

CL1755 BEGINNERS' LATIN

Who can do the course?

Any first-year student with less than a B in GCSE Latin. There are no formal requirements and no cap on numbers. If you have a B or better in Latin GCSE or equivalent, you should be starting with CL1765 Intermediate Latin (unless it was a *very* long time ago). See Prof. Jonathan Powell, who's teaching Intermediate this year.

What the course aims to do

The course sets out to provide a basic training in the Latin language for those with little or no previous experience of Latin. The emphasis is on developing the skill of analysing the structure and meaning of Latin sentences, and on efficient use of the dictionary. You'll also gain familiarity with a range of literary and epigraphic texts in the original Latin.

What you'll get from it

- a basic understanding of the structure and grammatical terminology of the Latin language
- the ability to work out the meaning of simple Latin texts and translate them into English
- the ability to make efficient use of Latin dictionaries and other reference books in dealing with original Latin texts
- a powerful set of transferable language-learning skills that will *greatly* increase the speed and efficiency with which you learn other languages (especially, but by no means only, Romance languages like French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian)
- a fuller and more assured command of English vocabulary, grammar, and usage
- the buzz of actually being allowed for once to use your brain in a rigorous, intellectually muscular discipline that is nevertheless rather easy-peasy
- the insufferable smugness that comes with admission to an élite community of illuminati that has shaped the cultural history of the west for two thousand years
- the opportunity to chat up any ancient Romans you may encounter
- the ability to see through walls, run faster than a speeding bullet, and project heat rays from your eyes (only available to candidates from planet Krypton).

Course materials

We use *Veni Vide Vince*, a course developed specially by Professor Powell for adult beginners at university. *Veni Vide Vince* is a carefully programmed introduction to the structures of Latin, including morphology, syntax and word order. Some vocabulary is also provided, but students are encouraged to make intelligent use of the dictionary rather than being forced to learn vocabulary lists (though we give you the tools to help with that as well). From an appropriate point in the course, continuous reading passages will be introduced. There are various PDF, ebook, and hyperlinked HTML versions of the text in Moodle, but you'll also need to have a hard copy, which is available at a below-cost £9.50 from the Departmental office.) You'll need to bring an annotatable copy to each class.

All students also need to acquire a Latin dictionary. We use the Pocket Oxford Latin Dictionary, edited by James Morwood (third edition, Oxford University Press 2005); this will be the dictionary used in the exam, and is in stock at the College Bookshop. You'll need to bring your dictionary to all the classes and tests.

Teaching

There'll be three groups, taught by Giulia Brunetta, Stavroula Kiritsi, and Nick Lowe. You'll stay with the same group throughout the year (unless there are special reasons to change). On Thursday afternoon in the course of the How to Study session, you'll fill in some basic details about your previous experience of language learning, which we'll use to try to sort people into groups with roughly-comparable linguistic experience. The list of groups and rooms will then be posted on the Departmental noticeboards on Friday, in time for the first class the following Thursday. All groups will go at the same rate – about two units of VVV a week – but the different teachers will run their own classes independently. There are three class hours weekly (Thursday 11–12 and Friday 12–2).

Most of the work, for this as for other courses, is done in your own time. All in-course written exercises are provided in interactive, self-marking versions in Moodle for instant feedback 24/7, and you can e-mail for help at any time, day or night. In addition to class hours, you should be putting in **at least an hour a day** of private study. Don't skimp on this even if you find the material easy. If you put in the hours, you'll pass comfortably. If you don't, you won't.

Assessment

60% of the marks are given for a 2-hour exam at the end of the year; the other 40% are awarded for the best four of five 50-minute in-course tests, taken at the end of each half term plus an extra one in the first week of term 2.

- **In-course tests (40%)**

The tests will consist of Latin sentences for translation into English. They'll be specifically designed to test use of the dictionary as well as understanding of the grammar covered up to that point. *It's your responsibility to make sure that you have your dictionary with you; we won't provide one for you, and you won't be allowed to share if you forget.* Tests take place in normal class rooms and times; assuming no timetable complications (ha), they'll be in the Friday 12.00 slot on **28 October** (Units 1-8), **9 December** (1-16), **13 January** (1-17), **10 February** (1-23), and **23 March** (24-29). Be warned that there are **no opportunities to resit assessed tests**; instead, we allow you to drop your weakest mark at the end of the year. If you believe you have exceptional reasons for special arrangements to be made, see the course director (NJL).

- **The exam (60%)**

The exam will contain graded sentences for translation and a passage of original Latin (with some help provided) for translation into English. Unlike the tests, dictionaries will be provided in the exam – you won't need, or indeed be allowed, to bring your own dictionary in.

Very important question

Have you been assessed as dyslexic? If so, we need to know *now*. You're allowed 10 minutes' extra time in each test, but only if there's a copy of your assessment or other documentation *on file in the Departmental office*. This applies to exams for all your courses, too, so make sure you let the office know right away.

Boring note about attendance

As on any course in this Department, but for even more pressing reasons, *attendance is required at all classes*. If for any reason you're unable to attend a class, it's vital that (a) you let the lecturer or the Departmental office [phone 01784 443217] know *beforehand*; (b) you have an acceptable reason. It's particularly difficult to "catch up" on a missed language lesson – it's not the kind of course where you can just copy someone's notes. Please take this seriously. Needless to say, it goes double for assessed tests: if you miss a test, you lose *at least* the whole mark for that test (suicidal).

Check us out online!

If you want to get a sense of what the course involves, go to <http://moodle.rhul.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=10457> and log in using your shiny new RHUL username and password. As well as the course text, you might like to take a look at the introductory overview of Latin grammar (bottom item in the "General course resources" section).

What you need to do before the first class

1. Get a hard copy of the course text for £9.50 from the Departmental office (Founder's West 18.) Spread a little sunshine by bringing exact change.
2. Get a copy of the *Pocket Oxford Latin Dictionary*, in stock at the College Bookshop.
3. Work through the first Unit, which is on pronunciation. (You'll be relieved to know that this is by *far* the longest Unit in the course, and has no Moodle exercises.)
4. Check the Departmental noticeboard on Friday for your group and rooms.

Any queries?

My office is Founder's West 29, my e-mail is n.lowe@rhul.ac.uk, and I'll see you all on Thursday anyway.

Nick Lowe
Course director