

Report on Research Methodologies Courses
Classics Department, Brooklyn College

The department is committed to engaging all undergraduates in meaningful, hands-on research, but recognizes that not all our students are ready to take on fully independent research projects without classroom structure, peer-support and faculty direction. It is also a budgetary impossibility to provide every major with individually tailored tutorial. To meet these challenges the department designed courses which embedded the hands-on independent research experience into a traditional class framework.

Role in the Major

<i>Concentration</i> → <i>Types of Courses</i> ↓	Ancient History	Languages	Literature	Material Culture
Basic Language Courses	9 credits of Latin <i>or</i> Greek	Both Latin and Greek (18 credits)*	9 credits of Latin <i>or</i> Greek	9 credits of Latin <i>or</i> Greek
3000 level Topics Courses	6 credits	3 credits	12 credits specifically focused on Literary Topics	3 credits
Specialty Courses	3 credits in a History Survey Course	18 credits in Language Classes above the 3012 level		Intro to Archaeology and 6 more credits on Material Culture Subjects
4000 level Research Courses	16 credits	8 credits	8 credits	8 credits

* - Students who place out of beginning and/or intermediate language levels may substitute other Classics courses for this requirement.

Research courses are designated by both their course numbers and the statement ‘emphasis on research methodologies’ in their bulletin description; they have as a pre-requisite English 1012, the second level English composition course that introduces students to writing research papers and at least sophomore standing. The current major is designed to allow students maximum flexibility while still providing structured progress through the degree.

Students with proven aptitude have the option to take 5000 level courses -- CLAS 5100 Independent Research, CLAS 5200 Research Assistantship – in place of 4000 level courses.

Connection with Departmental Goals

<p>The Classics program aims to help students achieve the following goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) mastery of the fundamental morphology, syntax and vocabulary of ancient Greek and/or Latin; familiarity with the influence that the Latin and Greek languages have exerted on English b) through learning at least one complex, highly inflected language, the ability to use language in general with analytical rigor and clarity c) a simultaneously broad and deep familiarity with the range of surviving cultural products from Greco-Roman antiquity, including both texts and material evidence d) an understanding of the diverse interpretive frameworks and contextualizing factors related to these cultural products, including literary trends, history, geography, and social patterns of ancient Greece, Rome, and their neighboring cultures e) the ability to build cogent and critically rigorous arguments rooted in textual and material evidence, arguments that respect the complexity and ambiguity of primary and secondary sources f) a familiarity with the influence that Greece and Rome have exerted on later phases of Western culture
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As outlined in more detail in the department's 2010 Self Study and the curriculum mapping done therein 4000 level courses with their emphasis on research methodologies help the department meet three of its pedagogic goals, including fostering in students a deep familiarity with cultural products (part of goal "C"), an understanding of the diverse interpretive frameworks and contextualizing factors related to these cultural products (goal "D"), but most especially "the ability to build cogent and critically rigorous arguments rooted in textual and material evidence, arguments that respect the complexity and ambiguity of primary and secondary sources" (goal "E").

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes must be tailored to the content of each specific course, but in order to ensure courses that fulfill the same major requirement share a high degree of continuity the department has developed templates and guidelines for each course type in our program. This is the basic model for research methodology courses:

1. Students use with accuracy and precision in writing assignments and classroom discussion the specialized vocabulary relevant to *the specified historical period or course theme* studied.
2. Students describe with precision *aspects of the course theme or historical period*, demonstrating an awareness of the possibilities of ambiguity or multiple perspectives.
3. Students articulate the socio-political and cultural issues which are necessary to contextualize *the course theme or historical period*.
4. Students develop their own well-informed research question(s) and project design.
5. Students collect meaningful and relevant primary evidence on which to base their argumentation.
6. Students identify and survey secondary scholarship relevant to their research project.
7. Students differentiate between primary sources and secondary literature, and critique their utility, as they employ both in their argumentation.
8. Students write clear, well-researched, and cogent research reports which build arguments based on specific primary sources.
9. Students discuss in an informal manner the development of their research project with their peers and course instructor, and also articulately present their findings to their peers and instructor in formal manner.

Delivery Methods

The Department of Classics respects the autonomy of the instructor in the classroom and encourages faculty to adapt and develop new, creative pedagogic techniques to help students meet the learning outcomes from their courses. That said, there are standard techniques commonly used in research methodologies courses. A typical set of assignments for a research methodology course looks like this:

Footnote Worksheet – Such an exercise is designed to have students follow up on academic citations, thus learning about the research process by retracing the work done by a professional scholar.

Off-Campus, Off-Line Research Experience – Students independently visit and utilize any number of city-wide resources, such as the open collection archives at the Metropolitan Museum or a specialist research library like the American Numismatic Society. Students too often think all the answers come from a few online sources. The emphasis on place-based, experiential learning helps them broaden their approach to identifying relevant source materials.

Search Term Quality Evaluation – This type of activity provides a structured series of exercises for the students to experiment with types of search terms and parameters in different online databases. This empowers them to become more efficient in their design of queries and their retrieval of quality materials in a digital age.

Research Journal or Blog or BlackBoard Discussion Board Entries - This includes not only confirmation of completion of required hours of independent research activity, but also successful completion of tasks and the ability to reflect on the experience. Multiple submissions allow the instructor to troubleshoot methodological issues and help students problematize their initial findings.

Staged Research Project – Assigning a single, large final paper only rewards the work of students who come into the class with the necessary skills; instead the project is broken down in a number of components: declaration of topic, formulation of question, annotated bibliography, preliminary conference, oral report, outline, rough draft, peer evaluation of rough draft, revisions, second conference, final draft, final conference.

Scheduling Practices

The department runs two to three 4000 level courses each academic year. They are always taught by full-time faculty engaged in research on a closely related topic. We aim to not repeat any topic in four semesters, thus diversifying the available topics for student engagement and allowing them to be exposed to different faculty approaches.

Evolution of Present Curriculum

The new bulletin language “3 hours plus independent research and conference”; 4 credits” only came into effect Fall 2012. However, the change was brought about after a gradual evaluation and assessment of the new major that was initially introduced in 2007. The departmental retreat in 2006 had initiated the division of the curriculum into different levels with specific learning outcomes, specifically the designation of certain courses as emphasizing research methodologies. As we implemented this emphasis it became clear that the level of independent work and individual conferences needed to meet the learning outcomes was not adequately reflected in the “3 hour, 3 credit” designation. We were asking too much of students and not adequately acknowledging their need for individual support. We had simultaneously created a Capstone Seminar with similar learning outcomes, designated as “4 hours, 4 credits” which was equally unsatisfactory for its heavy emphasis on classroom time--time better spent mentoring and supporting students in the design and implementation their own research projects. For Fall 2013 we have discontinued the capstone seminar in the Major, requiring instead at least two research methodologies courses.

Our current practice is highly informed by the curriculum model we put in place for our 5200 Research Assistantship course. The documents submitted to Faculty Council for this course articulated the principle that for 3 credits students were expected to spend 9 hours each week of the 15 weeks of the academic term assisting a senior scholar with a professional research project and meet at least fortnightly with their faculty advisor concerning the research experience. The 9 hours of this individualized 'internship' type experience is analogous to the 3 hours of classroom instruction and 6 hours of coursework regularly expected each week for a 3 credit course. Thus the Classics department takes 3 hours plus independent research and conference for a 4-credit course to mean 3 hours of instruction, 6 hours of regular coursework and 3 hours of documented independent research activity each week, like with CLAS 5200 or 5100 the conference is additional to this documented independent research, but also regularly scheduled and take as its starting point a Research Journal (or Blog or BlackBoard Discussion Board).

Planned Curricular Review and Revisions

As originally conceived 2007 revision of the major, research methodologies were considered to be predominantly ancient history courses. The collaboration of Classics and History is improving but as identified in the report of our external examiners in 2011 there is still work to be done. To accommodate the curricular needs of History we have not changed the course hours of our cross-listed courses and have in fact moved "Pagans, Christians and Jews" down to a 3000 level. Over the next year the two departments will be working to rationalize further their offerings of Ancient History courses, removing duplication, creating a standardized sequence of courses, cross-listing, and creating a teaching rotation for faculty. This will mean the removal of a number of research methodology courses, especially CLAS 4010 Democracy and Imperialism: Athens in the Fifth Century BC and CLAS 4020 Julio-Claudian Rome: City of Empire. Our literature concentration is by far the most popular at the moment, to this end it is appropriate for the department to create more literary focused research courses.

Inventory of Current Courses with the Designation "3 classroom hours plus conference and independent research; 4 credits"

CLAS 4010 Democracy and Imperialism: Athens in the Fifth Century BC

CLAS 4020 Julio-Claudian Rome: City of Empire

CLAS 4012 Delphi and Apollo: The Oracle and the Site

CLAS 4030 Ancient Cities

CLAS 4031 Approaches to Greek and Latin Poetry

CLAS 4032 Gender and Sexuality in Ancient Greece and Rome