

Teaching Latin to the 21st Century Student

It is no secret that 21st century Latin teachers of every level are faced with any number of new challenges that their 20th century counterparts were for various reasons simply not. Every year, students come to Latin for the first time later and later in their lives – and generally with far less (and often inadequate) grammatical preparation. In response to the modern student's unique needs, the so-called 'modern languages' are intentionally taking an approach that privileges speaking to the express exclusion of grammar. And although wonderful strides have of late been made in the spreading of spoken Latin, it remains for the time being more of a fringe phenomenon. So until spoken Latin takes a firmer hold, as attention deficit disorders become ever more prevalent and attention spans ever shorter, we Latin teachers must find another way to reach our 21st century students.

In my talk, I'd like to do several things. First, I will identify the unique challenges teachers of Latin face in the 21st century. Second, I will compare and contrast the strategies adopted in the modern, 'spoken' languages to show how our challenges (and their solutions) are signally different. Third, I will propose some suggestions on how to confront these challenges and turn potential problems into opportunities. For instance, instead of complaining about our students' diminished attention-spans and reliance on technology to satisfy their ever-expanding needs for aural and visual stimulation, I say that we stereotypically 'backward-looking' Classicists should stop resisting the flow of change and rather embrace the amazing possibilities new technologies can provide for learning.

To this end, I will share some of the most successful strategies I've adopted over the past several years in my own Latin classroom. Varying the day's activities, for instance, seems

essential; too much of anything is bound to impel minds to wander. As such, I incorporate as many and as varied stimuli as possible. By utilizing video clips from movies or recordings of songs in Latin, we can play on our students' strengths and ensure a more memorable learning experience. Classics like *Life of Brian*'s "Romanes eunt domus" graffito are an eternal favorite, but even bad folk-song renditions of Latin poetry set to guitar can be invaluable for their very tackiness. The age of the ubiquitous music is at hand, and we need to take advantage of this.

Another seemingly inexhaustible font of wonderful material comes from YouTube. Innovative teachers the country-wide are encouraging their students to make their own video-clips for class projects and post them to the World Wide Web. Whether they are mnemonic jingles to help memorize declensions, recitations of metrical poems set to modern pop songs, or skits illustrating a given grammatical point, incorporating these new technologies always seems to get the students excited and engaged. The traditional grammatical lecture, too, can and should be ever-updated. I myself have found a lot of success in creating mnemonics my students couldn't forget if they tried, such as the 'iPod' independent uses of the subjunctive, or 'MP3s that end with T' for impersonal verbs that take the genitive.

Given the nature of this talk, I will require audio-visual equipment capable of presenting a power-point presentation and, ideally, internet access so that I can display some of the wonderful materials available to us on the Web.