

## Distant Team-Teaching a first-year seminar on War and Remembrance

Team-teaching looms large in our graduate training. In our first classroom experience we may serve as teaching assistants running discussion sections for a large lecture. Later, on the job at a small college, we may take advantage of collaborative programs like Synoikisis, in which individual faculty members from different institutions create a common syllabus and supplement local language instruction with virtual guest lectures. Alternatively, we may pair up with faculty from a different discipline at our own institution in an interdisciplinary course. Each of these models has many benefits, but also limitations for the classicist at a small liberal arts college. We don't offer large lecture courses and have no TAs; increasingly we are teaching courses that are not in the languages; finally, staffing and curricular constraints make team-teaching with local colleagues a rare luxury.

In this paper we present our experience team-teaching a first-year seminar. The course is jointly developed and independently implemented by two classicists teaching at different colleges 200 miles apart. We believe that our cooperation may be unique in terms of the nature of the course and of our collaboration, and we hope that by reporting on our experiment we can spark a helpful dialogue. These days classicists often teach many of their courses in translation, and we compete for student enrollments with other disciplines. In particular, at small colleges administrators are currently touting first-year seminars.

Our collaboration happens mainly behind the scenes; the syllabus is co-written, but is also individually customized to fit our different skill sets, interests, and students. We operate in a bilateral mode; each instructor picks and chooses which aspects of the other section to implement. Several advantages arise from this mode of collaboration. (1) We can be nimble at managing and adjusting the structure of our individual courses since we are not obliged to follow the same

template. (2) We have the advantage of input and support from a colleague, but in the end each of us makes a fully personal imprint on our own course design. (3) Because we are each more aware of the institutional framework of another college, where there is much overlap and similarity in terms of philosophy and curriculum, but also substantial difference, we gain a fuller perspective and have a wider base of comparison for course design and student evaluation. (4) We exchange materials, and this exposes each of us to new ideas, and saves time in the production of documents (for example, guidelines for assignments), which partly offsets the time taken up by collaborative planning and reflection on what is working in class, and what is not. (5) To some extent we also have the benefit typical of a team-taught course with two instructors in the same classroom, where different teaching personalities complement and balance each other. Most importantly, however, we find that our collaboration counteracts professional isolation, while broadening the range of topics we are able to teach.

We believe that we have found a subject for such a seminar that fits the dual need of being firmly grounded in classics and yet is interdisciplinary and broadly appealing: War and Remembrance. The subject is timely due to America's continued involvement in the War on Terror and the current WW1 centennial. The fact that the way America remembers, both in text and monument, happens in a tradition deeply influenced by classical models, makes the topic especially suitable for classicists. Pedagogically, the interdisciplinary nature of the subject provides an opportunity to engage students with various kinds of primary resources, in both text and image, ranging from reexamining the familiar (such as the Gettysburg address) to acquiring the skills to tackle complex unfamiliar ones (such as Lattimore's *Iliad*). The syllabus juxtaposes antiquity with modern American and European material, and thus connects classics with the world around us, in which we are surrounded by war memorials. (Many small American towns are home

to monuments with lists of the dead, a commemorative technique whose origins lie in classical Athens, and these sites are excellent opportunities for field trips.) The theme of War and Remembrance also serves our mission as humanists, by engaging such essential human concerns as life and death, war and healing.

In our presentation we begin by briefly explaining our different situations in terms of department, institution, and students. This explanation leads to discussion of our syllabi, where we highlight overlap and differences (all materials will be made available to those interested). We discuss the mechanics of our collaboration and offer suggestions based on our experience with the hope of generating a discussion that will be fruitful for us and the audience.