Teaching children Latin
Our students spend time in schools

A day in the life
24 hours with a classics professor

Non-traditional learning
Developing creativity and imagination

Celebrating the history and culture of the ancient world
We are delighted that you're interested in studying classics at The University of Nottingham. As a department we're friendly and enthusiastic, as well as passionate about the ancient world. Our research interests span Greek and Roman history, culture, society, languages, literature, material culture and art; these interests are reflected in the wide range of interdisciplinary modules we offer.

Our teaching philosophy is to encourage and support independent learning, so that you grow in intellectual confidence and maturity. The degree courses are carefully designed to help you build towards your own research project in the third year dissertation. We are also proud to offer Greek and Latin language at all levels throughout your degree, although language learning is optional in most courses.

This has been a busy year for us, from hosting the successful Classical Association conference to developing exciting interdisciplinary MA modules on thematic topics including war and its representation, myth, telling stories and the ancient city. Nottingham is a stimulating place to study classics: diversity, innovation and flexibility, combined with rigour and excellence in traditional classical areas such as editing texts and military history, make us who we are. We hope you’ll visit soon and see for yourself.

Helen Lovatt
Head of the Department of Classics

Cover image: Mosaic produced by a student for the Independent Second Year Project, inspired by the famous Cave Canem mosaic from Pompeii.

Introducing children to the classical world

Every year our students have the opportunity to design and deliver fun classics sessions for local primary school pupils.

Through our outreach scheme NoCOut – Nottingham Classics Out and About – a team of students runs a weekly after-school club with the aim of introducing pupils to the classical world and giving them the chance to learn some Latin.

Trained and supported by the department, the team delivers sessions based on the Minimus coursebook but with their own creative games and activities added to the mix. In the past these have included quizzes, Roman cookery, plays, shield-making and even gladiator fights with sponges and buckets of water.

Third-year classics student Rachel Cust reports: “I volunteered with two Latin clubs as a way of gaining experience for a possible career in teaching and I learned a lot from the scheme, including teaching techniques and classroom control. Seeing the children enjoying the lessons and developing their language skills made participating in the scheme very rewarding.”

Volunteering with the outreach scheme is a great way of giving something back to the local community, sharing your love of classics, and achieving something truly impressive that shows your commitment, creativity and determination to potential employers.
Thompson prize-winner Thea Lawrence

Thea Lawrence was awarded the 2014 Thompson Prize, named after our first professor, Edward Thompson, for achieving the highest result among our finalists. Here she talks to us about her passion for classics:

“Before arriving at university, I had never studied ancient history – unless you count a childhood of dog-eared Horrible Histories books and listening to worn-out Greek myth cassette tapes as ‘independent learning’ – but from my first module I was hooked. The subject matter and the engaging way it was taught inspired me to switch from joint honours with history to single honours ancient history.

In my second year, the extended source study was invaluable practice for dissertation-style writing, and the immensely rewarding Independent Second Year Project offered the chance to approach the classical world creatively. Perhaps unsurprisingly, I took the opportunity to write and illustrate a Horrible Histories-inspired book: Wrath of the Gods: A Survival Guide!

The third year modules allowed me to dedicate myself to those aspects of ancient history which most interested me, especially in my dissertation. I would thoroughly recommend Nottingham as a place to study the classical world. The level of independence is liberating, and I left university with the sense that I had really accomplished something.”

Graduate profile

Louise Price graduated from her joint honours ancient history and archaeology degree with first class honours in 2005. Here she talks about the career opportunities her degree has helped her pursue:

“I work as both a curator at a small but fascinating medical museum in Worcester, and as a freelance oral historian/researcher. In the latter capacity, I’m working on a museum project at the University of Worcester, and creating First World War galleries at Worcester’s City Art Gallery and Museum.

Working in heritage is fascinating, but fiercely competitive. After graduating, I volunteered at various heritage organisations before completing my MA in museum studies at the University of Leicester. I have worked for a wide range of museums, both independent and council-run, while building up an extensive portfolio of freelance work.

I have no doubt that my first degree from The University of Nottingham helped me stand out from the crowd, and the skills I gained have proved invaluable. Poring over and interpreting epic poems and ancient religious calendars gave me an excellent grounding in explaining complicated themes and artefacts to the general public. I also gained confidence in my writing style, which has definitely come into its own when writing succinct marketing material, editorials, funding bids and interpretation panels for the museum world.”

A day in the life of Oliver Thomas

If only this were a typical day! I’m visiting the city of Modena in northern Italy, as part of a research trip to look at six 15-th century Italian manuscripts, which are among the earliest surviving copies of the Homeric Hymns.

I arrive as the library opens at 8.30am, and 10 minutes later, a leather-bound tome sits before me. Though I knew the basic contents in advance, I wasn’t prepared to see on some pages a single line of ancient text in the middle, engulfed by later commentary, and even comments-on-the-commentary, all written in Greek.

After five hours of frantic note-taking the library shuts. I have discovered that this book was produced in a workshop by three main scribes, dated a second manuscript to the 1460s by its watermarks, and identified one comment as a key insight into how pagan hymns were read in the 12th century: three new pieces in the puzzle of how the Hymns were appreciated and passed on in the Medieval and Renaissance periods.

After lunch I return to the hotel to type up my scribblings and chase down details on the internet. When I’ve finished there’s time to marvel at Modena’s cathedral, before doing some rigorous research into the famous local cuisine!”
International conference on campus

Over 450 classicists from all over the world visited University Park Campus in April 2014 when we hosted the biggest ever annual conference of the Classical Association.

Among the enthusiastic crowd were many of our classics alumni, including professional classicists Matt Trundle from New Zealand and Lynn Kozak from Montreal.

We had over 200 papers on subjects as diverse as cognitive approaches to Greek religion, and films about Hadrian’s Wall. The two plenary sessions reflected Nottingham expertise and innovation, with two speakers addressing related topics, followed by discussion and audience participation. The first, on space and narrative, featured Katharina Lorenz (Nottingham) talking about sculptures of giants at Pergamon and Nottingham alumna Alex Purves (UCLA) on viewing and touching in Apollonius’ Argonautica. The second featured Kostas Vlassopoulos (Nottingham) on the Greek city in the wider world and Penelope Davies (Austin, Texas) on concrete in the city of Rome.

Developing creativity and imagination

In the Department of Classics, we employ a variety of teaching and assessment methods. Our flagship module in terms of innovative learning is the Independent Second Year Project, which continues to generate a wealth of creative and engaging student work.

Over the last few years we’ve seen a model Athenian trireme (ship), a replica Roman scutum (shield), a board-game about the life of Christians in the late Roman empire, and a story written in Latin about an elephant called Nellius! Alongside the finished project, each student submits a detailed portfolio documenting their underlying research.

Many other modules also incorporate non-traditional assessment. For instance, Intermediate Latin, where students read a ‘real’ Latin text for the first time, uses portfolio-based assessment rather than an exam to help with the change in gear from beginners modules. Students select their best coursework exercises from the semester to go into the portfolio, and reflect on what they’ve learned and where they need to improve.

And in 2014/15, Carl Buckland’s new third-year Special Subject module, Classics through Film, will include the creation of a ‘DVD extra’ style commentary on the classical sources.

Gorgon face-painting and peplos-sewing

Our student outreach volunteers participated in the University’s public open day – May Fest.

Activities to engage the local community included Gorgon face-painting, creating a mosaic of Perseus and the Gorgon, colouring the Parthenon marbles, and trying on a peplos – an ancient Greek dress. A group of sewing enthusiasts got together regularly before Easter to make the peploi (plural of peplos) – a sort of Great Classics Sewing Bee!

Boost your CV in our Digital Humanities Centre

Classics students have access to the Digital Humanities Centre, a cutting-edge facility where you can enhance coursework, projects and research using the latest graphics equipment and software.

Our students use the centre to produce materials for presentation and publication in course assignments, and can join the volunteer scheme to work on extracurricular digital projects and boost their CV.

Find out more: www.nottingham.ac.uk/digital-humanities-centre