

**ASSESSMENT REPORT
M.A. IN CLASSICS
DECEMBER 2012**

Introduction

This year we decided to assess the extent to which the graduate curriculum in Classics meets the department's second program learning objective: "Students will demonstrate an advanced understanding of the diachronic development of Greek and Roman literature and of ancient Mediterranean cultures generally." (A complete list of learning objectives for this program can be found in Appendix A.) To this end, we created a diagnostic quiz that tested knowledge of chronology in literary, artistic, and more strictly historical contexts (Appendix B). This instrument was administered, in the 10th week of the Fall 2012 semester, to Greek 735 Greek Historians I and to the handful of graduate students in the following undergraduate classes: Classics 230 Ancient Epic Tales, Classics 240 Greek and Roman Drama, Classics 360 Greek and Roman Mythology, Classics 415 Classical Culture: Rome, Classics 490 History of Ideas in the Ancient Classical World, Classical Archaeology 250 Introduction to the Archaeology of the Ancient Mediterranean, Classical Archaeology 515 Greek Civilization I, and GRE 101 Elementary Ancient Greek.

Administering the instrument in the 10th week of the semester was not ideal. It would have been more helpful either to have administered it at the end of the semester, to see how much students had learned over the course of an entire semester, or, perhaps better yet, to have administered the same instrument at the beginning and end of the semester, which would have allowed us to control for what knowledge students may have had coming into the course in which the quiz was given.

The instrument showed that our graduate students performed better on the diagnostic instrument than both undergraduates and graduate students who are not pursuing an M.A. in Classics. But because most of our graduate students studied classics at another institution before coming to SFSU (in many cases, they have taken more courses at this other institution than here), we cannot necessarily attribute their success to our curriculum. Our findings are summarized in the section below and discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections.

Summary of Findings

1. Graduate students in the M.A. program in Classics performed better than both undergraduates as a whole and undergraduates majoring or minoring in Classics.
2. Graduate students in the M.A. program in Classics performed better than graduate students in other programs.

Discussion

Our M.A. students clearly performed better than undergraduates as a whole and than undergraduate majors and minors in Classics, as the chart below demonstrates.

| type of student | # of students in this category | average total score |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| all undergraduates | 105 | 4.8 |
| undergraduate majors and minors | 21 | 6.6 |
| M.A. students in Classics | 9 | 8.6 |

Our M.A. students also performed better than graduate students from other departments.

| type of student | # of students in this category | average total score |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| M.A. students in Classics | 9 | 8.6 |
| M.A. students from other departments | 6 | 6.5 |

This is more impressive than it might at first appear, for most of these graduate students from other departments come from the History Department, students who we would expect to be good at chronology. When we break down the data further, we begin to see the kinds of chronological questions on which Classics graduate students outperformed other (mostly History) graduate students:

| question type | Classics M.A. students | non-Classics M.A. students |
|---|------------------------|----------------------------|
| historical chronology questions | 94% correct | 88% correct |
| art and literature chronology questions | 80% | 53% |
| Greek chronology questions | 94% | 75% |
| Roman chronology questions | 78% | 61% |

On questions that focused on chronology of a traditional historical sort (questions ##1, 4, 9, 10), there was not a large gap between M.A. students in Classics and those from other programs (mostly History). But M.A. students in Classics outperformed other graduate students more decisively on chronology questions that have to do with the history of art (monuments, artistic styles, etc.)(questions ##5, 7) and those that have to do with the history of literature (works of literature, literary forms, etc.)(questions ##2, 3, 6, 8), precisely the kinds of questions on which one would expect Classics students to outperform graduate students in History and other related fields.

M.A. students in Classics also outperformed other M.A. students on both Greek-themed

(##2, 4, 7, 10) and Roman-themed (##3, 8, 9) questions, in both cases by moderate margins. This did not surprise. What was noteworthy is the fact that graduate students, both those in Classics and those from other departments, tended to do significantly better on the Greek questions than the Roman ones. It could be that the Roman questions were more challenging than the Greek ones. But another possible reason is that we have offered more Greek-themed M.A. seminars over the last three semesters than Latin-themed ones (2 compared to 1), with the result that our current students have been more exposed to Greek material than to Roman material.

The results are not as clear for graduate students as they are for undergraduates. Most undergraduates have learned everything they know about the ancient world in our department. But most of our graduate students earned their B.A. at another institution, where they would have learned much of what they know of the ancient world. In this case, it is more difficult to decide how much “value added” came from our program. We could partly correct for this problem by administering an instrument like this one to students when they first enter our program and again later during their time here: that would help us see more clearly what knowledge they gained once they arrived here.

Prospect for Future Assessments

We would like to continue to evaluate this program learning objective for the next assessment cycle. There are many additional insights to be gleaned from the data set we assembled for this assessment. We are considering administering the same instrument (or possibly a revised instrument) in a subsequent semester, both at the beginning and at the end of the semester (possibly via iLearn) or even, as we hinted above, to students at the beginning of their career here and again at a later point in their career. Still, we believe that we may still have plenty of current data to work with. We are also considering two other approaches to assessing this PLO. One is to compare the data collected for this assessment to the syllabi of individual courses, with a view to revising and/or standardizing goals for individual courses. The second is to look at how mastery of chronological issues is manifested in student writing: we would hope that it would be more in evidence on a paper written by a graduate student in his or her second or third year than on one written by a student in the first year.

Appendix A: Program Learning Objectives for the M.A. in Classics

1. (language) Students will achieve advanced proficiency in either Latin or Greek and at least basic proficiency in the other.
2. (history) Students will demonstrate an advanced understanding of the diachronic development of Greek and Roman literature and of ancient Mediterranean cultures generally.
3. (material culture) Students will achieve an advanced understanding of how material evidence informs our understanding of ancient Mediterranean cultures.
4. (writing) Students will write critical research papers demonstrating mastery of scholarship on selected topics.
5. (career development) Students will become capable of entering a doctoral program in the field of classics and/or gaining employment as an instructor at the K-12 or community college level.

Appendix B: Diagnostic Quiz for Assessing PLO #2

Name (optional) _____

For undergraduates:

1. Are you a Classics major? Yes ___ No ___
a. If "yes," what is your emphasis (One Language, Two Languages, Classical Archaeology, or Philosophy)?

2. Are you a Classics minor? Yes ___ No ___

3. What class are you in (while taking this diagnostic exam)? _____

4. List all other classes you are taking this semester with CLAS, CLAR, GRE, or LATN prefixes.

5. List all classes you have previously taken at SFSU with CLAS, CLAR, GRE, or LATN prefixes

For graduate students:

1. Are you pursuing an M.A. in Classics? Yes ___ No ___

2. Which of the following better describes you: (1) someone primarily interested in material culture, or (2) someone primarily interested in literature. _____

3. Which of the following better describes you: (1) Hellenist or (2) Romanist

4. What class are you in (while taking this diagnostic exam)? _____

5. List all other classes you are taking this semester with CLAS, CLAR, GRE, or LATN prefixes.

Answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

- ___ 1. Which of the following is in correct chronological order?
a. Roman Empire, Classical Greece, Medieval Europe
b. Classical Greece, Medieval Europe, Roman Empire
c. Medieval Europe, Roman Empire, Classical Greece
d. Classical Greece, Roman Empire, Medieval Europe
- ___ 2. To what century BCE do most scholars date Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*?
a. 2nd c. 8th
b. 10th d. 5th
- ___ 3. With what emperor did the Roman poet Virgil have a relationship
a. Nero c. Constantine
b. Hadrian d. Caesar Augustus
- ___ 4. Which of the following is in correct chronological order?
a. Hellenistic Period, Archaic Period, Minoan Period, Classical Period
b. Minoan Period, Archaic Period, Mycenaean Period, Hellenistic Period
c. Minoan Period, Mycenaean Period, Classical Period, Hellenistic Period
d. Archaic Period, Classical Period, Hellenistic Period, Mycenaean Period
- ___ 5. Which of the following is in correct chronological order?
a. Lion Gate at Mycenae, Parthenon, Roman Colosseum, Pyramids at Giza
b. Pyramids at Giza, Lion Gate at Mycenae, Parthenon, Roman Colosseum
c. Lion Gate at Mycenae, Pyramids at Giza, Roman Colosseum, Parthenon,
d. Pyramids at Giza, Roman Colosseum, Lion Gate at Mycenae, Parthenon
- ___ 6. Which of the following is in correct chronological order?
a. Homer, Sophocles, Tacitus, Callimachus
b. Sappho, Euripides, Aeschylus, Catullus
c. Sophocles, Catullus, Callimachus, Tacitus
d. Sappho, Aeschylus, Callimachus, Catullus
- ___ 7. Which of the following is in correct chronological order?
a. Doric Order, Corinthian Order, Ionic Order
b. Corinthian Order, Doric Order, Ionic Order
c. Ionic Order, Doric Order, Corinthian Order
d. Doric Order, Ionic Order, Corinthian Order
- ___ 8. Which of the following is in correct chronological order?
a. *Miles Gloriosus*, *Bellum Catilinae*, *Aeneid*, *Metamorphoses*
b. *Aeneid*, *Miles Gloriosus*, *Metamorphoses*, *Bellum Catilinae*
c. *Aeneid*, *Metamorphoses*, *Agricola*, *Miles Gloriosus*
d. *Agricola*, *Miles Gloriosus*, *Metamorphoses*, *Aeneid*
- ___ 9. Which of the following is in correct chronological order?
a. Constantine, Julius Caesar, Hadrian, Caligula
b. Julius Caesar, Caligula, Hadrian, Constantine
c. Hadrian, Constantine, Caligula, Julius Caesar
d. Caligula, Julius Caesar, Constantine, Hadrian
- ___ 10. Which one of these events did NOT occur between 550 BCE and 350 BCE?
a. The death of Socrates
b. The death of Alexander the Great
c. The "birth" of Greek democracy
d. The Battle of Marathon