

Department of Classics

The Department of Classics offers an introduction to the literature and culture of ancient Greece and Rome. We offer instruction in the primary languages from beginning to advanced levels, with a focus on reading significant and challenging works in the original. We also teach a wide range of courses in English translation.

Classics has always been fundamentally an interdisciplinary field, and this is especially true of Classics at Oberlin. We offer not only a study of language and literature, but also of art, archeology, history, philosophy, political theory, religion, culture, and society (see the catalog for a list of specific courses). The Classics themselves are creative works of particular significance for the western world, and they reveal literary, political, and social structures that provide foundations for our own ways of thinking. They are also the products of specific cultures across a range of time, however, and those cultures are in some ways radically different from the modern West. The department at Oberlin engages these works in both their universal human significance and their cultural, historical specificity.

Familiarity with the classical world and its literature contributes to personal growth in at least three ways.

- (a) Awareness of the roots of western civilization helps us to know who we are and how our civilization has developed.
- (b) Knowledge of a culture sufficiently different from our own encourages a more objective assessment of our modern world.
- (c) Exposure to the seminal ideas and basic humanistic values of the ancient world fosters both an intellectual and a humane response to contemporary human problems.

Courses in English translation provide a broad background for all areas of literary and humanistic study. Courses in Greek and Latin language and literature enable students to develop a deeper understanding of the literary history of Greece and Rome and the capacity for making independent judgments about them. Thus the Classics form an important part of any liberal arts education and may constitute the primary focus of such an education.

Major programs are offered in Greek, Latin, Classical Civilization, and, in cooperation with the Committee on Archeology, Classical Archeology. Majors may spend a semester in Athens or at the Intercollegiate Center for Classical Studies in Rome. Opportunities also exist to work on an archaeological dig in the Sangro Valley in Italy (directed by Susan Kane), and the department organizes occasional Winter Term projects in Greece and Italy. An honors program is available for outstanding students.

Recent graduates have continued their studies in Classics or in related fields in graduate departments at Berkeley, Brown, Chicago, Michigan, North Carolina, Oxford, Pennsylvania, Stanford, USC, and Yale.

Campus facilities include excellent undergraduate library holdings, collections of Byzantine manuscripts on microfilm, rare editions of texts, and an outstanding art museum. The department provides facilities for accessing Classical works in a computer-searchable index.

Each year several lectures are given by eminent visiting scholars, including the prestigious Martin Classical Lectures delivered in the spring. Recent Martin lecturers have included:

- Martha Nussbaum: "The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics"
- Anne Carson: "Greed: A Fractal Approach to Simonides"
- Josiah Ober: "Democracy and its Discontents: Athenian Critics of Popular Rule"
- Helene Foley: "Women as Moral Agents in Greek Literature"
- Mark W. Edwards: "Sound, Sense, and Rhythm"
- James O'Donnell: "The Lives of Augustine"
- Ian Morris: "The Greek Economic Miracle"
- Gregory Nagy: "Masterpieces of Classical Metonymy"
- Michael C.J. Putnam: "Poetic Interplay: Catullus and Horace"
- Leslie Kurke: "Aesopic Conversations: Popular Tradition and Cultural Dialogue in Antiquity"

Our majors are a lively and sociable group. In recent years, students have organized a "Classics Hall" where majors and non-majors with an interest in the Classics live and study together. Annual all-night readings of Homer, Virgil, and other Classical authors have been known to happen. And finally, the Classics picnic and croquet extravaganza is an event not to be missed.

Applicants who have further questions about the program in Classics are encouraged to visit the departmental website, www.oberlin.edu/classics, and should feel free to write to any member of the Department. When you are on campus, please stop at the office, get acquainted with the faculty, and visit one of our courses.

The Classics Faculty

BENJAMIN TODD LEE

Assistant Professor of Classics (B.A. with Distinction, 1991, Swarthmore College; M.A., 1995, Ph.D., 2001, University of Pennsylvania). Research interests: rhetoric, Imperial Latin prose, Latin poetry, modern critical theory, textual criticism. blee@oberlin.edu

KIRK ORMAND

Associate Professor of Classics and Chair (B.A., 1985, Carleton College; M.A., 1989, Stanford University; Ph.D., 1992, Stanford University). Special interests in Greek tragedy, "silver age" Latin poetry, gender and sexuality in the ancient Mediterranean, and modern critical theory. kirk.ormand@oberlin.edu

THOMAS VAN NORTWICK

Nathan A Greenberg Professor of Classics (B.A., 1969, Stanford; M.A., 1972, Yale; Ph.D., 1975, Stanford). Special interests in Greek epic, Greek lyric, and Latin poetry of the Republican and Augustan periods, and personal voice criticism. thomas.van.nortwick@oberlin.edu

ANDREW WILBURN

Assistant Professor of Classics (B.S., 1996, Randolph-Macon College; M.A., 1998, University of Maryland; Ph.D., 2005, University of Michigan). Special interests in ancient magic and religion, Greek and Roman history, Roman archaeology, Graeco-Roman Egypt. drew.wilburn@oberlin.edu

Associated Faculty

SUSAN KANE

Associate Professor of Art (B.A., 1970, Barnard College; Ph.D., 1977, Bryn Mawr College). Main areas of interest are Greek, Etruscan and Roman art and architecture. susan.kane@oberlin.edu

TODD GANSON

Assistant Professor of Philosophy (B.A., U-C Davis, 1992; M.A., Cornell 1994; Ph.D., Cornell, 1998). Main areas of interest are Ancient Philosophy, British Empiricism, and Philosophy of Mind. todd.ganson@oberlin.edu

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