

THE CLASSICAL STUDIES PROGRAM DEPARTMENT OF MODERN AND CLASSICAL
LANGUAGES GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

GENERAL SYLLABUS FOR ALL SECTIONS OF FIRST-YEAR LATIN COURSES
(LATIN 101 AND 102)

Dear Latin Student,

Welcome to GMU's Latin program! The information provided in this syllabus will introduce you to the content and format of your first-year Latin classes. It pertains to all sections of Latin 101 and 102 and explains the structures and procedures of your class. It is your responsibility carefully to familiarize yourself with the content of these pages. The instructor of the section in which you are enrolled will supplement this syllabus with specific information about your individual course section, such as time and place of office hours, etc.

I. RELATION OF LATIN COURSES TO LIBERAL-ARTS EDUCATION:

The value of a liberal-arts education is primarily humanistic and intellectual, not practical. While many courses outside the humanities emphasize personal experiences and the acquisition of skills, humanities courses are primarily concerned with intellectual understanding, critical thinking, interpretation of works of art and literature (study of languages is therefore an integral part of liberal education), and the ability to make well-informed judgments based on thorough knowledge of a given body of works or knowledge. Chiefly, students learn to read and interpret great literature, both in its historical context and in regard to its influence on the modern world (in the latter area there lies the timelessness of classical literature); they also receive training in clarity and accuracy of thought and its expression both orally and in writing. As part of this training they acquire fundamental techniques of inquiry, logical analysis, and literary interpretation. Through study of other cultures – in Classics courses these are the cultures of Greece and Rome, which founded and shaped all of Western civilization – students become acquainted with the world at large and learn that the past is always present and important.

As a result, attentive students learn to view themselves and each other in an enlightened perspective, to think more deeply about important issues in their lives and in their society, and to participate intelligently in a modern democracy, *e.g.* by being able to separate stronger from weaker arguments. The humanities, which are based on great works and on the languages in which these works were written, also teach us about self-examination and the meaning of duties, rights, and responsibilities beyond ourselves. While liberal arts do not teach vocations (*cf.* above), anyone well-trained in the humanities will be able to take up a vocation with greater ease, mental versatility, and success than those lacking such training. Corporate leaders have again and again confirmed the truth of this in their hiring of humanities graduates. Not least, the humanities open our hearts and minds to the beauty and emotional power inherent in the great works on which human culture and civilization rest.

The study of Latin is one of the best foundations (proven over two millenia) to prepare students for all these aspects of the liberal arts. Latin courses train students to think logically and analytically, to become aware of and learn how to use grammar and sentence structure, the necessary basis for clear and accurate expository writing and speaking, and to increase their English vocabulary.

As George Orwell emphasized, every time we fail to use words with concern for their truthfulness, we leave behind, increasingly, the honesty of everything we express in words. Today in particular, the border between fact and fiction is becoming more and more vague (*cf.* advertisements, political or ideological slogans of any kind, mass media, *etc.*). Fuzzy thinking, ignorance, and manipulation are the result. Latin, one of the most precise systems of thought and expression ever developed, will help you see through the fogs of obscurantism and defeat its insidiousness.

In addition, knowledge of Latin is the best starting point to study any of the other European languages. Latin courses also introduce you to the language, literature, culture, and history of ancient Rome, the civilization on which Western and American societies have modeled themselves most directly. In general, neither serious research nor creative work in the humanities is possible without a good knowledge of Latin (and classical Greek).

II. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF LATIN COURSES:

Latin 101 and 102 (Elementary Latin I and Elementary Latin II) provide students with a proficiency-oriented immersion in beginning Latin which is geared primarily toward reading comprehension. Emphasis is on the thorough study of the fundamentals of grammar (morphology and syntax) and vocabulary. At the end of two semesters, successful students will possess a firm grasp of all basic Latin grammar and of an extensive basic vocabulary. The continuation courses, Latin 201 and 202 (Intermediate Latin I and Intermediate Latin II), practice and deepen students' knowledge acquired the first year. These courses provide extensive readings of more advanced texts with an ongoing immersion into syntax and vocabulary.

III. REQUIRED TEXTS USED IN LATIN 101 AND 102:

Lingua Latina, Part I (our textbook)
A Student's Latin Grammar (our grammar book).

IV. EXAMINATIONS:

Short quizzes at the completion of each class, three 75-minute exams, and a Final Exam. Any quiz or exam missed will count as F. There will be no make-up quizzes or any kind of extra-credit work. The three lowest quiz grades will be discounted at the end of the semester.

Materials covered on exams: In LATIN 101:

First Exam: *Lingua Latina*, chs. 1-4;
Second Exam: *Lingua Latina*, chs. 1-8;
Third Exam: *Lingua Latina*, chs. 1-12;
Final Exam: *Lingua Latina*, chs. 1-15.

Materials covered on exams: In LATIN 102:

First Exam: *Lingua Latina*, chs. 1-18;
Second Exam: *Lingua Latina*, chs. 1-22;
Third Exam: *Lingua Latina*, chs. 1-26;
Final Exam: *Lingua Latina*, chs. 1-27.

Grading Scale:

91-100% = A

81- 90% = B

71- 80% = C

61- 70% = D

0- 60% = F

All exams will include practical tests of students' mastery of grammar and vocabulary. You will be asked to decline and conjugate words or phrases, to answer Latin questions in Latin, to change grammatical structures of given Latin sentences, to supply Latin words or their endings in context, and to translate a self-contained Latin passage into English (*cf.* below under X.) Translations are the best way for you to demonstrate how accurately you can integrate all you have learned up to that point. Latin stories on the 50-minute exams will be adapted from those in our textbook.

Exams must be taken in class at their scheduled times. A schedule of class (including Chapters to be covered and Exam dates) will be provided at the beginning of the semester to allow you sufficient time for a concentrated review on your own. In cases of serious conflicts of schedule students who wish to take a make-up exam (not a quiz; *cf.* above) must notify their instructor at least one week before the scheduled exam. Only major emergencies, usually of a medical nature, are excepted from this requirement. In accordance with university regulations, students who wish to make special arrangements about an exam for religious reasons must notify their instructor by the end of the second week of classes.

Outside aid in preparation for exams, such as studying or reviewing materials with others, is perfectly acceptable and indeed encouraged; however, no aid or communication with others is permitted during any exam. *Cf.* below under XI.

For the date of the deadline for dropping a class without special permission from the dean's office consult the current schedule of classes.

V. GRADING SYSTEM FOR EXAMS IN ALL LATIN COURSE SECTIONS:

A grade of Incomplete will be given only in accordance with university regulations, which are outlined in the current Catalog *s.v.* "Grading Policies."

Grades are statements about work done in a course; they are not statements about a student's character or personality. It does not matter how much time you spend studying; the only thing that counts is what you get out of studying. As explained below (V-IX), you will be responsible for a great deal of learning, memorizing, translating, and reviewing in and outside class. A successful course is one in which you realize that you are increasing your intellectual skills. The extent of such success is up to you. As the Roman emperor and philosopher Marcus Aurelius observed: "Everybody is worth exactly the value of the things he has seriously pursued."

VI. COURSE GRADE:

Course grades are determined solely by the achievement and performance demonstrated in a student's written work. This means that you, and only you, determine which grade you receive. Your work will be weighed on the following scale:

Average grade of quizzes = 1/4 of grade;
Four 75-minute exams = 3/4 of grade

Oral class participation (*cf.* below under VIII) is usually decisive in borderline cases. The university allows only clerical errors as the basis for a change in a course grade after it has been submitted to the registrar's office. No later work can therefore be accepted to improve a grade.

Examples of Commonly Encountered False Logic About Grades:

BECAUSE I've worked really hard;
BECAUSE I didn't miss any classes (or hardly any);
BECAUSE I read or studied everything and I took lots of notes;
BECAUSE I really enjoy this class;
BECAUSE I paid for this course;
BECAUSE I have A's (or A's and B's) in all my other classes;

THEREFORE I deserve an A (or at least a B)."

WHY IS THIS FALSE LOGIC? BECAUSE GRADES ARE BASED ON PERFORMANCE AND ACHIEVEMENT ONLY.

VII. CLASS ATTENDANCE:

Attendance and attentiveness at every class period is essential for successful work above the level of D. Since class activities provide what you cannot do on your own or with fellow-students, there is no substitute for attendance. As experience shows, absenteeism is the surest way toward low or failing grades; the number of students cutting classes is directly proportional to those receiving F's. Attendance is checked every class, recorded, and weighed.

For the sake of a class atmosphere as conducive to learning as possible, you may not bring food or drink to class. (This rule is in keeping with general university policy.) Eating or drinking in class seriously interferes with your attentiveness, distracts both your neighbors and yourself, and shows bad manners into the bargain.

Electronic Devices: Cell phones, pagers, laptops and tablets (*e.g.*, iPads) and other communicative devices are not allowed in this class. Please keep them off, stowed away, and out of sight.

VIII. CLASS PARTICIPATION:

Students are strongly encouraged to participate in discussions, ask questions, *etc.* Grades are directly related to students' attentiveness to and interest in the subject. You will find quizzes and exams much easier if you have been active in class.

IX. HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS AND STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

Since our textbook works through an intensive immersion method, your conscientious co-operation in the learning process is the prerequisite for your success. Your instructor will introduce and explain all new material and will always welcome your questions. But since classes meet only for less than three hours per week, we can teach you only if we are able to rely

on your own commitment to learn. This commitment primarily involves intensive and regular memorization of vocabulary and morphology.

You are responsible for all material covered in class. Even without specific reminders you must spend a regular amount of time on homework. A study period of two hours a day, including weekends and minor holidays, is the necessary minimum for you to accomplish the following essential tasks:

- work through and translate for yourself the text in any given chapter of our text-book and occasionally read through earlier chapters for quick reviews; —do all the exercises in each chapter (best done in writing);
- memorize all new vocabulary in a given chapter and review old vocabulary; —review all new grammar and consult your grammar books for reinforcement whenever necessary;
- practice new morphology in connection with previously covered materials, especially in preparation for quizzes;
- prepare a list of questions to be asked in class if you have any problems, e.g. with translating or understanding.

All sections of first-year Latin proceed along the lines of teaching and studying here described. The teaching faculty provide regular office hours for consultation, practice, and review as out-of-class support to ensure students' progress. If you run into difficulties or are beginning to fall behind – or, even better, before this happens! – be sure to avail yourself of this opportunity for individual or small-group instruction.

If, for whatever reason, you are either not willing or not able to commit the requisite amount of time and effort to this course, you might wish to drop it at the beginning of the semester or after the first exam at the latest. Your exam and quiz grades at that time will tell you where you stand and where you are likely to go. A grade lower than C on your first exam in either Latin 101 or 102 is a clear indication and a serious warning that you are not on the level necessary for successful completion of the course since you do not possess the minimum knowledge on which everything else will build. This advice pertains in particular to students who are carrying a heavy course load or have serious other obligations, such as full- or part-time work.

Students without a firm grasp of grammatical concepts and without solid knowledge of vocabulary will run into insurmountable problems later. For this reason it is every student's own responsibility to engage in regular reviews of all grammar and vocabulary both during and between semesters. Students who fail to do so will be likely to drop by at least one full grade per month of non-review. Example: a student with a grade of B in Latin 101 who fails to review over Christmas break is unlikely to do better than C-level work in Latin 102. Students who receive a course grade lower than C in any given semester should not proceed to the next course in the sequence since they lack the necessary level of knowledge and preparation on which work in later semesters will build.

X. TRANSLATIONS:

Students in all Latin classes will regularly do a considerable amount of translating Latin into English, especially on exams. The purpose of these translations is to demonstrate to yourself and to your instructor that you understand the way Latin works; that is to say, that you have mastered the morphology, grammar, and vocabulary covered in class and that you are progressing toward the chief goal of all first- and second-year language courses: the ability to use a language independently of an instructor after four semesters of training. Translations are therefore not a goal in themselves; rather, they are the best way for you to show your proficiency both to yourself and to your instructor. For this reason it is a good idea to stay as closely as possible to the original Latin sentence structure in your translations and to be only as free as necessary for the sake of writing idiomatic English. Accuracy is the standard according to which your translations as well as all your other work will be evaluated. As explained above, the level of accuracy you achieve is entirely up to you.

XI. HONOR SYSTEM:

George Mason University participates in an honor system which has existed in Virginia since 1842. The GMU Honor Code provides that a student's word is a declaration of good faith acceptable as truth in all academic matters. Specifically, the Honor Code applies to all your written work submitted for a grade. When you signed your application for admission to the university, you agreed to conform to its Honor Code. By putting your name to your exam, quiz, homework, or other written assignment, you certify that you are the only person who has produced the work you hand in. Both students and faculty are charged to report violations of the Honor Code to the Honor Committee. Anybody caught cheating or plagiarizing therefore need not ask for mercy or a "break." Enrollment in this class constitutes your acknowledgment that you have received fair warning that cheating, plagiarism, and other kinds of intellectual dishonesty will not be tolerated. In this course you are required to familiarize yourself with the rules and regulations of the Honor Code by consulting the appropriate pages in the current Catalog.

XII. SOME FINAL NOTES:

Your instructors both in Latin and in Classical Studies courses hope that you will have an educationally and intellectually stimulating and rewarding experience in the courses they offer. These are

- Latin 101-202: language courses;
- Latin 351, 352, 451, 452: courses in Roman literature. They are the continuation of the language courses and represent the "pay-off," as it were, for previous work;
- courses listed under Classics in the Schedule of Classes.

These are courses on different aspects of classical literature, civilization, history, and their tradition. We will be happy to be of any assistance to you as much as we can, so do not hesitate to get in touch with us if we can help you with a problem. You are also welcome to stop by our offices if you simply want to introduce yourself, talk about Romans or Greeks, or find out more about the field of Classical Studies or about the humanities in general.