

Hybrid Vigor: Networking with Online Partners in Small Language Classes

Classical Studies at my institution faces a situation common to many departments: while enrollment in our courses in translation is strong, enrollment in our languages vary, and numbers predictably thin out in the upper levels. This is especially true in upper-level Greek, where classes of two or three raise red flags with budget-conscious administrators. Although such small classes are a pleasure to teach because of the intense contact with the students, they wreak havoc on faculty member FTE's, which again raises flags with those same administrators. In the past, our department had solved this problem by offering these small upper-level languages as teaching overloads, but this year we decided to try something different. This presentation is a discussion of how our department partnered with the Paideia Institute, through their Telepaideia program, to offer our advanced Greek course as an online hybrid, and of the results so far as we go forward with the pilot course.

We decided to use our upper-level Homer class as the pilot program for Spring '18, based both on the small size of the group (2-3 students) and also on the academic strength and maturity of those students. The strategy for the semester is for the class to be anchored by six weeks with Loyola instructors in a brick and mortar classroom, and then to meet online with an instructor from the Paideia Institute for the other ten weeks of the term. An ideal division of labor would have the instructors for Paideia working with the students on their translation skills, while the time in class with their Loyola instructors would be spent on exams, presentations, and discussions of secondary works.

At the time of the presentation, roughly three-quarters of the way through the pilot semester, we should be able to discuss the merits of offering the course in this hybrid model, as well as some of the issues we were not able to anticipate upon proposing such a course. In

particular, we will be focusing on the student experience. Current wisdom on the value of hybrid classes is that they create a “best of both worlds” phenomenon for the students, allowing for greater flexibility in approaching materials, increased interaction with instructors, and other beneficial intangibles that come from multiple formats for learning. Included in the presentation will be examples of activities and assignment given in both brick-and-mortar and online settings, as well as preliminary feedback from the students about their experience with the class.