

Teaching Latin in a Hybrid Class
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Starting in Fall 2008, introductory Latin at The University of Alabama is taught solely through a hybrid online course using Blackboard Vista software. This paper will describe the rationale behind the hybrid program, the methods used to teach Latin, and the benefits and drawbacks of this method as opposed to the traditional in-class model.

Language instruction lends itself to blended learning, since much of the work is independent – the student himself must memorize and then learn to apply the grammatical concepts to translation. Only part of the time in the traditional classroom is spent lecturing on the grammar; much of it is taken up with memorization of forms, exercises, and student questions. In the hybrid model the website becomes the primary place for memorization, practice, and support for the homework through various methods. These include audio files, self-tests and drills, discussion boards and chat rooms, sample translations, and tip sheets.

The hybrid model fosters independent and collaborative learning. The onus is placed on the student to access the files necessary to his understanding of the material, yet at the same time support is available at any hour. Students can view or hear the files most useful to them, and spend as much or as little time as needed. Questions can be answered and homework problems solved with their peers in the discussion boards. The course is streamlined for the professor as well; class time can be maximized to focus on the basic grammar, while the finer points – reading aloud, comments about homework or quizzes, vocabulary review, and administrative concerns -- are put on the website. Some grading and record-keeping can be done by the computer as well.

There are drawbacks to this method of instruction, however, particularly keeping students on track. The hybrid model is superior to a fully online course in this respect, however, since students have contact with the instructor and classmates at least once a week. Regular assessments and assignments can also be used to motivate students.

The flexibility of the blended learning model makes it useful to both students and instructors. It makes the most of the available technology while still allowing for instructor-student interaction, thus increasing the benefits towards student comprehension of Latin.