in early Christian thought or Political thought.

Employment

Because Classics is a challenging degree undertaken by intelligent, motivated and adventurous people, those who have graduated in it are highly sought after by employers.

Our students go into a diverse range of stimulating careers from banking, law, management consultancy and the civil service to political or sports journalism, marketing, drama, education and academia.

A recent independent study of major employers confirmed their high opinion of Classicists as potential employees: they know how to work hard, are accurate and efficient, take new tasks in their stride and can master situations intelligently. Above all they can talk articulately and argue coherently.
How we teach

How we teach is as important as what we teach.

All students in Classics benefit from tuition which is organised centrally by the Faculty and, on a more individual basis, by the college (every student at Cambridge belongs to a college). Colleges also provide you with a Director of Studies in Classics, who will help you maximise your potential.

This variety of provision allows us to offer a unique level of care and flexibility. Lectures are offered on all parts of the course as well as in some areas that cut across disciplines, while classes (especially in Part II) allow you to debate issues and formulate your own arguments.

Likewise, throughout your degree, college-teaching or ‘supervision’ offers you the chance to study the ancient world in depth, often emphasizing different aspects of the subject from those covered in lectures.

The format of supervisions differs according to college. Often you will write an essay in advance and join with your supervisor and up to three other students to discuss it. There is a real opportunity to work on each individual’s intellectual development. Supervisions train you to think critically and independently.
Resources

The Museum of Classical Archaeology on the first floor of the Classics Faculty building houses one of the finest collection of plaster-casts of classical sculpture in the world and has an excellent pottery or 'sherd' collection. It is regularly used in Art and Archaeology teaching. Many pictures in this brochure were taken in it.

The library downstairs completes the picture. Not only is it a wonderful and up-to-date resource for primary and secondary literature on open access, but it is light and airy. Undergraduates, graduates and lecturing staff find it a friendly and productive place to study.