

TEACHING CLASSICAL LANGUAGES SYMPOSIUM

9.00 Opening and Welcome

Professor Paul Roche, Head Department Classics & Ancient History University of Sydney

9.05-9.10 Introductions

Associate Professor Sarah Lawrence (UNE) and Dr. Tamara Neal (USyd)

ANZUK Education

SESSION 1: TEXTBOOKS

9:15am–10:30am

9:15am–9:30am — Phillip Brophy

Co-textbooking with Ørberg

9:30am–9:45am — Phillip Dupesovski

Suburani: Learning Latin “Below the City”

9:45am–10:00am — Emily Gilbert

Between Textbook and Text: How Textbook Choice Shapes the Transition to Original Latin

10:00am–10:15am — John Tuckfield (ZOOM)

Reflections on a New Textbook

10:15am–10:30am — Discussion

10:30am–10:50am Morning Break

SESSION 2: HERITAGE & RECEPTION

10:50am–12:20pm

10:50am–11:35am — Keynote: Carla Hurt

Classical Languages as Heritage Languages: Why Are We Learning “Dead” Languages While Indigenous Languages Are Dying All Around Us?

11:35am–11:50am — Jamie Nguyen

Reconceptualising the Textbook

11:50am–12:05pm — Sota Maruono (ZOOM)

Ancient Writing Systems

12:05pm–12:20pm — Discussion

12:20pm–1:20pm Lunch

SESSION 3: MATERIAL CULTURE

1:20pm–2:50pm

1:20pm–2:05pm — Panel 1: Craig Barker, Yasmina Chotochova, and Fran Keeling

Artefact as Textbook: Lessons from Teaching Classical Languages in a Museum Context

2:05pm–2:20pm — Kathryn Welch

What should go in a Textbook. A View from the Roman Republic

2:20pm–2:35pm — Monique Webber (ZOOM)

Material Culture in the Latin Classroom: Provocations and Practice

2:35pm–2:50pm — Discussion

2:50pm–3:20pm Afternoon Break

SESSION 4: GRAMMAR

3:20pm–4:05pm

3:20pm–4:05pm — Panel 2: Alison Griffith, Elizabeth Minchin, Gary Morrison, and Alex Madeira

Embracing “Grammar”

3:20pm–3:35pm — Alison Griffith and Gary Morrison

Embracing Grammar

3.35-3.50 — Elizabeth Minchin

The Longer History of ANU’s Traditional Grammar Experiment

3.50-4.05 – Alex Madeira

Reflecting on Traditional Grammar from a Former Student’s Perspective

4:05pm–4:30pm Discussion, Wrap-Up, and Afternoon Tea

SPEAKERS AND ABSTRACTS (in order of appearance)

Philip Brophy

“Co-textbooking” with Ørberg

Over the past four years, I have redeveloped the Latin program at James Ruse Agricultural High School to base it on the text *Lingua Latina Per Se Illustrata (LLPSI)* by Hans Ørberg. This presentation will discuss some principles that I have followed and discovered while creating materials to go alongside *LLPSI* to support its use within the context of my school - what one might call a 'co-textbook'. I will provide some reflections about my process of creating these resources, in particular about how I have supplemented the text to develop a wider variety of exercise types targeting different post-reading skills and to include authentic Latin texts early on.

Philip Brophy has the immense privilege to teach Latin at James Ruse Agricultural High School in Sydney, NSW. Prior to this he studied Ancient History at Macquarie University, where he first discovered the joys of Latin and Classical Greek. He has a particular interest in the Latin of epigraphic sources.

Phillip Dupesovski

Suburani: Learning Latin ‘Below the City’

Over the course of 2026, I have been trialling *Suburani* Book 1 (2020) in the Latin classroom. The textbook aims to present a ‘balanced representation of all people in the Roman Empire,’ starring a cast of complicated characters who work at a pub in the Subura, or downtown Rome. *Suburani* is a textbook for the 21st Century, with a sprawling ‘suite of digital learning resources’ that includes audio recordings of each chapter’s comics and stories, differentiated language learning exercises, and scaffolds or printouts for class games. I will talk to the themes of *Suburani*, its pedagogical approach, the literature and ideas of the Roman world it wishes to represent, as well as the book’s accompanying website (which, at first glance, can be a bit overwhelming). Comparing assessment results from previous course iterations (based on the *Oxford Latin Course*), I will also talk to how *Suburani* places ‘culture’ on equal footing with ‘language’, and the way this has impacted engagement and understanding in the classroom.

Phillip Dupesovski holds a PhD in Classics from the University of Sydney. He is Secretary of the Classical Association of New South Wales and teaches French and Latin at Newington College.

Emily Gilbert

Between Textbook and Text: How Textbook Choice Shapes the Transition to Original Latin

In many secondary and tertiary contexts, students find the transition from reading confected textbook Latin to original literary Latin challenging. This paper offers an overview of Latin pedagogical methods and how these are reflected in textbooks commonly used in Australian secondary schools. It considers the extent to which such textbooks prepare students for the demands of reading original Latin literature.

The presentation draws on a review of literature discussing Latin pedagogy and Modern Foreign Language teaching, as well as qualitative data from interviews with practising VCE Latin teachers. Participants will be invited to reflect on their own position along the continuum of Latin pedagogical methods, the qualities they value in a Latin textbook, and the strategies they employ to support students in the transition from confected to original Latin texts.

Emily Gilbert teaches Latin at Haileybury College in Melbourne and is currently completing a Master of Education at the University of Melbourne. Her research investigates the move from confected textbook Latin to original literary texts and the pedagogical approaches used by teachers to support students through this process.

John Tuckfield *Reflections on a new Textbook*

Abstract: This year I have undertaken the process of writing a new Latin textbook from scratch. The aim was to produce a book that would prepare students learning on a shortened time frame for the demands of senior secondary Latin. I started by mapping the grammar I wanted to cover. I wanted the students to read passages based on authentic texts as much as possible - modified to suit their grammatical understanding, of course - so I then began the hunt for suitable texts. The textbook is divided into 4 modules, each a semester long, with two reading focuses per semester. I am using it in its first iteration, and (apart from numerous typos, autocorrects and just plain mistakes) it's going well. Next, I'm looking at creating a stand-alone course that can be used in situations where schools want to offer a "taster" course for younger year levels.

Dr John Tuckfield is an expert in Roman language, literature, history and culture. He has taught Latin for 35 years at schools including Scotch College, Brighton Grammar School, Camberwell Grammar School and Stamford School, Lincolnshire. Dr Tuckfield holds a doctorate focusing on language learning from the University of Melbourne, where he is an Honorary Fellow. He teaches Latin Method to MTeach students and supervises higher degree students, as well as a Latin reading class at U3A Hawthorn. He is the head of the teachers' wing of the Classical Association of Victoria, has organised teacher conferences for over twenty years, and is the author of numerous publications, presentations and textbooks. He enjoys travelling through the Roman world, and has had numerous archaeological adventures including exploring Roman Libya, hiking across the Alps following the route of Hannibal and walking the Emperor Trajan's campaigns in Romania.

Carla Hurt *Classical Languages as Heritage Languages: Why Are We Learning "Dead" Languages While Indigenous Languages Are Dying All Around Us?*

'Why are we teaching a dead language when there are languages dying all around us?' This talk explores the role that we as Latin and Ancient Greek teachers can play in shaping attitudes towards First Nations languages and in fostering reconciliation. Where does this argument take us, how do we value languages, and what can we practically do as teachers while avoiding tokenism or digressing too far beyond the scope of our subject?

Carla Hurt is a high school Latin teacher and Youtuber who has converted to input-based approaches. she runs foundinantiquity.com, a blog about classical languages. Her goal is to make engaging, learner-friendly content in Latin and Ancient Greek, so that the beauty and richness of ancient languages can be more accessible to people of all backgrounds, learning abilities, ages, and interests.

She is based in Melbourne, Australia where she lives with her husband, little son, and greyhound. she teaches Latin at Heathdale Christian College. An active member of the Classical Association of Victoria, she has given talks on Latin pedagogy from 2022-2024 at the annual Latin teacher conferences.

Jamie Nguyen *Reconceptualising the Textbook*

In this paper, I respond to the ongoing crisis in Latin uptake by arguing that the problem is not simply methodological, but epistemological. Latin continues to be justified through frameworks that no longer resonate with contemporary learners. Drawing particularly on the Australian context, it foregrounds the finding that the subject's decline is not the result of a single cause, but of successive and intersecting historical, cultural and pedagogical forces. Once central to a moral and intellectual education shaped by colonial classicism, Latin has lost authority within systems that now prioritise utility and market outcomes. This has produced a clear paradox: Latin is marginalised for its perceived lack of utility yet persists as a form of elite cultural capital.

I will show that traditional defences of the subject have remained largely static and increasingly unconvincing. Even recent pedagogical innovations, while promising, often fail to address the

deeper issue of relevance. A historiographical analysis of Latin textbooks as a part of my thesis reinforces this claim. Across the 20th and 21st centuries, textbooks have negotiated the tension between grammatical rigour and engagement yet consistently positions students as recipients rather than producers of meaning. Changes in pedagogical methodologies have not led to a fundamental shift in the learner's role. In response, this paper proposes Classical Reception, grounded in Reader-Response Theory, as a way forward. Framed through the provocation "Imagine the perfect textbook," it reconceptualises the textbook as an active mediator of meaning. A reception-driven model that integrates language, culture and interpretation through thematic and contemporary inquiry. Ultimately, it is hoped that by positioning students as participants in an ongoing dialogue with the past that the issue of Latin's relevance is resolved.

Jamie Nguyen is a Latin teacher from Sydney and is currently teaching at Scotch College, Melbourne. He recently finished in a Master of Education by Research from the University of Sydney supervised by Dr Tamara Neal and Assoc. Prof Robert Cowan. He will begin a Master of Science in Educational Research at the University of Oxford in October. His research interests predominantly lie in contemporary receptions of antiquity and more recently their potential in classical languages pedagogy.

Sota Maruono *Rethinking Classical Language Pedagogy through Ancient Writing Systems*

This paper presents a workshop-based pedagogical model for teaching Classical Languages through the lens of ancient writing systems, specifically the Phoenician alphabet and Mesopotamian cuneiform. Designed for high school students, the workshop invites learners to engage directly with the materiality and structure of writing as a gateway to understanding classical languages and cultures.

Rather than beginning with grammar and translation, this approach foregrounds the historical development and visual logic of scripts. Students reconstruct signs, experiment with writing tools, and decode simple inscriptions, thereby encountering language as a system of representation embedded in social and economic contexts. This method aligns with recent calls to expand the scope of "textbooks" beyond linear grammar instruction by incorporating tactile, visual, and collaborative learning experiences. In this sense, the workshop can be seen as a prototype of a "textbook" that moves beyond the page.

The workshop also addresses key pedagogical questions: What kinds of exercises foster confidence in beginners? How can "culture" be meaningfully integrated into language learning? By shifting the focus from correctness in translation alone to exploratory engagement, students develop a sense of agency and curiosity. The session will include practical examples, student feedback, and reflections on how such activities can complement or even challenge traditional textbook-based instruction.

Ultimately, this paper argues that writing systems offer a powerful and accessible entry point into Classical Languages, particularly in hybrid and interdisciplinary educational settings.

References

- Maruono, Sota. "Workshop Report: 'Phoenician Script Experience Workshop: Writing Your Name Using the Origins of the Alphabet.'" *ORIENTE* 68 (May 2024): 14–17.
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Sota Maruono is a historian and history educator at Tokiwa University High School in Japan. His research focuses on Assyriology, ancient West Asian history, and history education. He is particularly interested in interdisciplinary approaches that connect ancient history, classical language learning, and public engagement. His recent work explores how ancient writing systems, including cuneiform and the Phoenician alphabet, can serve as entry points to classical language education and historical inquiry.

Dr Craig Barker, Yasmina Chotochova, and Fran Keeling

PANEL SESSION 1 Artefact as textbook: Lessons from teaching classical languages in a museum context

The Chau Chak Wing Museum at the University of Sydney has welcomed thousands of students studying Classical Languages over the years. For us, the perfect textbook does not exist - we are looking at Greek and Latin as epigraphic evidence; carved in stone, handwritten on papyrus, graffiti on walls, minted on coins and stamped on ceramic vessels and architectural fragments. Indeed, the museum collection allows students to explore language usage in formats that differ from the typical student engagement on printed page or digital screen. This paper will explore archaeological and epigraphic approaches to primary and secondary Classical Languages engagement, as well as some of the programs the Chau Chak Wing Museum has developed in order to enhance this engagement. The talk will explore how to bring material culture into teaching.

We will pose questions as to (1) how we can bring artefacts to life as “textbooks”, (2) how we can best use them in a classroom context, and (3) how museums can better service the needs of the Classical Language teachers utilising these texts.

Craig Barker is a Mediterranean archaeologist and museum manager. He is Director of the University of Sydney's Paphos Theatre Archaeological Project working at the World Heritage-listed site of Nea Paphos and has decades of experience in archaeology in the eastern Mediterranean and has published widely on the archaeology of Cyprus and ancient theatre. Craig is the Manager of Education and Experience at the Chau Chak Wing Museum where he specialises in museum education, particularly in archaeology and ancient history engagement for primary, secondary, tertiary and adult groups using material culture and object-based learning experiences. He is overseeing the Chau Chak Wing Museum's school education program and the museum's academic OBL engagement programs and co-ordinates learning experiences using the museum's collections with exhibition programming.

Yasmina Chotochova is an archaeologist and public engagement coordinator/educator at the Chau Chak Wing Museum, University of Sydney. She specialises in using museum collections as a gateway to the ancient world, creating educational experiences that bring the past to life for students and visitors. Her greatest passion is sparking enthusiasm for archaeology and ancient cultures in young people, helping them see the enduring relevance of the past in today's world.

Fran Keeling graduated from USyd last century. She has worked in the field in Cyprus, Jordan, and Italy, and on commercial projects in Sydney. At USyd, Fran has taught Archaeological methods, was tutor Aegean Prehistory, and, for 15 years, in Greek and Roman Myth – working with such luminaries as Alister Blanchard and Eric Csapo. She spent 10 years as Academic Tutor in Uni2Beyond programme, which facilitates people with intellectual disabilities to audit 2 years at University. As an Education Officer, Fran has been associated with the Nicholson Collection for 21 years, and the CCWM since its inception. For the general public, she also undertakes Heritage tours of the University, of the Museum in toto, and, on memorable occasions, Architectural tours of the building itself – including the mysterious ceiling space.

Kathryn Welch *What should go in a Textbook. A View From the Roman Republic*

You would think that textbooks specifically required them to be boring if all you were to see were the 'history and culture' sections in our language textbooks. It is worth comparing them with narrative histories of the Roman Republic where readers are bombarded with dry "factual" accounts that concentrate on institutional politics (narrowly defined) wars, "great" men and their individual histories, and/or enormously simplified and often tendentious social history which treats the subject with a contempt which is the very essence of Man History. And there is that inevitable barrage of names, many of them the same and always inviting general confusion. How familiar does this sound.

Whether one teaches language or (in my case) history, it is worth asking how the usual selections for a study of culture came to be canonical, I had to ask why the textbooks on the Republic were so boring and confusing when the actual historical accounts from the past are engrossing and instructive. In seeking to answer that question, I discovered (at least in part) why the textbooks I encountered were a disaster. Unpacking that journey will hopefully lead to a discussion about choices that both language teachers and history teachers can make in shaping their students' thirst for knowledge. The future of the past (and its languages) is in our hands.

Kathryn joined The University of Sydney in 1991 after six years as a teacher at Kogarah High School and three years as a teaching assistant/PhD student at the University of Queensland. Her main teaching and research interests are in Roman republican and early imperial history and historiography, though she also loves teaching the history of the city of Rome from antiquity to the present – either in Sydney or on the ground in Rome.

Monique Webber *Material culture in the Latin Classroom: Provocations and practice*

The relationship between material culture and language in the Latin classroom has never been an easy one. Seen alternately as integral and ancillary to language acquisition, this contested history has been reignited in Australia by new curricula emphasising artefacts as learning tools. As educators consider material culture's role in their own classroom, this presentation offers a series of provocations and practices. When did material culture enter the Latin classroom, and does/should this history inform our teaching today? Which items should be used, and whose histories are we ignoring? What does material culture add to language acquisition, and whom does it benefit – the student before us, a future practitioner, or both? How can engaging with objects move beyond a 'fun' lesson to embed language skills? In this interactive session, participants will reflect upon the relevance of culture in their own context and design resources for their classroom.

Monique teaches Latin at Melbourne Girls' Grammar School.

Alison Griffith, Gary Morrison; Alex Madeira; Elizabeth Minchin,

PANEL SESSION 2 Embracing "Grammar"

A. Alison Griffith & Gary Morrison: Teaching Ancient Language in a Bums-on-Seats Tertiary Economy

Since 2022 the Classics department at the University of Canterbury has taught CLAS151: Greek and Latin for Absolute Beginners using Professor Elizabeth Minchin's *Traditional Grammar*. We managed to teach a full suite of ancient language courses in the dire post-quake years (2012-2019), but during that period two significant changes occurred: we came under pressure to

address courses with low enrolments, and we started spending considerably more time teaching English grammar as a basis for understanding grammar in ancient languages. The Covid pandemic exacerbated everything. We collectively decided to cultivate the good will of Management by consolidating introductory language teaching, but in an academically sound manner. With Professor Minchin's permission, we adapted *Traditional Grammar* using a course that flipped our traditional mode of teaching on its head.

In this paper we will discuss the way we constructed CLAS151 as a course, how we solved our immediate challenges (low enrolment numbers and double-teaching grammar) and how we reaped unpredicted benefits. We will also share how the experience of creating this course shaped our views about the need for a textbook (an open access revision of *Traditional Grammar* is forthcoming), the types of exercises that support student learning, the role of 'culture' in language courses, and especially the value of translating English to Greek, or Latin.

Gary Morrison is the Roman Historian at the University of Canterbury. His interests are in Social History, the realities of life and living in the ancient world; and Classical Reception. Gary has been teaching the ancient languages for over 20 years. He regularly teaches the Beginner Greek courses at UC and worked with Alison Griffith to create the introductory language course 'Greek and Latin for Absolute Beginners'.

Alison Griffith, also at the University of Canterbury, teaches courses that relate to ancient material culture. Her research interests focus on Roman religion and cults, which she studies through the lens of archaeology and, at times, cognitive psychology. Alison has taught Latin language for several decades and it is this experience that underlies her approach to "Greek and Latin for Absolute Beginners".

B. *Elizabeth Minchin: The Longer History of ANU's Traditional Grammar Experiment*

An innovative course with the no-nonsense title, *Traditional Grammar*, was first included amongst the offerings of the Classics Department at the ANU in 1990, following up on a proposal by Dr Colin Mayrhofer. This would be the preliminary course for all students who were beginning their study of Ancient Greek and/or Latin. It introduced, week by week, a new topic in traditional grammar, moving from English (the first language of the majority of students—but by no means all of them) to the same topic in Ancient Greek and then Latin. Students were expected to memorize morphology and a modest list of vocabulary in the ancient languages and to complete exercises in all three languages. This paper will discuss the reasons for the development of the course; the decisions that were taken about what to include, what to omit, and, importantly, how to present the material; the lessons I learned over time as I wrote, taught, and revised the course; and its expected—and unexpected—outcomes.

Elizabeth Minchin began her teaching career in a Canberra high school as a language teacher, making the transition to tertiary classes somewhat later. At the ANU she taught across the range of offerings but has always enjoyed finding new ways to address the challenges of learning and teaching Ancient Greek and Latin.

C. *Alex Madeira: Reflecting on Traditional Grammar from a Former Student's Perspective*

This presentation will outline my experience as a former student of *Traditional Grammar* (TG) and how it was important for my development as a language learner. I will outline some of the typical academic challenges encountered by secondary and tertiary language students for which TG can provide solutions. In particular, I will show that the skills TG offers are transferable beyond classical languages, by explicitly teaching not only linguistic skills and content, but study skills such as routine, memorisation, and problem-solving. The underlying philosophy and principles of TG are

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reflected in my own pedagogy at various levels, and I will explore how these may be embedded by educators at any level to teach skills both explicitly and implicitly.

Alex completed a Bachelor of Classical Studies with an honour's year in Latin at the ANU in 2014. He began teaching Latin at Canberra Grammar School the following year where he specialises in the IB programme. He loves teaching Latin poetry, especially Ovid, Martial and Catullus, but appreciates the odd passage of Cicero too.

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If you would like support Classics in the Community, please consider becoming a member of the Classical Association of NSW. Founded in 1909, CANSW is one of only three independent Classical Associations in Australia and New Zealand (the others are the Classical Association of Victoria and the Classical Language Teachers Association).

CANSW conducts lectures, social functions, film screenings, and the Latin and Greek reading competition for school students. It also sponsors the Sydney Latin Summer School and is the co-sponsor of the journal *Classicum*. CANSW provides financial and other assistance to classical causes, activities, and publications, including the Todd lecture series, and the Teaching Classical Languages Symposium. <https://classics.org.au/>

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