

Bringing Rome Home: Collaborative Technologies for Roman Material Culture and History in the Latin Classroom

The Classical Summer School at the American Academy in Rome provides a unique opportunity for established and emerging teachers to collaborate on innovative tools and approaches to the teaching of Latin which also integrate significant aspects of Roman material culture and history. This workshop proposes to present two pedagogical projects that had their genesis during the CSS program, and that have been further developed and tested in beta form and/or in the classroom. Workshop participants will have the opportunity to demo the materials developed by these two projects and discuss ways these ideas could be further enhanced for application in diverse pedagogical environments.

Discenda: A web-based instructional module for Latin students

Discenda's compilation of texts is schematized both historically around changes to Rome's urban landscape, and pedagogically according to the developmental needs of L1 English L2 Latin learners. The historical scope of the project is focused on three periods of Rome's urban development: the Forum Romanum in the late Republic, the city at the time of the death of Caesar, and the city at the time of the death of the emperor Trajan. By selecting maps of the city on *Discenda's* main page, users can navigate to subpages about contemporary monuments, social institutions, and cultural practices. This is accomplished either by clicking on spaces within the maps themselves or by choosing items in the navigation bar. The temporal and spatial distribution of the subpages across the three periods reflects developments in Roman attitudes toward cultural practices and changes in the lived experiences of the city's inhabitants pursuant to Boatwright's (2012) recent textbook on Roman social and political life. So, while choosing the late Republican period gives students access to ideas from Livy and Vitruvius about the place of

gladiatorial games in the Forum Romanum at that time, texts describing the *naumachia* and the colosseum are only available by using the map of the city at the death of Trajan. This historical orientation responds well to the successes of educators who have implemented Content Based Instruction (CBI) in World Language classrooms, and addresses local, state, and national standards for the interdisciplinary study of foreign cultural communities. (Klee and Barnes-Carol 2006)

Discenda, however, seeks to offer an alternative approach to textual editing for L2 Latin learners that incorporates recent secondary language acquisition (SLA) research and instructional frameworks. Specifically, *Discenda* adapts VanPatten's model for Structured Input (SI) or Processing Instruction (PI) by identifying and diminishing the obstacles to input processing that slow SLA. Although *Discenda* remains a work in progress we are excited to expand the traditional corpus for L2 Latin instruction beyond canonical narrative sources to include material culture from ancient Rome. In this way, we can offer our users a rich immersive encounter with the topography of the ancient city that promotes SLA.

The Dirty Game of Politics: Collaborative Role-Playing

The second portion of the workshop focuses on the role-playing framework, implementation, logistical difficulties, and empirical findings of the *Reacting to the Past* game *Beware the Ides of March* (originally designed for a course at Michigan State University) as it was used in two Middle School introductory Latin classes. Game play began simultaneously in the fall of 2014 in separate independent schools with interactions being mediated through online technologies. Prior to implementation, we collectively adapted the game and created personalized lesson plans. During the workshop we will share qualitative data collected from

students and focused observations from each teacher to measure the effectiveness of role playing in a Middle School classroom.

Participation in a *Reacting Game* is performance-oriented and designed to deepen understanding of the historical narrative. In *Beware the Ides of March*, students are asked to think critically about the significance of Caesar's death and the ultimate outcome his death had on Roman Imperium. The game is spread out over the course of a semester, and immerses students in the decision-making motivations and mechanisms of ancient Roman politics, while also introducing them to aspects of Roman material culture and topography. Because roles are unscripted and classes are student led, results can vary and history can change.

While it is possible to adapt a role-playing model for the Middle School classroom, our initial conclusion reflects the logistical challenge of implementing this type of pedagogy on a Middle School schedule. Nonetheless, our observations will show that every student benefitted from the use of active role-play, inspiring students to think critically and develop a strong oral argument. Indeed the students maintain that they learn more from this type of lesson than any other. Because the current model presupposes a continuity difficult to maintain in Middle School, suggestions for improvements of the model will be discussed and an additional year of case study will begin in 2015.