

**ASSESSMENT REPORT
B.A. IN CLASSICS
DECEMBER 2012**

Introduction

This year we decided to assess the extent to which the Classics curriculum meets the department's second program learning objective: "Students will become familiar with the broad diachronic development of ancient Mediterranean cultures." (A complete list of learning objectives for this program can be found in Appendix A.) To this end, we created a diagnostic quiz that tested knowledge of chronology in literary, artistic, and more strictly historical contexts (Appendix B). This instrument was administered, in the 10th week of the Fall 2012 semester, to the following classes: Classics 230 Ancient Epic Tales, Classics 240 Greek and Roman Drama, Classics 360 Greek and Roman Mythology, Classics 415 Classical Culture: Rome, Classics 490 History of Ideas in the Ancient Classical World, Classical Archaeology 250 Introduction to the Archaeology of the Ancient Mediterranean, Classical Archaeology 515 Greek Civilization I, and GRE 101 Elementary Ancient Greek.

Administering the instrument in the 10th week of the semester was not ideal. It would have been more helpful either to have administered it at the end of the semester, to see how much students had learned over the course of an entire semester, or, perhaps better yet, to have administered the same instrument at the beginning and end of the semester, which would have allowed us to control for what knowledge students may have had coming into the course in which the quiz was given.

The instrument showed that our curriculum was generally successful in getting students to master "the broad diachronic development of ancient Mediterranean cultures." We found that some courses contributed more to this mastery than others, and that some categories of students performed better than others. Our findings are summarized in the section below and discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections.

Summary of Findings

Majors and Minors

1. Our majors and minors performed better than non-majors.
2. Among majors and minors, those who had taken a greater number of courses within the department did not, on average, perform consistently better than those who had taken a fewer number.
3. Minors performed somewhat better, on average, than majors.

Non-Majors/Minors

1. Among non-majors/minors, students who had taken a greater number of courses within the department did perform appreciably better, on average, than those who had taken a

fewer number.

2. Among non-majors/minors, students in the literature-intensive courses did better on questions of literature chronology, whereas students in the material culture-intensive courses did better on questions of artistic and historical chronology.

Discussion: Majors and Minors

Our majors and minors clearly performed better than students who were not majoring or minoring in classics, as the chart below demonstrates.

type of student	# of students in this category	average total score
majors and minors	21	6.6
other students	84	4.3

There are two possible explanations for this: (1) majors and minors tend to have taken a greater number of courses in the department (but see below); and (2) majors and minors, regardless of how many courses they have taken within the discipline, are more interested in and committed to the field.

Among majors and minors, students who had taken a greater number of courses within the department did not perform consistently better than those who had taken a fewer number. Consider the following table:

# courses taken in the department	# of majors, minors in this category	average total score
1-3	6	6.0
4-6	5	7.0
7-9	6	6.3
10 or more	4	7.3

There is a generally positive correlation between number of courses taken and average score: students who had taken the fewest number of courses received an average score (6.0) somewhat lower than those who had taken the greatest number of courses (7.3). But one might have expected the latter group to have outperformed the former group by a greater margin. What is more, the six students who had taken 7-9 courses within the department performed somewhat more poorly (their average score was 6.3) than those who had taken only 4-6 courses in the department (whose average score was 7.0). These somewhat mixed results are probably not as anomalous as they might appear at first. For our majors spend a good deal of their time studying the ancient languages, and these language courses contribute relatively little to students' chronological mastery of the ancient world. The same is true for those minors pursuing one of the emphases that require ancient language study. So we would not necessarily expect to see a greater number of total courses (so many of which are language courses) result in *dramatically*

higher scores on a diagnostic quiz that tests mastery of chronology.

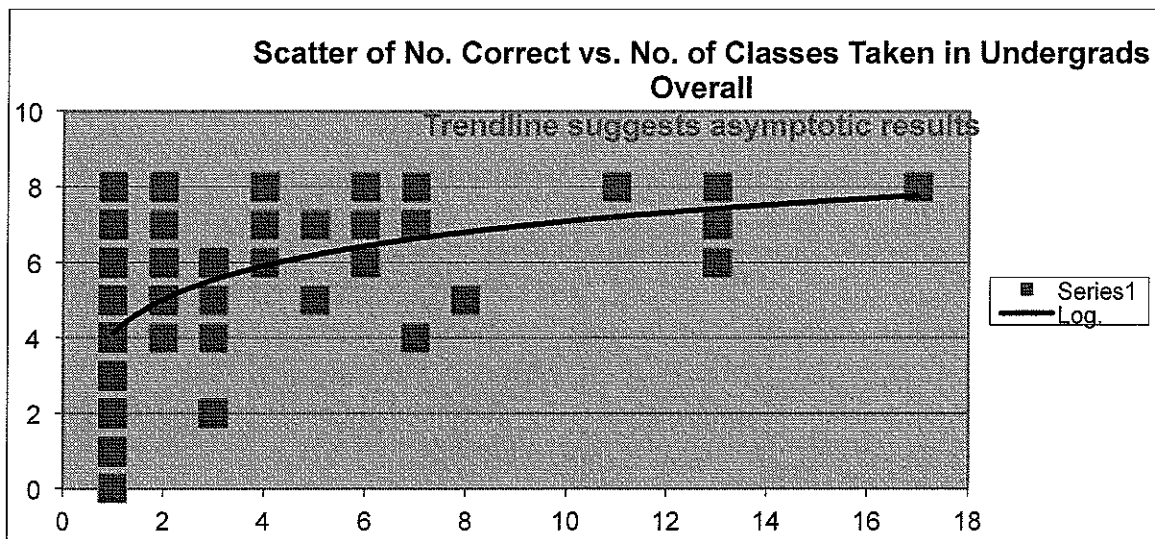
Related is our finding that minors (whose average score was 6.8), who take 24-28 units in the program, performed slightly better than majors (whose average score was 6.4), who take 43-44 units in the program. The reason is probably that many of our minors, perhaps greater than 50%, are pursuing the “Ancient Mediterranean Studies” emphasis, which requires no language, but a greater number of culture courses, which is precisely where students learn literary, artistic, and more properly historical chronologies.

In sum, the classics curriculum does succeed in promoting mastery of “diachronic development,” but this learning happens more in our culture courses than in our language courses, so that students who have had more culture courses (such as minors in the “Ancient Mediterranean Studies” emphasis) tend to gain greater mastery than those who have had fewer. And although students who focus on language may have somewhat less mastery than those who focus on culture, our majors and minors, as a group, still do markedly better than students who are not majoring or minoring in classics, probably because majors and minors, whatever their emphasis, still take more culture courses than the typical general education student.

Discussion: Non-Majors/Minors

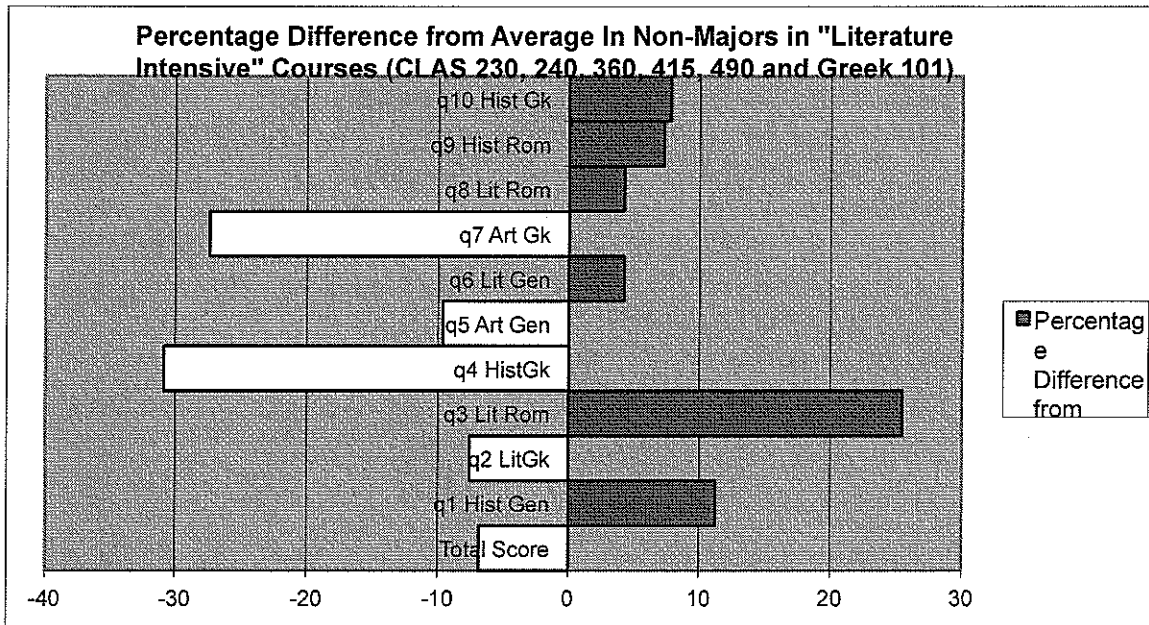
We were interested not only in how well our major and minor curricula perform on this program learning objective, but also in how well individual courses, especially those within the general education program, perform.

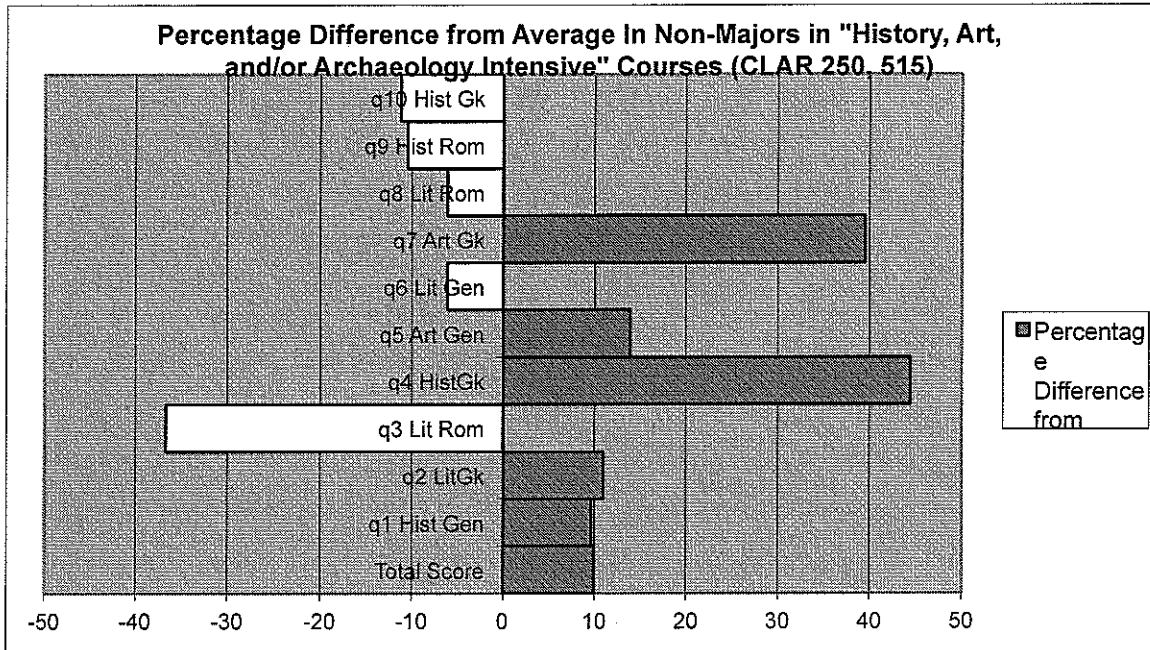
We found that, among non-majors, the total number of courses taken did make a difference to how well students performed on the diagnostic quiz. Consider the following chart, which plots total score (on a scale of 0 to 10) on the y-axis and number of courses taken on the x-axis:



Why is there greater correlation between number of courses taken and total score among non-majors/minors than among majors and minors (see above)? The reason is probably that the courses taken by non-majors/minors were mostly culture courses, and not language courses, and it is in these culture courses where most of our diachronic learning takes place.

We found that students in literature-intensive courses (CLAS 230, 240, 360, 415, and GRE 101) did better on most literature-themed questions (3, 6, and 8) than students in material culture-intensive courses (CLAR 250, 515). Likewise students in the material culture-intensive courses did better on most art and history questions (4, 5, and 7) than their literature peers. There were two minor exceptions: the literature students did slightly better on the one general historical question (#1) and the material culture students did better on one of the Greek literature questions (#2). The latter can be easily explained: one of the two courses in the material culture sample is CLAR 515 Greek Civilization I, which does discuss some Greek literary texts, though this is not the focus of the course. The charts below indicate the average score of each group relative to the overall average on each question of all students who took the quiz.





Prospect for Future Assessments

We would like to continue to evaluate this program learning objective for the next assessment cycle. There are many additional insights to be gleaned from the data set we assembled for this assessment. We are considering administering the same instrument (or possibly a revised instrument) in a subsequent semester, both at the beginning and at the end of the semester (possibly via iLearn), although we believe that we may still have plenty of current data to work with. We are also thinking of comparing this data to the syllabi of individual courses, with a view to revising and/or standardizing goals for individual courses.

Appendix A: Program Learning Objectives for the B.A. in Classics

1. (language) Students will acquire sufficient proficiency in Latin and/or Greek to read and interpret basic texts in the original language(s).
2. (history) Students will become familiar with the broad diachronic development of ancient Mediterranean cultures.
3. (material culture) Students will acquire an understanding of how material evidence informs our understanding of ancient Mediterranean cultures.
4. (writing) Students will learn to develop cogent arguments in writing about various topics in the study of the ancient Mediterranean.
5. (connections) Students will apply their knowledge of ancient Mediterranean languages and cultures toward a richer understanding of their own language and culture.

Appendix B: Diagnostic Quiz for Assessing PLO #2

Name (optional) _____

For undergraduates:

1. Are you a Classics major? Yes ___ No ___
a. If "yes," what is your emphasis (One Language, Two Languages, Classical Archaeology, or Philosophy)?

2. Are you a Classics minor? Yes ___ No ___

3. What class are you in (while taking this diagnostic exam)? _____

4. List all other classes you are taking this semester with CLAS, CLAR, GRE, or LATN prefixes.

5. List all classes you have previously taken at SFSU with CLAS, CLAR, GRE, or LATN prefixes

For graduate students:

1. Are you pursuing an M.A. in Classics? Yes ___ No ___

2. Which of the following better describes you: (1) someone primarily interested in material culture, or (2) someone primarily interested in literature. _____

3. Which of the following better describes you: (1) Hellenist or (2) Romanist

4. What class are you in (while taking this diagnostic exam)? _____

5. List all other classes you are taking this semester with CLAS, CLAR, GRE, or LATN prefixes.

Answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

- ___ 1. Which of the following is in correct chronological order?
a. Roman Empire, Classical Greece, Medieval Europe
b. Classical Greece, Medieval Europe, Roman Empire
c. Medieval Europe, Roman Empire, Classical Greece
d. Classical Greece, Roman Empire, Medieval Europe
- ___ 2. To what century BCE do most scholars date Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*?
a. 2nd c. 8th
b. 10th d. 5th
- ___ 3. With what emperor did the Roman poet Virgil have a relationship
a. Nero c. Constantine
b. Hadrian d. Caesar Augustus
- ___ 4. Which of the following is in correct chronological order?
a. Hellenistic Period, Archaic Period, Minoan Period, Classical Period
b. Minoan Period, Archaic Period, Mycenaean Period, Hellenistic Period
c. Minoan Period, Mycenaean Period, Classical Period, Hellenistic Period
d. Archaic Period, Classical Period, Hellenistic Period, Mycenaean Period
- ___ 5. Which of the following is in correct chronological order?
a. Lion Gate at Mycenae, Parthenon, Roman Colosseum, Pyramids at Giza
b. Pyramids at Giza, Lion Gate at Mycenae, Parthenon, Roman Colosseum
c. Lion Gate at Mycenae, Pyramids at Giza, Roman Colosseum, Parthenon,
d. Pyramids at Giza, Roman Colosseum, Lion Gate at Mycenae, Parthenon
- ___ 6. Which of the following is in correct chronological order?
a. Homer, Sophocles, Tacitus, Callimachus
b. Sappho, Euripides, Aeschylus, Catullus
c. Sophocles, Catullus, Callimachus, Tacitus
d. Sappho, Aeschylus, Callimachus, Catullus
- ___ 7. Which of the following is in correct chronological order?
a. Doric Order, Corinthian Order, Ionic Order
b. Corinthian Order, Doric Order, Ionic Order
c. Ionic Order, Doric Order, Corinthian Order
d. Doric Order, Ionic Order, Corinthian Order
- ___ 8. Which of the following is in correct chronological order?
a. *Miles Gloriosus*, *Bellum Catilinae*, *Aeneid*, *Metamorphoses*
b. *Aeneid*, *Miles Gloriosus*, *Metamorphoses*, *Bellum Catilinae*
c. *Aeneid*, *Metamorphoses*, *Agricola*, *Miles Gloriosus*
d. *Agricola*, *Miles Gloriosus*, *Metamorphoses*, *Aeneid*
- ___ 9. Which of the following is in correct chronological order?
a. Constantine, Julius Caesar, Hadrian, Caligula
b. Julius Caesar, Caligula, Hadrian, Constantine
c. Hadrian, Constantine, Caligula, Julius Caesar
d. Caligula, Julius Caesar, Constantine, Hadrian
- ___ 10. Which one of these events did NOT occur between 550 BCE and 350 BCE?
a. The death of Socrates
b. The death of Alexander the Great
c. The "birth" of Greek democracy
d. The Battle of Marathon