

Classics Assessment Plan

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Department: Classics

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1. Department Mission

Classics is the critical study of the people and societies of the ancient Mediterranean world. Students learn Arabic, Hebrew, Greek or Latin, reconstruct cities and settlements through archaeological and architectural analysis, and engage materials from myth to art, all with a view to assessing the crises, failures and successes of the complex, multicultural worlds of the ancient Mediterranean. Students learn how to examine and interpret evidence in its historical context and develop a deep linguistic, cultural, religious and material knowledge of this region in antiquity. Classics provides a place for the critical analysis of ancient and foreign cultures and how their stories and histories have been received and retold in the shaping of the modern world. Classics helps students enter and engage sympathetically with a worldview different from their own and focuses on writing, critical reading, language acquisition and argumentation.

2. Student Learning Goals

Macalester graduates with a major in Classics:

- read texts closely and critically, and in the original of at least one language of the ancient Mediterranean,
- have deep and broad knowledge of the historical context and cultures of the Mediterranean region in antiquity
- write clearly and persuasively
- have experience living, working or studying abroad
- use critical analysis of ancient and foreign cultures to reflect upon their own modern cultural context
- engage sympathetically with worldviews not their own
- and are prepared for graduate work in Classics or related disciplines (including archaeology, anthropology, architecture, art history, comparative literature, English, history, law, Middle Eastern studies, museum studies, and religion).

3. Student Learning Outcomes (more specific objectives)

- Students use primary and secondary sources critically, and demonstrate their ability to read sources in the original ancient language via translation, adept analysis or skilled use of evidence in that language.
- Students display a sophisticated understanding of the depth and significance of cultural differences and use their knowledge of historical and cultural context in literary, historical, archaeological or other forms of analysis.

- In their writing, students pose suitable questions and theses, express ideas clearly using standard academic English, pursue their arguments using a logical structure, and use a standard citation style effectively when appropriate.
- Students engage sympathetically with viewpoints not their own.
- Students use their investigation of the past to reflect critically on their modern cultural context.

4. General Assessment Strategies and Processes

1. Direct Evidence. We use a standardized rubric featuring our learning outcomes to evaluate the annual capstone and Honors projects in the form of an academic argument. This rubric is now used (sometimes in modified form) in our intermediate level research seminar so that both instructors and students focus on the skills students need to develop in preparing to take on a capstone project. We are working on identifying national standardized tests to evaluate student progress in learning our four languages.
2. Indirect Evidence. We conduct a group exit interview with our graduating majors and minors during Senior Week. We ask them to respond to specific concerns or proposed changes to the curriculum and program as well as to reflect together on their experiences with the department. Begun in 2007, these interviews led to the development of a new senior seminar shared across major tracks and the intermediate level research seminar. We have also begun collecting student feedback on textbooks in the elementary language courses.

5. Four-year Timeline

- 2014:** Use of primary and secondary sources (Capstone and Honors Rubric)
- 2015:** Writing (Capstone and Honors Rubric)
- 2016:** Displaying understanding of cultural difference; and sympathetically engage viewpoints other than their own (Capstone and Honors Rubric)
- 2017:** Use of the past to reflect critically on our modern cultural context (Senior Exit Interviews)