
Classics

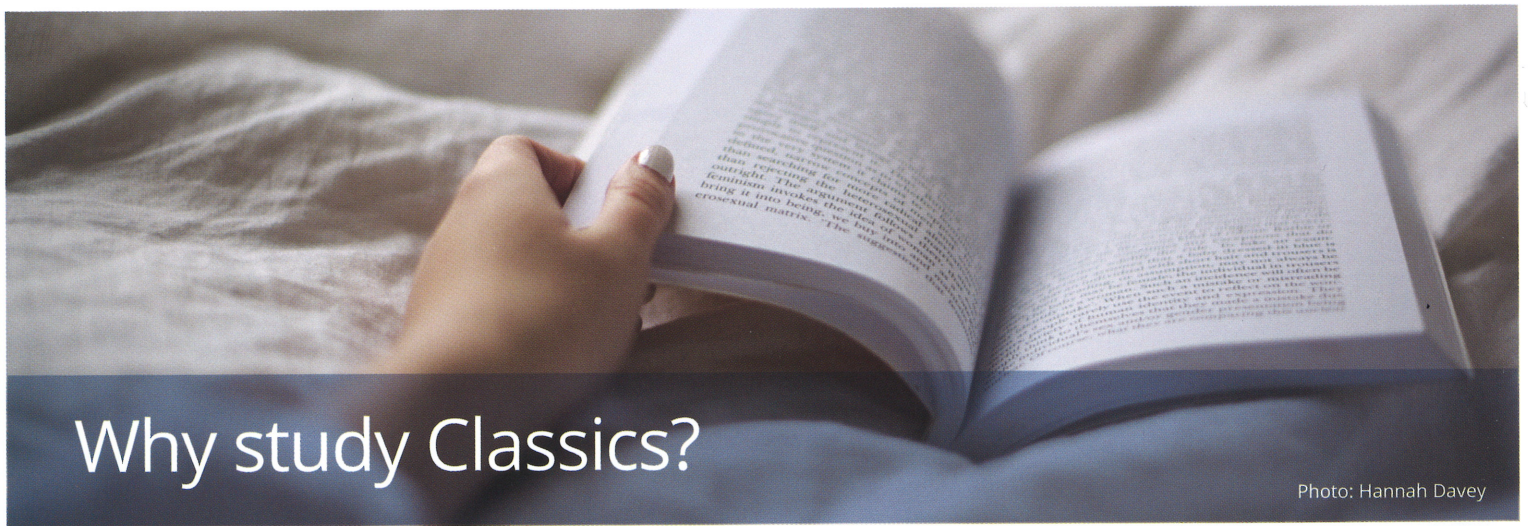
The basis of western civilization

"I quickly realised that to understand the Classical tradition was to gain a greater understanding of the present-day world in which we live."

Michelle Sim, MA Classics
Communications Officer, Air Force
Museum of New Zealand

Classics is the study of the civilisations of ancient Greece and Rome. These civilisations had an immense influence on the development of western civilisation. Much of our modern language, literature, art and architecture, drama, philosophy and political system is derived from Greece and Rome. Classics aims to understand these cultures, and to appreciate what they achieved and how important they have been in historical terms. At the same time Classics students are challenged to confront the major questions which the Greeks and Romans faced and which humanity has faced down the ages – about human behaviour, human society, ethics, war, politics, religion, indeed the whole meaning and purpose of life.





Why study Classics?

Photo: Hannah Davey

To understand anything properly you need to have an appreciation of its origins. Greece and Rome lie at the root of western civilization and by studying the Greeks and Romans we are studying the western roots of our own cultures.

Classics is a self-contained inter-disciplinary subject. It has links to almost every other arts subject – anthropology, art history, gender studies, history, languages, philosophy, politics, religious studies, theatre studies. Western medicine and science too have their roots in Greece and Rome.

By studying Classics you will develop your awareness of language, your insight into literature and art, your understanding of history and politics, your knowledge of religion and mythology, your appreciation of ethical and social issues. You will certainly broaden your intellectual and cultural horizons. You will also develop valuable generic skills transferable to the outside world.

Background required

No specialist knowledge is required, as Classical Studies, Greek and Latin are all taught from scratch. If you have done Classical Studies at school, you will find that our first-year courses build on and extend your knowledge. Students who have passed NCEA level 3 Latin may be granted direct entry into 200-level papers.

Careers in Classics

Arts degrees provide valuable generic skills in demand in the workplace. For some jobs you may well need further specialist training. However there are plenty of employers who value a well-rounded education such as Classics provides. The millionaire financier Sir Robert Jones is fond of saying that he would far rather employ a Classics graduate than a Commerce one. Employers value transferable skills such as the ability to think through a problem, to see both sides of a question, to analyse, to present an argument, and to express yourself clearly and fluently.

Recent Classics graduates have made careers not only in school and university teaching but in university administration, foreign affairs, trade and industry, social welfare, local government, tourism, computing, insurance, law, librarianship, bookselling, publishing, museums and art galleries, fashion and design, broadcasting, journalism, tourism and the theatre. This list emphasises the versatility of Classics graduates.

Student exchange

You may be able to do part of your study overseas through the University's extensive exchange programme or as a postgraduate student.

Even if you don't, your study of Classics is going to enrich your OE enormously. Students repeatedly tell us after all that study, there is something magical about your first glimpse of the Parthenon by moonlight!

Classics at Otago

Otago's Classics Department was the first established in New Zealand, in 1871.

Your first year of study

At Otago we cover papers in Classical Studies, Greek, and Latin. If you plan to major in Classics in a Bachelor of Arts you can do so with any combination of these three subjects that suits your interests.

Majoring students will need to do at least two of our first-year papers. Classics, Greek and Latin can also be taken as minor subjects. We encourage you to study one or both of the languages.

First year Classical Studies papers introduce you to Greek and Roman archaeology, Roman social history and Greek mythology.

You can study:

- the art and archaeology of Greece and Rome, from the Minoan period to Classical Athens, and on to ancient Pompeii and the buildings of the late Roman empire
- the social life of the ancient Romans, looking in particular at the experiences of slaves, gladiators and prostitutes
- the myths of Classical Greece, especially their stories about the creation of the cosmos, and the deeds of heroes such as Heracles and Theseus

Studying Greek and Latin language

Learning the languages is an excellent way to appreciate how the Greeks and Romans perceived the world around them and communicated their values and ideas. The textbooks that we use for the teaching of Greek and Latin language are designed for beginner students, and they focus on the reading of continuous texts from the outset.

Papers in Greek and Latin language are available at all levels.

Learning ancient Greek and Latin is not compulsory at Otago, but if you are considering postgraduate study we strongly encourage you to take papers in Greek and/or Latin in your BA degree.

Continuing your studies

At higher levels you can investigate the culture and society of Classical Athens, the conquests of Alexander the Great, and Greek and Roman myths connected with cursed individuals such as Oedipus and his family.

For students interested in ancient history, we have advanced papers on the Roman emperors from Augustus to Nero, on the successors to Alexander the Great's kingdom, and on violence and corruption in the Late Roman Republic (studied via the speeches of Cicero). A paper on the Fall of the Roman Empire examines the archaeological remains from this crucial period of Roman history, and advanced studies of ancient Greek culture are available through our papers on Greek religion and Greek philosophy (looking especially at Socrates and Plato).

Honours in Classics

For students who want to pursue postgraduate studies in Classics, our Honours programme provides the opportunity to work closely with a lecturer in the department and investigate a topic of your own choice in detail.



Papers

100-level

CLAS 105: Greek Mythology

CLAS 108: Classical Art and Archaeology: Of Heroes, Gods and Men

CLAS 109: Roman Social History: Slaves, Gladiators, Prostitutes

GREK 111 and 112: Introductory Greek 1 and 2

LATN 111 and 112: Introductory Latin 1 and 2

200-level

CLAS 238: Fantasies, Phobias and Families in Graeco-Roman Myth

CLAS 240: The Classical World in the Movies (Summer School Paper, not offered every year)

CLAS 241: Alexander the Great

CLAS 242: Living and Dying in Classical Athens

GREK 211 and 212: Intermediate Greek, Intermediate Greek Authors

LATN 211 and 212: Intermediate Latin, Intermediate Latin Authors

300-level (Papers offered on two year rotation. Exception CLAS 345)

CLAS 337: Murder and Corruption in Ciceronian Rome

CLAS 340: Love, Death and the Good Life: Socrates and Plato

CLAS 341: After Alexander: the Struggle and the Chaos

CLAS 342: Ancient Greek Religion: Myth, Ritual and Belief

CLAS 343: Archaeology and the Fall of the Roman Empire

CLAS 344: From Augustus to Nero: Scandal and Intrigue in Imperial Rome

CLAS 345: Tales of Troy: From Homer to Hollywood

GREK 328 and 329: Advanced Greek Authors 1 and 2

LATN 328 and 329: Advanced Latin Authors 1 and 2

400-level (Honours)

Each of our 300-level papers (exception CLAS 345) has an accompanying 400-level paper. Honours students also undertake a supervised research project (50% of the workload).

Suggested Degree Plans

The following plans are suggestions only. They outline possible streams through the degree according to your particular interests.

We encourage students to study at least one of the ancient languages over the course of their degree but this is not mandatory. For this reason, there are more options given for each year than is required for the major.

It would be an advantage to do two papers of GREK or LATN as well as CLAS papers in your first year, as this increases your range of options for subsequent years. Or you could consider doing three CLAS papers in your first year, which will give you a good broad foundation for more advanced work.

Mythology and Literature

First year: CLAS 105, CLAS 108; GREK 111/112 or LATN 111/112

Second year: CLAS 238, CLAS 240, CLAS 242; GREK 211/212 or LATN 211/212

Third year: CLAS 340, CLAS 342, CLAS 345; GREK 328/329 or LATN 328/329

History and Archaeology

First year: CLAS 108, CLAS 109; GREK 111/112 or LATN 111/112

Second year: CLAS 241, CLAS 242; GREK 211/212 or LATN 211/212

Third year: CLAS 337, CLAS 341, CLAS 343, CLAS 344, CLAS 345; GREK 328/329 or LATN 328/329



Dr Gwynaeth McIntyre
Lecturer

In spite of a strong interest in history when she was in high school, Gwynaeth McIntyre says "I almost failed history in school". A lack of good history teachers coupled with a focus on names and dates in her assessments left her uninspired.

Fortunately for us, Gwynaeth discovered Classics at university. Now she teaches the first year Greek Mythology paper, the Latin papers and a 300/400-level paper *From Augustus to Nero: Scandal and Intrigue in Imperial Rome*.

Gwynaeth went to university to do a degree in biochemistry and microbiology, as she had gravitated towards maths and the sciences at school. In her second year she took an Ancient Greek paper as she thought it would help her memorize scientific names and terminology. "I absolutely loved it, and realised that I did not have a passion for science." Gwynaeth then went on to take a variety of papers in the humanities.

"I had an amazing lecturer for Roman history and that's what got me 'hooked' and made me want to learn more about Roman politics and religion. I learned that history is so much more than names and dates; it's about people and events, and following broad trends in thoughts and attitudes.

"I think of history as tipping points or spikes. It's so much more than just a series of isolated events. For example, the Ides of March (the date that Julius Caesar was assassinated) was a culmination of the political conflicts and upheavals that had plagued the Republic for almost 100 years and as a result, political players took advantage of the power vacuum through a series of civil wars which ultimately led to a new form of government being established."

Gwynaeth believes we can learn a huge amount from the Greeks and Romans, not only about how past cultures developed and thrived but even about ourselves.

"What I try and do is to give students two different perspectives of the same narrative so that they can see that one is no more right or true than the other; that each is discussing the same event in different terms. If you start questioning why ideas are being presented in certain ways then you can get into the minds of the people who are writing about their past and develop understanding and empathy.

"Personally, I love the politics, the intrigue, the murder and mayhem of the Roman imperial period. The drama almost makes it feel like I am teaching a movie script or TV show. Yet, it also gives students a chance to see how ancient societies presented their own history and identity and how these texts, images and ideas shape our perceptions of our own history and identity.

"For the myth class we always have a little movie break on Mondays where I find a pop culture reference to the myth that we are talking about, so that students can see how we are taking these narratives and making them our own. How we might change narratives to suit our purposes. This can be very political and very relevant in addressing issues for us today."



Will Harvey
LLB, BA(Hons) Classics, MA Classics

My name is Will Harvey. I am a fairly recent graduate of the University of Otago. After completing my LLB and BA(Hons) in Classics, I went on to graduate in 2014 with an MA in the area of Ancient Greek religion. My thesis examined the origins and character of the goddess Hekate. My years at Otago, and in particular in the Classics department, were some of the very best of my life. The department nurtured my passion for the ancient world which had begun in high school and has led me to my current job.

I am now based in London. I'm working at a cultural travel company by the name of Martin Randall Travel. We organise small group tours led by lecturers. For example, I managed a tour of the British Museum's Ancient Greek collection, and the lecture was given by a former student of John Barsby (Emeritus Professor, Department of Classics, University of Otago)! I've just taken over the operations for our Maltese and Greek tours so heading off to manage the Classical Greece tour next year will be fabulous. It's a brilliant combination of business and academia, and something I was led to inexorably by my Classics education at Otago.

What skills do I use from my Classics degrees? First and foremost, communication. Beyond the written and verbal skills a Classics degree endows you with, it makes you open-minded and able to interact freely, courteously and civilly with all types of different people. My job can involve high pressure, and the time management skills I gained from my degrees have helped enormously with that. I may not be trawling through primary and secondary texts on a daily basis anymore, but years of doing so has given me the ability to think quickly, process information and solve problems. Don't let anyone tell you that Classics isn't vocational!

Further Information

Questions concerning undergraduate study should be directed to the department's Undergraduate Academic Subject Advisor:

Arlene Allan
Email arlene.allan@otago.ac.nz.

Contact us

Email classics@otago.ac.nz
Tel 03 479 8709
Fax 03 479 9029
Web www.otago.ac.nz/classics

or write to:

Department of Classics
University of Otago
PO Box 56
Dunedin 9054

Visit the Department of Classics

5th Floor, Arts Building
95 Albany Street
University of Otago
Dunedin 9016