

Pragmatic Gaming and Virtual Realities in the Classics Classroom

In 2025, it is an uncontroversial statement to say that a large portion of our students are exposed to the ancient world through video games. While the medium might still be stigmatized among some, others have embraced the possibilities that games and virtual reality offer to introduce a wider audience to antiquity. This presentation is not concerned with making further arguments for the serious treatment of such media. Instead, it details the experience of teaching and the results of a course centered on these aspects offered by the Classics Department at a university, “The Ancient World in Video Games.” It also offers resources and suggestions for instructors wanting to introduce interactive media into their classrooms at a variety of levels from K-12 and in both Ancient History and Latin courses.

Instead of a technology meant to emulate or replace instruction, games and virtual realities offer new tools for engaging students within the classroom and for drawing the interest of prospective students to Classics, Ancient History, and Archaeology. The presentation seeks to demystify such practices for instructors and offers an introduction to games and their classroom usage. While games and virtual realities broaden accessibility into the ancient world for modern audiences, they also present new accessibility issues for modern classrooms (i.e., the cost of platforms and the games themselves). This presentation offers solutions for such issues encountered during the course creation and based on student feedback. Ultimately, interactive media is a useful resource that has concurrently grown with advances in digital humanities, offering new avenues through which digital worlds can interact with ancient ones.