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# Paragraphoi

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This section publishes short essays exploring topics of interest to the profession. Submissions should run to no more than 1200 words. Diverse opinions and spirited exchanges are welcome. The editor, however, reserves the right to return essays deemed unsuitable for the format.

## Classics Outside the Classics Department

Marian Demos

*Florida International University*

I present the following with some trepidation because some may think my statements relevant to only a small segment of the APA membership. A majority may persist in the belief that Classics as a discipline need not change drastically to survive in post-secondary institutions. My views are based on my own experiences as the only Classicist in a Humanities program at a large state university. My aim is a modest one: I wish to urge all Classicists, especially the elected officers of the APA, to direct attention to the students who, unlike their privileged counterparts at traditional liberal arts colleges or four-year schools renowned for strong scholarly traditions, have been overlooked because of their educational backgrounds and economic circumstances.

I appeal to APA members to consider the “nontraditional” students many of us have in our classes. They range in age from 18 to 65 and, for most of them who are at first unacquainted with our discipline, Classics seems an arcane field which has neither relevance nor meaning outside the narrow confines of a classroom. If Classics is to survive as a viable subject of study, we must focus our responsibility as teachers on exposing as many students as possible to all types of remnants of the past, be they literary or physical remains, and on encouraging them to study Greek and Roman civilizations in order to appreciate more fully the tradition which they have partly inherited. On a more basic level, we must appeal to the students’ everyday experiences and cultural surroundings in order to help them understand those of distant generations. Once the message is made clear that the Classics have an existence outside the traditional Classics or Humanities department, students will ap-

proach our subject with less apprehension. My comments will focus upon the need for the teaching of Greek and Latin, as well as other Classics-related courses, in community colleges and the importance of the dissemination of the Classics to “nontraditional” students who comprise a significant proportion of the student population.

Approximately one-third of all my students began undergraduate study at community colleges; a vast majority of these have earned associate degrees at these schools. According to the 1994 *Peterson's Guide to Two-Year Colleges*, about forty percent of students who attend two-year colleges transfer to four-year colleges and universities. Unfortunately, many of these students have had little or no exposure to Classical studies of any kind during their first two years of college. Once they enroll in four-year institutions, they have usually decided upon their major and the “Classics track” of the Humanities program at my institution is consequently not a popular choice. The case is different, however, with respect to the more general Humanities major and that of Liberal Arts. The Liberal Arts degree program in particular has an overwhelming number of undergraduate majors (around 100) while the Humanities majors number around ten per year.

While I have been affiliated with this university, only three students have elected to be “Classics track” majors. In my opinion, more students would be interested in taking Classics courses if they had somehow become acquainted with Classics at the community college level. More importantly, my enrollments in first-year Latin and Greek (which is the only level I can teach because of low enrollments at higher levels) indicate that third and fourth year students who must fulfill foreign language proficiency requirements before graduation elect Greek and Latin once they have studied Classical literature in translation. If beginning Latin and perhaps even Greek, in addition to other Classics-related courses, were offered at more community colleges, students would not have to wait until they transfer to a four-year school to learn a Classical language, and they could embark upon more advanced study of original texts in their junior and senior years. It is a sad truth that the lack of a Classics curriculum in the community college system, which contributes at least a third of all incoming students to my university, greatly impairs my ability to attract students to our field and makes it impossible to offer higher level Greek and Latin.

Although ancient Greek and, to a greater extent, Latin are taught at some community colleges, the national enrollment figures as compiled by David Berry in his article, “Foreign Language Education at Community Colleges” (which can be found in *Improving Foreign Language Education at Community*

*Colleges*, the proceedings of a February 1992 meeting held by the NEH in cooperation with the Community College Humanities Association) are not very encouraging. According to his study, 909 students were enrolled in Latin in community colleges and only 283 were enrolled in ancient Greek. Students studying Spanish numbered 133,823 or 59% of all foreign language enrollment; those studying French numbered 44,366 (19%). According to his figures, Latin comprised approximately .4% of the total foreign language enrollment in community colleges; ancient Greek a meagre .12%. The better figure for Latin can probably be attributed to the fact that Latin is taught much more frequently than ancient Greek at the secondary school level and, consequently, community college students will probably study that language with which they already have some familiarity.

How can these enrollment figures for Greek and Latin be increased? The obvious solution is that Classics, especially with respect to language study, needs to be incorporated into more community college curricula. An aggressive nationwide campaign, spearheaded of course by the APA, and perhaps even with the support of the NEH, must be launched so that Classics and, in particular, the Greek and Latin languages, can be available to as many students as possible. Many community colleges do offer Humanities or Liberal Arts associate degree programs; Classics would only add to a student's choice of specialization within the general rubric of "Humanities" or "Liberal Arts." Currently, there are only a handful of two-year schools which offer associate degrees or certificates in Greek, Latin, or Classical Studies; such programs often are affiliated with Honors programs within the two-year schools. It seems obvious that if Classics is to survive in the four-year schools, it must be offered in the two-year institutions.

If Classics can successfully be incorporated into the curricula of community colleges, the APA should work to encourage the scholarly integrity of these programs by having Classicists oversee them. The job market could only benefit from the creation of teaching positions at the community college level. Of course future generations of Classical scholars would have to become more willing to devote their time to teaching elementary level courses. A field like ours, whose very survival in many universities is at stake, must reach out to many students as early in their careers as possible so that they may develop an interest in the Classics.

I now turn to my next topic, that of the changing complexion of the overall post-secondary school student population. When I was an undergraduate and a graduate student, very few of my colleagues held employment outside of the university setting. In contrast to my personal experience as a college student at

private institutions, the vast majority of my pupils work in order to survive financially. Although some of my students are eighteen year-old freshmen, the average age of my students is about twenty-six. In some of my classes, I have taught elders (mostly wealthy retirees from a major metropolitan area) who, according to state law, are entitled to audit classes free of charge.

How can Classicists and the APA in particular reach out to these students and broaden their academic horizons? The solution lies in making the subject matter which we wish to impart have meaning for the "here and now" of all students. I have found that the dissemination of the Classics to these nontraditional students is a difficult yet worthwhile activity. It has compelled me to re-evaluate my conception of the traditional pedagogical techniques which I inherited from my own teachers. For example, I have noticed that my students learn more enthusiastically if they are not subjected to long lectures and one-way conversations on the part of the instructor. A class of about twenty-five students responds well to a combination of lecture and discussion. The community college setting is well-suited for this type of instruction. Moreover, in light of the national stature of my university's School of Hospitality Management, I have devised a course on the theme of hospitality in Classical literature in order to attract students who otherwise would never be exposed to the Classics. This type of course, in addition to elementary Greek and Latin, could be taught at two-year schools to students who are beginning their course of study. The course which I have described and other introductory courses could be taught in community colleges under such general headings as literature, language, history, or philosophy. In other words, Classics departments do not have to be formed at the community college level so that Classics courses can be offered. Classicists could be housed in any of the aforementioned departments or their appointments could be interdisciplinary.

It is premature to offer a detailed plan for community college curricula. What is important at this stage in our field's history is the awareness on the part of Classicists that we must address the needs of students who, because of the current structure of post-secondary education, have not had the opportunity to study Classics. When one realizes that for many students, the general core-type courses which are commonly offered at four-year schools are the first and last time they will ever be exposed to the Classics, one cannot help but feel that not only these students but also the Classics themselves have somehow been shortchanged. We as educators must do justice to both.