

My introduction to Classics was a tale of two semesters: a Greek Mythology course, originally meant to be a breadth requirement for my Chemical Engineering major, seduced me and I began taking Ancient Greek the next semester. In the span of one academic year, I experienced the two sides of Classics that so many students face—an engaging and accessible civilization course and a difficult and potentially overwhelming language course. As an instructor, I am acutely aware of this contrast and I focus my teaching on ways to enhance the aspects that I found so engaging about Greek Mythology while minimizing the challenges that I faced in my first semester of Ancient Greek. This approach keeps me firmly focused on the experiences of my own students, since my own experiences as a beginning Classics student—positive and negative—are never far from my mind.

This mindset shapes my teaching practices, although the details of my teaching vary, depending on whether I am teaching a civilization or literature course, or a language course. Regardless of the course, though, I emphasize previous knowledge that my students possess and I anchor new ideas to things they already know, whether that ends up being the subconscious ways that they derive meaning from the stories that shape their own worlds or the grammatical structures that they may intuitively understand, but have never closely examined. Because I start with knowledge that they already have, my students are better able to retain and apply the new material that they learn in my classes.

In Classical Civilization courses, I strive to show my students the ways that the texts that they are reading and the cultures they are studying can relate to their own lives. At times, this means drawing out more explicit connections, such as juxtaposing the Mytilenian Debate and the Melian Dialogue from Thucydides with current political debates about preemptive warfare and how superpowers should behave on the world stage. At other times, the connections can be subtler, such as a discussion about the conflict at the heart of Sophocles' *Antigone* and which values are most important to uphold when deeply held values seem to be incompatible with one another. Some of my favorite moments as an instructor started with a discussion of Homer but quickly expanded to a much broader discussion about why literature is so important and why we keep retelling and reimagining these same stories. When I encourage my students to engage in a personal and direct way with the course content, I have found that my students are more active in class discussions and are more invested in their essays. As I designing my own courses now, I structure my courses with an eye to both the ancient and the modern world, in hopes of replicating the passion and interest that Greek Mythology inspired in me, so many years ago.

Language courses, however, present a very different set of challenges and opportunities. I struggled with Greek and Latin grammar when I first started studying the languages and, because I struggled, I did not enjoy my early language courses. It was not until later—when I was finally able to move beyond grammar and syntax and actually read a full text—that I grew to love these languages in their own right. When I am teaching Latin, I try to remain conscious of both sides of my own love/hate relationship with the language, particularly because so many of the students in a Latin 101 classroom have not had extensive language instruction in high school and approach foreign languages with fear and loathing. Because of this, I work to design classroom activities that are dynamic and engaging. There will, of course, always be a place for rote memorization and verb paradigms, but I also focus a great deal on metacognition in language classes, as I use classroom translation activities to model the intermediate steps involved in translating a complex sentence. For

my students, this means a great deal of sight translation, which allows me to see their entire translation process, from their first encounter to the text to a final, polished translation. Often, I partner students with one another and ask them to struggle with difficult syntax together, rather than providing them with the answers too soon, which forces them to grapple with the places where they struggle the most. Some students benefit from teaching what they already understand, whereas other students benefit from the insight of someone who is closer to their level of proficiency with the language. As a result, I am able to meet the students where they are to provide opportunities for specific, deliberate practice. Overall, a major goal of mine in a Greek or Latin classroom is to teach students good translation habits that will allow them to approach and dissect any sentence they encounter.

Because a great deal of my teaching involves putting students in intellectually challenging situations, it is critical that I foster a supportive environment in my classroom. Students will only feel comfortable engaging in difficult debates or attempting to translate a sentence they have never seen before if they know that failure is not catastrophic, and telling students that it is good for them to try and fail at challenging assignments can ring hollow if it is not supported by anything more substantive than words. With that in mind, I build a large number of low-stakes assignments into my courses, which eventually scaffold into some sort of large, graded assignment. These low-stakes assignments, which are graded on a done/not done scale but receive substantial feedback, demonstrate to the students that there is value in pushing themselves beyond their academic comfort zone. I also make an effort to model elements of their assignments in class before asking them to complete those assignments on their own. This has been extremely useful for essays, since a carefully structured and moderated classroom discussion can replicate the process of developing a thesis and creating a strong argument that also accounts for contradictory evidence. After my students have debated a question from all sides, I can then work with them to distill a thesis and an essay structure, using the arguments they have already made. This organic process has yielded far better results than trying to *tell* them what a good essay should look like. By helping them mold their ideas into a strong argumentative essay, I can instead *show* them how to use and apply what they know.

I know what sorts of assignments and activities helped me the most as a student (for example, my competitive nature means that classroom debates have always appealed to me), but I also recognize that strategies that worked well for me may not work well for all my students. Therefore, I solicit and respond to anonymous feedback throughout the semester so that I can improve my teaching and remain flexible and responsive to the needs of the students. Outside the classroom, I am also looking for ways to expand my pedagogy and I make a concerted effort to attend teaching and learning workshops and to participate in departmental and campus-wide discussions about teaching. As a graduate student mentor and a facilitator for campus-wide graduate student instructor trainings, I have also been able to help other students think about their own teaching strategies and have also learned many useful teaching techniques from my fellow graduate students in the process. Although I have developed a teaching philosophy that reflects my current approach, I am confident that it will continue to develop as I teach more classes.