

Classical Studies Podcast Transcript

Alex:

Greetings and welcome to Iowa State University's Podcast program on languages and cultures! My name is Alex Ely and I will be your host for today's show about the Classical Studies program at ISU. We have an interesting show for you today. I will be sharing with you what Iowa State University has to offer regarding the curriculum, activities, and study abroad opportunities within the Classical Studies program. But before we start, ISU alum, Professor Frederick Schwink, reminds us why it's important to learn a human language:

Frederick:

Learning any foreign language, be it Latin, ancient Greek, German or anything else enriches you in a way that is important, whatever your career is. I've rarely learned anything that hasn't somehow been relevant in my life as a whole.

Alex:

Ancient Greek and Latin are languages that had an enormous impact on many of the languages most commonly spoken today in the world. Many of the words in modern English are derived from these ancient languages. If you are considering a career in say, science, law or medicine, chances are that you will become very close friends with many technical terms derived from Latin and ancient Greek. So having a background in either or both of these ancient languages would give you a great advantage. But who better than professors at ISU to give you an overview of the many possibilities waiting for you in a classical studies major.

Madeleine:

My name is Madeleine Henry; I'm a professor of Classical Studies here at Iowa State. That means I teach courses in Greek and Latin and historical topics and literary topics. I am also in charge of the Classical Studies program so I help the program move forward and grow and organize events for us and try to help students figure out more things about their study. Our major right now is an independent major and we have kind of a template for it. Like other majors it requires some core credits, about 25 and the main things that make it different from other humanities majors

is we require three semesters of Greek or Latin and then we have a combination of basic courses in Classical Studies like our ancient city course or our mythology course and then a mixture of literary courses, material, culture, ancient history and we require at least one semester of Roman history. So that's the nutshell for Classical Studies major and the minor is just a smaller version of that.

Alex:

Did you know that even though Latin is no longer a spoken language, it is still used to communicate? YLE, a Finnish Broadcasting Company, produces Nuntii Latini, a radio station in Latin. Shows in Classical Latin, such as a weekly review of world news, are available through this unique international broadcast and you can even discuss topics of interest in Latin in a discussion board. For more information and a link to the YLE website, please visit our webpage www.language.iastate.edu and click on PODCAST. The Classical studies program at Iowa State University is one of the most interdisciplinary fields in the humanities. By participating in this program you will embark on a fascinating journey that will take you to explore many aspects of the Greco-Roman world. But if you are still wondering why study an ancient language, listen to these insights from Professor Henry. This is what she told us when we asked her why would anyone study Latin:

Madeleine:

Oh it's like why wouldn't anybody study Latin. First of all it's very practical to study Latin; I know you might think "How can that be because Latin isn't spoken anymore?" Latin has given the world its scientific and technical terminology, Latin and Greek. It has been the ancestor of the romance languages, so if you're interested in Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, you need to be interested in Latin because about three quarters of the words in those languages come from Latin. Of course it has had a major effect on English too; about two thirds of our words in English come from Latin. It's also very very beautiful and a lot of wonderful stuff was written in it. Major documents of western civilization, beautiful poetry, I don't know what else to say. Those are the reasons that I would encourage anybody to study Latin. Also if you study Latin your SAT scores and your LSAT scores are going to higher than the scores of people who didn't study Latin.

Alex:

So what if you would like to get started with Latin at ISU but missed the opportunity to sign up for it this semester. Well, it may not be too late. Listen to this new development at ISU:

Peggy:

We're going to put online, completely online, our beginning Latin sequence, Latin 101 and Latin 102. This is not going to replace our classroom courses; you can take classroom versions of Latin 101 and 102 but because so many people get interested in studying Latin sometimes when they are far along in their academic programs at Iowa State we want to enable them to start it in the summer or in January and complete it that way. We want people aren't on campus whether they're high school students or maybe Spanish teachers out there wanting to get introduced to the Latin language. Maybe people who had Latin a long time ago in school who would like to learn it again enable them to start it and have an online experience.

Alex:

As the Classical Study webpage states, "The major in Classical Studies is ideal for students fascinated with the ancient world, and provides an understanding of how language, politics, history, material culture and art are all inextricably interconnected." So far we have given you some information on Latin. But what about ancient Greek?

Peggy:

I'm Professor Peggy Mook and I'm a classicist and my specialty is in Greek archeology. I especially work on material culture from the late Bronze Age to the classical period so roughly 1200 B.C. down to around 450 B.C. is my area of specialization, typically pottery and household. Actually I became interested in Classical Studies by going on a study abroad program to Greece. It was lead by two classicists where the focus was looking at the remains of ancient Greece both the prehistoric and historic remains and it really captured my imagination and I had been mathematics major. I came back to school after the study abroad program in the summer and changed my major to Greek with a minor in Latin and I switch my classes to Greek, Latin and archeology class. Ancient Greek is an interesting language, a challenging language to study. Of

course for me the primary reason that one would want to read it is so that you could read the ancient sources written originally in Greek in their original text, which is the best way to understand them. Beyond that a student would benefit from taking Ancient Greek because it will improve your understanding of English, a lot of important English words are based upon Greek words. It's also a language, because of its complexities, grammatically speaking, it also teaches you a way to think logically and to analyze sentences and it really helps you with critical thinking skills and problem solving. We frequently get a lot of engineer students who take Greek and they do very well because it suits the way that they think.

Alex:

As you heard from professor Mook, a study abroad experience can be extremely rewarding and virtually change your life. That's why the Classical Studies Program encourages Iowa State students to take advantage of the many opportunities to enhance their curriculum through the study of the classical world in Greece, Italy, and many other places. Iowa State has two programs with strong Classics components: Classics' own *Study Abroad: The Archaeology of Greece* program; and Art and Design's program in Italy, *Popes and Caesars: 2000 Years of Art History in Rome*. We asked professor Mook to give us more details on the study abroad program offered by Classical Studies.

Peggy:

The primary program that Classical Studies currently offers is a study abroad program in the archeology of Greece which I regularly offer. This summer we will be taking students to actually participate in an excavation but this will be the last time for that particular program. Beginning in the summer of 2008 we'll go back to our three week study tour program which usually lasts three weeks and takes place in the month of May. That's a program where we'll spend five or six days maybe a week in Athens and then travel around to other parts of Greece to explore the different periods of ancient Greek history and different remains and different aspects of the topography. I'm hoping in the future that when we do this to some extent, say at least a week of the three week program, we'll take in to account the sights that those participating students that year particularly wanted to see. I should also add we're hoping that Professor Hollander who is in the history

department and also a person in the Classical Studies program, he and I are also talking about in the future developing a program where we would take students to Italy for part of the program and we then to Greece for part of the program. That's still very much in the developmental stages but it is something that we hope to be able to offer students in the future.

Alex:

As you have heard, the classical studies program at ISU gives you many different options to become actively involved in the learning of ancient languages and cultures. But that is not all there is to it. If you are an undergraduate student of classical Greek or Latin and you challenge yourself to a high level of achievement, yet one more option becomes available to you.

Peggy:

Eta Sigma Phi is the Greek and Latin honor society. Our students who do particularly well in first year Latin or Greek or any level beyond that are inducted into this. It's a national honor society. This is a group that participates in various activities, depending on the particular year and the level of student interest. They have in the past done things like sponsored film festivals; do toga parties, cook ancient meals based on cook books that are derived from to some extent ancient sources and other sources as well.

Alex:

I hope we have helped you become informed of the many options within the Classical studies program. For more information on classical studies at ISU, please make sure to check out the program's website, which is linked to our website under Academic Programs. Our website address is www.language.iastate.edu. Once again, thanks for joining me and I hope you'll tune in next week for another exciting Podcast on languages and cultures from Iowa State University. If you would like to send us feedback, send us an email to podcast@iastate.edu. This project is an initiative of the ISU Foreign Language Learning Resource Center and was funded in part by a recruitment and retention grant from the Professional and Scientific Council and the ISU Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. Laura Centeno-Diaz is our show coordinator, Mehmet Sahin is our interviewer and advisor, Keith Swanson is our technical support, Julio Rodriguez is our advisor,

and my self Alex Ely, am your host.

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