Introduction to Beginning Latin on line (Audio Presentation)

Salvete, discipuli! That's Latin for "Hello, students!" Welcome to the most exciting journey you'll ever take in language study. You're about to climb inside a time machine and go back two thousand years to ancient Rome where you'll read the thoughts and wisdom of our ancestors in their own words. Since classical Romans can't learn English, the only way to communicate with them is for you to meet them on their own turf and learn Latin. And now you're on your way. *Macte*! That's the way Romans said "Congratulations!"

In this presentation, the first of many, I'm going to outline the course and show you how it's structured. In many ways online classes resemble their traditional face-to-face counterparts, but there's one huge difference I want to emphasize right from the start. Since you won't be having daily contact with some ugly old vulture of a professor who leans over you daily squawking "Did you do your homework last night?," the risk of falling behind schedule is considerably greater. *Mora est mors*. That's Latin for "delay is death." This is not a class you can cram. Once you learn something in this course, you have to retain it which is almost as hard as ingesting new forms and grammar. The problem with cramming is you don't remember the stuff you crammed for very long, and that's the *via ad ruinam*, "the road to ruin." [I have to say, Latin is a really excellent language for making threats.] This is not, however, because of Latin; it's how the brain works. Most normal people have to learn something several times before they can remember it reliably. You learn something, you forget it, you relearn it, you re-forget it, and that goes on until you get so mad you decide to burn it into your mind with the searing flames of frustration. Don't like that process? Go live on another planet. That's just the way it is.

Knowledge is actually recall, meaning you have to allow yourself several opportunities to learn something. Only then will it stick. So the most important thing I can say to you right here as we're starting our journey through Latin is "Don't let yourself fall behind!" Do every assignment at the scheduled time. You need to give yourself the room to forget and relearn again and again before you put your knowledge to the test. Alright! You've been warned. If you ignore me and find yourself on the long descent to Hades, that's on you. Know this! There are really scary things down there, and very few people come back.

Now let's talk about the class. You can read all the details and fine print in the syllabus which you'll find on line, both on Canvas and the course web site (http://www.usu.edu/markdamen/Latin1000/index.htm). [Or go to the USU web site and search "Damen" (my last name) and "Beginning Latin." That will take you to the course web site.] You might want to print that syllabus out right now and look at it as you listen to this audio Presentation.

First, I hope that, even though this is an online class taught on a distance platform, we won't be "distant" from each other. Please contact me regularly and often, whenever you feel you need my help. My preferred medium of contact is email (mark.damen@usu.edu), but I'm open to other means of communication. And be aware: if I see you struggling or falling behind schedule, I'm going to contact you. Also, if you're ever on the Logan campus during the time when the face-to-face Beginning Latin class meets, know that you have a standing invitation to join us. That class

meets in Main 201 at 12:30-1:20 MWF and at noon-1:15 TR. I think you'll enjoy meeting the other Beginning Latin students, and I know I'd love to meet you in person.

The textbook we'll use is an old but excellent one, the third edition of Frederic Wheelock's *Latin: An Introductory Course Based on Ancient Authors*. Please note that we're using the *third* edition. There have been quite a few editions published since, but I don't like them. They add too much vocabulary and extra grammar. While the old edition sometimes embraces outdated ideas and has some silly sentences like "The glory of girls is beauty" ─ you'll learn to laugh at them ─ the third edition's fundamental clarity and good sense will guide you efficiently and effectively to a sound comprehension of Latin.

So be careful that you secure the *third* edition of the textbook which is available through almost every used book dealer on line. Just google it. Often you can buy it for less than one dollar. I've also provided on Canvas pdfs of the chapters we're studying this term so you have immediate access to the textbook until your own copy arrives. Look under "Files" on the Canvas course site. Or if you're happy using the pdf's, there's no absolute need for you to buy the book at all.

The learning outcomes of this course are readily evident: to learn how to read Latin and the works of ancient authors. Along the way, I hope the development of this skill will also improve your understanding of English and hone your ability to think critically and find solutions to complex problems. Learning a new language rewires your brain ─ ask any neurologist ─ giving you the capacity to think in new ways. That's the gift I want you to give yourself here.

Your grade in this class will be based on a number of different exercises. Half will come from the scores you earn on four tests, each weighted equally. The other half will depend on a variety of online exercises collectively known as Individual Chapter Assignments. These include Practica, English-to-Latin sentences, Vocabulary Quizzes and DIRT Quizzes. We'll talk more about these later in this Presentation. The grading scale follows a standard curve based on the average score you achieve: 100-92 = A, 92-90 = A-, 89-88 = B+, 88-82 = B, 82-80 = B- and so on. The syllabus outlines all the details about failing grades, incompletes, withdrawals and makeups. Let's hope we don't have to deal with any of that.

Instead let's move on to course procedures. The goal of this class is to complete the material in the first twenty-two chapters (out of forty total) in the textbook, meaning we'll cover one chapter about every three days. That's a fairly brisk pace and remember also, as we just noted, that, once you learn something, you're expected to retain it, so review will become more and more of a factor as the term progresses.

A typical chapter unit will proceed this way. To begin a unit, you'll watch a video called a **Presentation** which discusses the material introduced in a chapter, both the grammar and vocabulary. Along with each Presentation comes a full **Transcription**, a written-out version of my words. Some students prefer to read a text rather than watch a video, which is fine. Just be aware that the graphs and charts included in the videos are not part of the transcriptions. If you choose to read the Transcription and not watch the video, you'll need to keep the textbook open. For those of you who choose to watch a Presentation video, if you like, while you're watching it, you can fill out a **Presentation Exercise**, a worksheet which guides your notetaking. Some

students like the Presentation Exercises and do them all; some never do any of them. It's up to you. What's *not* up to you is the fact you have to learn the material somehow. With all the different exercises I offer here, I'm only trying to accommodate different learning styles. Learn the way you learn best. Just be sure you learn.

After you're done with the Presentation, one of two things will happen. You'll either do a **Worksheet** about the new material, or if there's no Worksheet for that chapter, you'll translate the first set of sentences in the chapter. After Chapter 2 these are called **Practice and Review (P&R) sentences**. Either before or as you're doing those, you might explore the **Grammar and Vocabulary Drills** which are attached to each chapter. Again, you don't have to do these. They're only there to help you learn the new material. As always, do what works for you, but make sure you find some method that works.

Once all that's done, you'll usually be asked to translate sentences, either the P&R's if there was a Worksheet, or the second set of sentences in each chapter, the *Sententiae Antiquae* (*SA*'s). That's means "ancient sentences." Sometimes you'll be assigned to do both sets of sentences at the same time, if it's a relatively easy chapter, but most often you'll have two days to complete these assignments.

Now begins the assessment phase of each unit. The first quiz you'll take, called a **Vocabulary Quiz**, centers on the vocabulary in the sentences you've just translated. These quizzes are on Canvas. They require you to provide an accepted meaning ─ that is, one given by Wheelock ─ for a Latin word. The Vocabulary Quiz will show you one of the P&R or *SA* sentences with one word in it in ALL CAPS, and you'll be asked to enter one accepted meaning of that word. These quizzes are open-book but they're timed. You'll have five minutes to answer twenty-five questions so you won't have time to look up the answers for every word. You'll have to have memorized the meanings of at least some of them. Also, the Vocabulary Quiz will use any word you've been asked to memorize which happens to be in a sentence in that chapter, so vocabulary from earlier chapters can and will appear on these quizzes. Note also that you can retake Vocabulary Quizzes as many times as you like ─ always starting from the beginning: five minutes, twenty-five words ─ and only the highest grade you get on any attempt counts. Vocabulary Quizzes are a great opportunity to review!

The next-to-last assignment you'll tackle, usually on the third or fourth day after you've embarked on a unit, is the set of English-to-Latin sentences (**E2L**'s) found in each chapter of the textbook. At the end of the P&R's, Wheelock provides four or so English sentences to translate into Latin. These you'll turn in to me by email, I'll look them over and make suggestions about things you might want to rethink, and then you can revise and resubmit them for credit. I promise to make every effort to return my comments to you quickly so I'm never the one slowing up your progress.

The last assignment in each unit is called a **Practicum**. It's a quiz that tests your understanding of the grammar in the sentences (the P&R's and *SA*'s), the ones which you've translated in the current chapter. On Practica ─ that's the plural of Practicum ─ you'll be asked to perform all sorts of operations on words ─ for instance, change their tense or case ─ or explain the syntax of certain constructions, or write a simple word or phrase in Latin. You'll understand how to do all

these operations as you work through each chapter. Note that Practica are open-book and untimed so you'll always have the time and opportunity to look up forms and figure out the answer. You can even start a Practicum on Canvas, leave it and come back to it later, but beware of one thing: Practica are not repeatable. You get one chance at each one, and that's it.

Now let's talk about how all these exercises work together to produce the half of your grade based on Individual Chapter Assignments. Each Vocabulary Quiz offers up to 25 points, the English-to-Latin sentences up to 50 points, and each Practicum up to 35 points. However, the maximum number of points you can earn in any chapter is 100 points, but the total potential credit available from any chapter's assignments (Quiz + E2L's + Practicum) is 110 points. That's ten points more than you need, which means you have a little comfort margin there. You don't have to get perfect scores on all three exercises to reach the maximum point value. I set things up this way so the Individual Chapter Assignments give you a nice buffer against low test scores. For those of you who suffer from test anxiety that should be turn the pressure down a bit. So if the tests are an issue for you, your hard work on quizzes and the like can compensate. Learning Latin is the point here, not acing tests.

While we're on the subject, let's talk about the tests for a moment. I don't want to discuss their content here. By the time you get to each one, it'll make sense why it contains the types of questions it does. All you need to know now is that each test is worth 100 points, and the average of your test scores constitutes half of your final grade. Also note that on the course web site at the end of the last chapter before each test, there's a full practice test with answers. That way you can tell how well prepared you are and what you need to work on.

Finally, there's one last exercise which can earn you credit toward your final grade, the so-called DIRT Quizzes. DIRT stands for "Do I Remember This?" DIRT Quizzes are designed to help you review past material, the forms and grammar which you need to know but which may have slipped from your mind. The scores you achieve on these DIRT Quizzes will be added to the final total of your grade at the end of the term. They're pure bonus, granted, not a whole lot of points, no more than ten, but bonus is bonus. Why turn down the opportunity to earn free points? Like Vocabulary Quizzes, DIRT Quizzes are open-book and timed but, like Practica, you can take each only once. And one last point: be aware that there are DIRT Presentations ─ you'll find one on each chapter page of the course web site ─ which cover the material on the DIRT Quizzes. Make sure you watch the corresponding DIRT Presentation before you take any DIRT Quiz! Otherwise, the Quiz won't make much sense.

And that's it! That's my quick overview of the course structure. You'll get used to how we do things here very soon, but of course, if you have any questions, don't hesitate to email me. So now you're ready to set out on your journey back in time to ancient Rome! Begin please with the Grammar Preview Presentations at the top of the home page on the course web site. Before you can even get underway in this class, you need to be able to determine a word's part of speech ─ that is, whether it's a noun or adjective or verb ─ and which word or words in a sentence function as the subject or direct object. When you've done with that, get going! Start Chapter 1! *Macte*!