

Stanford University



Classics

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How can an educated person stay away from the Greeks? I have always been far more interested in them than in science.”

Albert Einstein

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Why Study Classics?

*To make a living
and To make a life.*

The first reason may not be obvious. But valuable skills can be gained from studying Greek, Latin, and the ancient Mediterranean contributions to civilization.

Classics teaches us to:

- Analyze data to detect and articulate trends, patterns, and styles
- Write elegantly and persuasively, and master a sophisticated vocabulary – 70 percent of English comes from Greek and Latin
- Understand cultural references reaching over three millennia

The second reason is about feeding the heart and soul. How should I live? What are humans created for? What forces beyond the human affect our lives? Where do our fundamental ideals and institutions come from? Classics offers an inexhaustible source of deep thinking and relevant comparisons that provide both intellectual and spiritual enrichment.



A Foundation of Knowledge

Studying the legacy of Greece and Rome opens new ways to understand the relevance of the ancient Mediterranean world in modern times—in arts and letters, science and medicine, geopolitics, law, entertainment, and religion. Students are trained to excel in logical analysis and ethical reasoning and to put complex problems into words.

Stanford's highly interdisciplinary classics program, one of the nation's largest, offers courses in Greek and Latin language and literature, ancient art, archaeology, philosophy, and history.

Tracks range from a focus on languages to ancient history. Students can pair classics with subjects ranging from biology and electrical engineering to English and political science.

There are many opportunities to study abroad. Students have also joined archaeological digs in Rome, Sicily, Britain, Israel, and Turkey.

Beyond the Classroom

Exploring the past in new ways

Faculty and students use the latest in digital imaging and data mapping to find new answers to questions about life in ancient and premodern times:

- **ORBIS: The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World**

Using geospatial technology to simulate movement along Roman roads, rivers, and sea routes, ORBIS reconstructs the duration and cost of travel in antiquity. This interactive project has attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors since its May 2012 launch.

- **Mapping the Grand Tour**

Undergraduates have used primary sources, such as personal letters, to design original visualizations of 18th-century travelers in Italy. These images are part of Mapping the Republic of Letters, a project portraying the correspondence exchanged between intellectuals during the Enlightenment.

A Successful Future

Critical thinking. Logic. Precision of language.

Armed with a classics degree, Stanford students enter a wide range of careers, including law, business, medicine, film, drama, journalism, government, education, and cultural preservation. Stanford alumni also find the exploration of classics a lifelong source of intellectual challenge and joy.

A Full Spectrum:

Stimulating courses on the ancient world

- **Antigone: From Ancient Democracy to Contemporary Dissent**
- **Ten Things: An Archaeology of Design**
- **Gender and Power in Ancient Greece**
- **Ancient Athletics**
- **Sappho: Erotic Poetess of Lesbos**

“ Studying classics opens our eyes to the reality that our everyday activities—our laws, our speech, and even our worldviews—are derived from foundational concepts. It was through classics that I started to wonder about the basics of everything around me. This curiosity led me straight to computer science, where even the most complex of machines can be distilled to fundamental bits of information. ”

Jon Madorsky, '14, Classics and Computer Science

“ Classics offers a disciplinary breadth—from art to history to philosophy—that enables students to sample the many components of a liberal education... The study of ancient Greek and Roman civilizations has fostered within me a logic and curiosity that have proved invaluable in classrooms, workplaces, and personal relationships. ”

Jacob Kovacs-Goodman, '13
Classics with a minor in Philosophy

“ Classicists have been exposed to the modern world in the making...As you have watched the Middle East erupt over the past few years and seen cultures of oligarchy and autocracy struggle with fledgling democracies, you are the ones who have had access to the original and best thinking about the nature of democratic government and the threat of tyranny and abuse of power.”

Excerpt from 2012 Classics commencement address by Carey Perloff, '80
Artistic Director of the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco

“ For all its reputation as a ‘fuzzy’ pursuit, studying classics prepared me well for the analytical thinking required in science. Translating the Greek sentence, much like interpreting results in the lab, requires the mind to hold multiple discrete conclusions in parallel until a great meaning emerges. Word by word, experiment by experiment, the picture comes into focus with logic, patience, and practice.”

Sarah Douglas, '07
Doctoral Candidate in Molecular & Cellular Biology, Harvard University

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School of **Humanities**
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