

Ab ovo usque ad mala: Creating a Latin Hybrid Course

Beginning in Spring 2016, our university is transitioning first semester Latin from four to three days of classroom time with one “class period” of asynchronous time. For this asynchronous class period, students will be expected to prepare (i.e. through normal homework) and then engage with 50 minutes of interactive course materials online at their leisure within a proscribed 36-hour period. This paper discusses the departmental reasons, pedagogical frameworks, logistical challenges, and practical methods informing this transition.

Many secondary and collegiate Classics programs struggle to maintain both high enrollments and standards. A hybrid (or blended) language course, with in-class and online components, can help with both of these challenges. By removing in-class meetings on Tuesdays, more students can fit Latin into a schedule composed of traditional divisions of M/W/F and T/Th classes. By moving grammar drills and basic sentence analysis into online spaces, in-class meeting time is preserved for addressing identified trouble spots and higher-level analytical work. Effective use of in-class time is especially important in our model, which reduces the number of contact minutes per week. Even so, a student’s time-on-task with the language increases, since those 50 minutes of online work require their attention and interaction 100% of the time (a feat often difficult to attain in a large classroom). Students also receive more individualized feedback that allows them to self-diagnose weak areas in their learning and take greater ownership of their learning. Research suggests that hybrid models like this can be more effective for students than courses meeting entirely in person or entirely online (Means 2009).

Modern languages making such transitions are routinely supported by robust online materials provided by textbook publishers; for Latin and Greek, instructors are typically left to

their own devices to create content (e.g. Rosenbecker and Sullivan 2014) or find content online (e.g. Davis's 2013 blog post collecting Greek and some Latin resources). One serious impediment to using free online exercises, YouTube videos, etc, for an asynchronous hour is that student activity online cannot be easily measured. By contrast, student behavior within a campus Learning Management System (LMS) is typically recorded by that LMS and available in some capacity to the instructor. Sakai, the LMS in use at our university, has a "Statistics" tool that allows instructors to see when and how often students click on resources, when quizzes are taken and submitted, and various other metrics. These various analytical data provide an easy way to keep students accountable and also to evaluate how well the course materials are serving their purposes. By the time of this presentation, we will have preliminary data from a partial trial occurring in Fall 2015 and from the first half of the fully hybrid course in Spring 2016.

Currently available online drills are unsatisfactory not only because they fail to offer the instructor proper analytics, but also because most exercises are limited to grammar charts or vocabulary drills that do not engage the student in higher-order thinking. We thus embarked on an ambitious plan to create a bank of sophisticated drills and quizzes keyed to each chapter of *Wheelock's Latin*, 7th ed. This paper will discuss the hurdles to this process, including faculty time commitments, funding, evaluation of software options, technical assistance, creation of video content, assessment of student progress, and designing an architecture to host the material in the LMS. Moreover, it is important to properly archive materials so that they can be reused every semester, even by advanced Latin students as a review. And instructors (both regular faculty and graduate students) need to be trained to use this new technology effectively.

Many of our fellow classicists are already engaging in exciting projects to flip classes or create blended learning experiences (e.g. Muellner 2015). We hope that our experiences and

data will add useful information for our colleagues who are considering the practicalities and benefits of such course improvements for their programs.

Bibliography

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