

Classics and STEM at a Small Liberal Arts College: Rethinking the Senior Seminar

At any size institution, Classics benefits from STEM allies, and that is perhaps even more true at a small liberal arts college. At my institution, in addition to teaching a seminar on Greek and Roman medicine and an introductory course on the history of epidemic diseases, both of which count towards our Global Health minor, I plan to pilot a senior seminar for Classics majors in spring 2021 on ancient medicine. More specifically, the course will focus on the healing god Asklepios and will have the students creating materials for community outreach based on what they learn.

This is a new model for senior seminar at my institution. Traditionally, we've had students produce research papers as the culminating experience in the course, which is also the culminating experience in the major due to the fact that the seminar takes place in the second semester of senior year. It will come as no surprise that we often find the quality of these papers lacking and have been looking for a way to offer a more meaningful experience. It is also the case that we deem outreach necessary for the future of Classics, both at the liberal arts college where I teach and more broadly as an academic discipline. Our solution for senior seminar, then, is to try pivoting towards outreach as a primary outcome. And who better to serve as Classics ambassadors to our local communities than senior majors who have bought into the value and joy of Classics and have training in the field?

The inspiration for my decision to build a capstone seminar, with outreach, around Asklepios comes from several places: my own research interests in ancient medicine, our students' interests in STEM (Classics majors at my institution often carry another major or a minor in STEM), and the visionary educational outreach of the Corinth Museum in Greece,

including a specific initiative on Asklepios (<https://www.ascsa.edu.gr/teachers/k-12-educational-resources>).

In this paper, I will discuss the format of the course and how I plan to integrate study of ancient medicine more broadly with intensive analysis of the cult and with creation of a presentation and accompanying outreach materials. Given that health is a universal concern, one that transcends time and place, a presentation on this topic has potential for broad appeal. I imagine that it could be taken to local schools and other community organizations, including hospitals, retirement homes, veterans' groups. This seminar is but one example of the many ways that Classics is well positioned to tap into and enrich both student interest and more general interest in the historical and cultural aspects of STEM.