

MÉALNUCESQUE

Integrating the Left and the Right Brain

How the natural sciences and the humanities

STEM from the same Classic tree

*There seems often to be an opposition between the natural sciences and the humanities,
but in reality, the two are not so at odds. The integrated man, made up of both body*

Departmental News

CAMWS

Alumnus Spotlight

By Richard von Weber-Hahnsberg, Guest Contributor

Richard von Weber-Hahnsberg attended UD from 1996-2000, and he has since taught Classical languages for over twenty years. He currently teaches Latin at Ignite Community School of Mesquite.

A Rough Country, But It Breeds Good Men: A Classical Education at UD

It is to two classes of person one must bear life-long gratitude and the cognizance of a debt incapable of repayment: parents and teachers. Education is the gift of both.

I had the immense good fortune to receive the greatest encouragement from my parents in regard to the study of Classics, to which was added the even greater of finding myself at the University of Dallas. What did I discover there? To this day I am continuing to count the benefits, but chiefest were the amazing faculty. These were the great days of Sweet, West, Maurer, and Davies – the most important influences on my life.

Our discipline of Classics is the oldest of the western academic endeavors. Never once in my Greek and Latin classes did I simply receive 'language instruction'; instead, I was immersed in the rich traditions of our discipline, learned the names of Valla and Bentley, and introduced to the methods and pleasures of philology. The agony of Greek synopses and principal parts quizzes was more than offset by the goodness, truth, and beauty I found not only in classical literature but in the intellectual example set by my teachers.

Their instruction was painstaking and rigorous, but behind the course objectives rested a sincere interest in students as people. Near the heart of UD is the notion of flourishing, and that critical component of a good life was as much the subject of each class as scanning the *Menaechmi*. Too often the modern university is a center of research and 'knowledge production,' only secondarily a source of good teaching. My Classics professors were truly great teachers because they actively willed the good for us, endowing us with the first clumsy steps toward figuring out what a good life looks like. Every time we dissected a passage in great detail we were never doing busy work: we were learning that beauty is in the whole, but wonder in the parts.

Herodotus said that to read Homer is to be civilized – and how civilized our classes were! There was, of



course, Homer – lots of Homer – yet everywhere in the classical world, its successes and failures, its sheer glory was vibrantly alive. In the midst of reading the *Georgics*, we were treated to the methods of ploughing used by the Romans. In the Pre-Socratics, we meditated on the profundity of Heraclitus and Parmenides. How could such learning, such an environment not seep into one's marrow? A Classics education at UD is transformative.

I have taught Greek and Latin for over twenty years now, from elementary to AP. While my technical proficiency is due to my excellent teachers, such merit as I have as a teacher in my own right is due to them at the absolute foundation: mentorship, sincerity, rigor, patience, wisdom. But most of all courage, the courage to show that the *bonus vir peritus dicendi et agendi* is a fit ideal for any student.

Were I to give advice to an undergraduate Classics major, it would be to cherish your four years. You will never have as much leisure to learn. When I was wading into advanced Greek, I purchased a commentary on a few of Pindar's *Odes*, and did my best. It wasn't long before I was foundering. I asked Dr. Sweet for help and before I knew it I was sat between Drs. Sweet and Maurer, being given the immense benefit of their learning – and this was not even a class, just something I was trying on my own.

Make the best of your time as an undergraduate. You have the best minds available to you, authors and teachers both.

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