

Classical Literature And Civilisation (Q820): Selected Module Descriptions (year 1)

Greek and Roman Literature

The module provides an introduction to key aspects of Greek and Roman Literature. Students will look at a representative sample of primary materials. Semester 1 introduces Greek Literature, starting from the Homeric epics, and including other key texts such as archaic lyric poetry, Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and other dramatic texts. Semester 2 introduces key Roman texts and authors, including the *Aeneid*, Livy's history of Rome, and Roman elegy and satire.

Greek and Roman History

The module provides an introduction to key aspects of Greek and Roman antiquity. In semester 1 you will examine Classical Greece, primarily Athens and Sparta, the development of hoplite warfare, the Persian wars, democracy, the role of women and Alexander the Great. In semester 2 you will examine the rise of the Roman Empire, the relationship between Rome, Greece and the Carthaginians, changes in Roman society and class conflict, Roman religion, the destruction of the Republic and the creation of the Imperial system.

Latin Language: Beginners*

The module is an introduction to the Latin language and its use for beginners with some previous experience of language learning (e.g. at GCSE). Students will be introduced to Latin syntax and grammar, and will acquire key vocabulary. The aim of the module is to enable students to use their linguistic skills in order to access primary materials.

*Latin and Greek are offered at the appropriate level depending on pre-existing expertise, included here are the 'beginners' descriptions only.

Greek Language: Beginners*

The module is an introduction to the Greek language and its useful for beginners with some previous experience of language learning (e.g. at GCSE). Students will be introduced to Greek syntax and grammar, and will acquire key vocabulary. The aim of the module is to enable students to use their linguistic skills in order to access primary materials.

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Project – Virgil's *Aeneid*

In this project students read Virgil's epic poem the *Aeneid*. We consider the big questions of love, war and empire which the poem treats. We approach details of the text and the many translations we have of it, and we research the scholarly literature which has grown around it. Students write brief commentaries on extracts, give presentations on larger questions and issues arising from the poem, and carry out a range of bibliographic exercises.

Project – Dionysus

Dionysus is one of the most enigmatic and fascinating of the Greek gods: shape-changer, god of the mask and illusion; outsider and 'newcomer' to Greece and Olympus, and yet somehow always already there; androgynous yet phallic; giver of wine, which calms or drives to frenzy; patron of the civilized arts of the theatre, but also the beast-god in whose mountain-top orgies living flesh is torn and devoured.

In this project, you will study the changing faces of the god as he is represented in visual art (especially vase-painting), in a variety of ancient literary texts, and also in modern representations of the ancient world, both scholarly and popular. In the process, you will develop your skills in giving oral presentations, finding and using primary and secondary sources, and planning and writing essays; you will also gain a deeper understanding both of the pervasive role of religion in Greek culture and of how modern understanding of Greek religion has developed.

Texts we will read include: the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus*; Euripides' *Bacchae*; Aristophanes' *Frogs*; excerpts from Nonnus' epic *Dionysiaca*; Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*; E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*; Donna Tartt, *The Secret History*. We will also investigate the god's cult and festivals and his representation in visual art, as well as the growing, changing and often bizarre presence of Dionysus on the Web.

Project – Greek Lyric Poetry

In this project we will explore the thought-world of archaic and early classical Greeks through their short poems and songs. Homer had sung of gods and legendary heroes; the Greeks who came after him sang about their own more down-to-earth experiences of war, but also bragged about their sexual conquests, mourned their dead, celebrated weddings and praised their city-states. Greek lyric poetry is ancient but also excitingly new: many of these poems have only come to light in the last century, discovered on papyrus fragments from Egypt, and new discoveries continue to challenge our ideas about what these poets sang and why.

We will study a selection from authors including Semonides, Archilochus, Mimnermus, Alcman, Alcaeus and Sappho, reading them in Martin West's *World's Classics* translation.