

## Classical Studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: More Relevant Than Ever

The Society for Classical Studies and the Archaeological Institute of America affirm the value and benefits of undergraduate and graduate academic engagement with classical antiquity. “Classics” once denoted the languages, histories and cultures, and material remains of the Greek and Roman societies dominant in the Mediterranean (~ 2000 BCE-500 CE) and contributing to European and American history, law and politics, and literature. Now, thanks to diverse perspectives and new technologies, the field looks to the present and future as well as the past, and it is ever more accessible. Contemporary classicists and archaeologists engage with cultural property and repatriation, for example; others read *The Iliad* with PTSD-afflicted veterans; still others compare empire-building in China and in Rome. Today the study of the Classical world stretches from antiquity to the future and encompasses regions far outside the Mediterranean.

As core humanities disciplines, Classical Studies and Archaeology advance undergraduates’ varied careers and goals in ways eloquently attested by the [National Humanities Alliance](#). Our statement focuses more specifically on the virtues of courses that your institution may offer through departments or programs in Classical Studies, Classics, Mediterranean Studies, and the like. Your own faculty and students would be happy to tell you more about these and other benefits, as well as the exciting work they do daily. In the meantime, we list some benefits here:

- The precision needed to explore cultures that peaked thousands of years ago and to interpret fragmentary remains builds critical thinking and other skills essential to all higher learning.
- Archaeology courses are a perfect bridge between STEM and the Humanities.
- Online epigraphic, papyrological, archaeological, and other types of classics databases hone skills in data curation and analysis.
- Learning Greek, Latin, and other languages and literature analyzed for centuries provides structured ways to understand language, and to internalize and improve syntax, vocabulary, and literary style.
- The history of the Mediterranean, marked by slavery, suppression of women and non-citizens, steep inequalities, and other rampant injustices, allows engagement with difficult issues that still resonate today.
- Classical political philosophy helped shaped our US Constitution and others; its grasp enables analysis and informed debate of current politics and governments.
- Ancient art and architecture have continued to influence sculptors, painters, buildings, and urban planning; Greek and Roman literature has resonated through the ages. Students investigate classical themes and elements re-imagined from Donatello to Vik Muniz, Paris’ Arc de Triomphe to the Lincoln Memorial and Mexico City’s *El Palacio de Bellas Artes*, or Shakespeare to Gwendolyn Brooks, and understand the importance of the past to the present.
- Ancient philosophy, by inquiring into the meaning of life and grappling with personal success and failure, allows students to reflect and connect with others.
- Archaeological field work provides experiential, collaborative, and vertical learning.
- Islamic scholars preserved and developed Greek and Roman science and medicine, one example of beneficial cross-cultural interactions significant for the Classics.

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