

A Podcasting Approach to Greek and Latin Orality

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ABSTRACT

Podcasting helps to bring Latin and Greek off the page through oral performance, and also creatively recuperates aspects of ancient Roman and Greek practices of poetic performance and rhetoric. Even more importantly, it provides an audience other than the teacher. Students take on the role of public scholars, which can positively affect the learning process. A sample assignment is described, deriving from college intermediate level Greek and Latin poetry classes, and examples of student work are given. The assignment involves the creation of a 6–8 minute audio recordings, including discussion (in English) of a poem or short passage, translation, and recitation in the original language. The technical process of creating podcasts is not overly demanding in itself, but the writing and editing of the script is time consuming and must be executed carefully to obtain good results. While this particular assignment is aligned with learning goals not exclusively focused on second-language acquisition, the benefits of podcasting can be aligned with various types of learning goals.¹

KEYWORDS

podcasting, oral Latin, oral Greek, poetry, translation, interpretation, pedagogy, class projects, rubric

PODCASTING

The delivery of series of audio recordings via the internet emerged as a popular medium around 2006, in tandem with the rise of portable .mp3 players (Salmon and Nie). Since then podcasting has come to occupy a vibrant sector of the media landscape in entertainment, news, and education. Many individuals listen to their favorite series via the main purveyor, [iTunes](#), and other outlets. News organizations such as [NPR](#) and educational institutions such as [Oxford University](#) produce an

¹ This essay is based, with much revision, on a talk delivered on Jan. 4, 2014 at the meetings of the American Philological Association, as part of a panel organized by the Society for the Oral Reading of Greek and Latin Literature. I would like to thank the organizers of that panel (“Talking Back to Teacher: Orality and Prosody in the Secondary and University Classroom”), Chris Ann Matteo and Andrew Becker. I would also like to thank two anonymous reviewers for *TCL*, and John Gruber-Miller, for their detailed critique and suggestions.

abundance of informational podcasts on a variety of subjects. A growing scholarly literature deals with the use of podcasting in educational settings, including in foreign language instruction. The purpose of this essay is to describe and discuss an assignment in which Latin and Greek students at the intermediate level produce their own podcasts, and the instructor posts them on the internet.

There are various possible uses of podcasting in educational settings (Salmon and Edirisingha). Published research about podcasts in language instruction have so far dealt largely with efforts by modern language teachers to introduce authentic materials via podcast as supplements to traditional textbooks (Facer and Abdous). While not the focus here, such an approach could be applied to Latin as well. The Latin audio courses produced by [Evan Der Milner](#), though designed primarily for autodidacts, form an extensive archive. A series of 39 recordings of the [neo-Latin Colloquia](#) by various Renaissance humanists is also available on iTunes.

Another important area of podcasting is the effort to replace in-class lecture with recorded lectures delivered as podcasts, a technique sometimes known as “prof-casting.” Launched in 2007, [iTunesU](#) is a subset of Apple’s media store that delivers college lectures. This kind of podcasting can be used in the context of a “flipped” class or “blended” approach (also not my focus here). Other educationally-oriented podcasts are produced by academics casually, without a distinct classroom use in mind. Podcasts on ancient history and archaeology are available from several universities, such as [The University of Cincinnati](#) and [The University of Warwick](#). The present article is informed by the author’s own forays into producing an occasional series, [Latin Poetry Podcast](#), from 2006 to 2010.

Very little attention in the scholarly literature has been paid to the idea of getting students to actually *produce* podcasts, rather than simply listening to them for homework, though this is certainly being done in many fields. The Smithsonian American Art Museum, for example, posts student podcasts, and has a [guide to creating podcasts](#) with students. But evidently no published discussion has dealt with the uses of podcasting in the Latin and Greek classroom in any form. This essay makes a modest attempt to put something into that gap, based on the author’s five years’ experience helping students to produce podcasts about Latin and Greek poetry. The assignment (see Appendix for the full text) derives from fourth-semester Greek and Latin poetry classes in a liberal arts college setting. Students create 6–8 minute recordings in which the student first discusses (in English) a short poem or passage, then gives his or her own literary translation, and finally recites it in the

original language. The success of the project has been such that it has been adopted by others, and my hope in discussing it here is that those with different learning goals and different circumstances may nonetheless benefit from considering the potential of the podcast medium.

PODCASTING AND LEARNING GOALS

Published research into the effectiveness of podcasting in language instruction has centered around the model of student as consumer, guided to authentic materials by the teacher, and asked to listen as part of homework. The evidence for its effectiveness is somewhat inconclusive, according to the one study done on this topic (Abdoussa, Facer, and Yen). But the enthusiasm of some dedicated teachers suggests that it can be made to work well (Schmidt).

The model of student-as-producer, rather than consumer, is a different phenomenon, and no research has been done into its effectiveness. It is the “least common use reported in the literature,” as Oliver McGarr points out in a 2009 review of the podcasting pedagogical literature (McGarr): There are obvious disadvantages: it is time consuming, both for students and instructors. Time spent mastering necessary software is actually negligible. Rather, the time comes (for the students) in drafting and re-drafting the script, making, polishing, and editing the recording; and (for the instructor) in preparing for, explaining and discussing the assignment, in one-on-one meetings between student and instructor (highly recommended for creating quality work), and in posting the recordings on the internet. That time might be profitably spent doing many other things. No one should consider student podcasting unless a compelling rationale can be found in the learning goals of the class.

The benefits (again not backed up by any kind of broad-based controlled studies), are in many respects not different from those of any creative assignment that encourages the students to tap into prior knowledge and interests, and helps them to “own” a poem or topic. In my own case, the main goals of the classes in question are as follows:

- read Latin (Greek) poets of moderate difficulty with appropriate assistance
- relate the Latin (Greek) poetry to its historical and literary contexts
- identify and appreciate literary and stylistic features of Latin (Greek) poetry

Since the assignment involves translation, there is some work on the first goal, but that is normally dealt with primarily by other means, especially [sight reading](#) with comprehension questions, and prepared in-class oral translation. The podcast assignment hits the other two goals directly, contextualization and appreciation, since in discussing the poem or section students are asked to deal with historical context and tell what is interesting or distinctive about the poem in their view. Another important goal is helping the students read aloud effectively—both correctly and with expression—and podcasting is an excellent way to teach and assess that skill.

An article by a group of authors from the University of Iowa published in 2010 in this journal (Lindgren et al.) makes the case for such creative and performative projects eloquently. The authors argue that their project—having students create and perform a literary, poetic translation of a short poem or passage—helps the students toward a deeper literary understanding, aids in forming a personal connection with a poet and a poem, gives experience of poetry as performance, and helps the students to think more deeply about the process of translation itself and its limitations. Such a creative project “encourages students to approach Latin poetry as literature, as something that has meaning, context, and beauty in its own right.” (Lindgren et al. 119).

The project I describe here is similar, and has many of the same benefits. The added element is the recording of the result as an .mp3 file and the distribution of that file over the internet. But why go to this added trouble? Not because social media is fashionable, or because students are particularly technically savvy (often they are not). The central benefit of a wider distribution is the changed sense of audience. Open sharing of a podcast puts the student in the role of the public scholar: one with specialist knowledge and a responsibility to convey that knowledge effectively as well as explain why it is interesting or important.

The introduction of the non-specialist audience fundamentally changes the relationship between student and instructor. In a traditional research paper, or even an in-class report, the primary audience is always the teacher, and the student’s goal is too often to impress with mastery of technical jargon, or, worse, to camouflage a lack of interest or understanding in windy verbiage. When the audience is an untutored public, the teacher becomes more guide than judge, more coach than censor. And in a way the public, with its short attention span, is a sterner judge than any teacher. In my experience students become far readier to take advice, to revise writing wholesale, and even to pitch entire drafts, when that unseen third partner is

in the room. Whatever the leaning goals, the value of this reorientation cannot be overestimated.

That audience, though doubtless small, is real. My students' podcasts occasionally see comments on the WordPress blogs where they are posted, and are often at or near the top of downloads on Dickinson's iTunesU channel. Particularly popular for a time in 2012 was a podcast by Dan Plekhov on [chariot tactics in Homer](#). A 2009 podcast by Elizabeth Parker on the [prayer of Chryses](#) in *Iliad* 1 drew this comment from a teacher: "In my many years of teaching Latin and Greek I have never heard such a wonderful discussion of this particular section of the *Iliad*. I am going to share this with my Greek club next week! Thanks for sharing." A podcast by archaeology major Karl Smith on [boar's tusk helmets](#) in Homer garnered an anonymous reply, "Wow! I am doing a project on whether Troy exists or not at the moment, and this has been very helpful!" A [discussion of *venustas*](#) and sexiness in Catullus 35 by Katy Purington prompted the admiring comment, "After that reading, I have to say, I find you very *venusta*." A 2012 podcast by Alexis Kuzma, "[The 'In' Crowd \(Catullus 12\)](#)" got a comment from an interested listener—her mother: "so proud of you." I usually also make a point of commenting myself, so my feedback is public, as in the example just mentioned. (See Figure 1.)



[Permalink](#)

2 Comments »

latin-poetry-podcast Said,

May 17, 2012 @ 2:06 pm

Nice, catchy introduction, Alexis. Excellent use of secondary scholarship to craft a subtle and persuasive interpretation of your own. The sound effects are very funny, and the Latin sounds fantastic. Brava!

Joan E Kuzma Said,

May 17, 2012 @ 6:27 pm

So proud of you!

[RSS feed for comments on this post](#) · [TrackBack URI](#)

Leave a Comment

Figure 1: Screen shot of comments on a student podcast (the first is mine).

The key advantage of podcasting—the expanded sense of audience—is in principle entirely goal-independent. Whenever a student is trying to explain something and make it interesting to somebody who is not the teacher, the same benefits potentially accrue. A desire to reach such an audience accounts for my direction that the discussion in English and the English translation come first in the recording, before the recitation. But even those whose goal is to have as much as possible done in the target language might benefit from, say, recording some more *Colloquia* or other texts in Latin for the use of those who wish to gain fluency by listening to authentic Latin texts. At the very introductory level one can imagine podcast projects that explain grammatical concepts, or propound the student’s own patented mnemonic devices for the benefit of future Latin learners.

Depending on the actual content of the work, a podcast assignment might meet many of the goals articulated by the *Standards for Classical Language Learn-*

ing published by the American Classical League and the American Philological Association. But the one most suited to the medium is probably Goal 5 (“Communities”). Standard 5.1 reads “Students use their knowledge of Latin or Greek in a multilingual world.” One of the sample progress indicators reads, “Students present and exchange information about their language experience to others in the school and in the community.” Meeting that standard can be difficult, and podcasting offers an effective way to do so—one that can work powerfully with, rather than distract from, the other goals.

Another benefit, though not one typically thought of in the context of the modern Latin class, is that the assignment helps work on effective public speaking, or, to use the ancient term, rhetoric. In some ways podcasting is a recuperation of Roman traditions of rhetorical education, a point stressed by the entirely classicist-free group of authors of the 2012 book *Digital Humanities* (Burdick et al. 11):

In the era of pervasive personal broadcasting, the art of oratory must be rediscovered. This is because digital networks and media have brought orality back into the mainstream of argumentation after a half-millennium in which it was mostly cast in a supporting role vis-à-vis print. You Tube lectures, podcasts, audio books, and the ubiquity of what is sometimes referred to as “demo culture” in the Digital Humanities all contribute to the resurgence of voice, of gesture, of extemporaneous speaking, of embodied performances of argument. (emphasis in the original)

Again rhetorical training is hardly unique to podcasting, but is a welcome side benefit, one useful well beyond the Latin or Greek classroom. Nor does the assignment forgo the traditional and important academic pursuits of writing, research, and footnotes.

THE SCRIPT

The assignment itself begins by stating the goals (mentioned above), which deliberately echo the learning goals stated on the syllabus for the course as a whole, and which we assess as a department as part of our collegiate accreditation process. In class we prepare throughout the semester with kindred activities: pronunciation,

reading aloud, work on metrics, comparison of published translations, discussion of historical context, and observation of stylistic matters: word choice, word order, figurative language, persona, etc.

The assignment has two parts: the drafting of the script and the recording of the audio. The script is in effect a normal academic paper, in that it entails research and writing and the citation of that research (I provide some bibliography). I stipulate a limit of about 525 words, based on a target time for the whole recording of 6–8 minutes. While initially appealing to the students, the word limit soon becomes a real challenge. I provide various questions that the students might want to use as starting points. It is good to emphasize that not every, and perhaps not any, of these questions *must* be addressed. The only requirement is to interpret, translate, and perform the poem. At the same time I require that they *not* spend any time on basic, general information about the author, such as dates of birth and death. If that seems necessary I can add it either in a brief introduction to all the podcasts, or in a sentence or two on the blog where I post them.

It is helpful to mention in advance that while the same kind of research is required, the style of writing for a podcast is different from that of most academic writing that they are used to. Listening to successful podcasts helps to make this point. It is best not to employ the familiar five-paragraph essay structure, but instead to start with the “[inverted pyramid](#)” structure that is a mainstay of journalistic and media writing. The essential idea should be up front, not languishing at the end of the first paragraph. The style should be vivid, direct, and clear. I suggest that they write with a friend or family member in mind. Still, the first drafts of the scripts are often redolent of the five paragraph essay with its fulsome, stilted introductions, its formulaic paragraph structures and transitions. The most common comments I make on the initial drafts are directed at encouraging writing that is less academic, more comprehensible and interesting:

- find an angle, a particular aspect of the poem that intrigues you; start with a grabber;
- don’t use technical terms (*poetae novi*, Ennian, choliambic), or else explain them so ordinary people can understand them;
- say what you think, what you like or don’t like about the piece; help the listener to appreciate it;
- subordinate research to your own ideas.

The subordination of research to one's own ideas is a perennial problem in all kinds of academic writing. Students are often loathe to "throw away" any morsel of research that they have found. But the twin discipline of the audience and the word limit helps a great deal in overcoming this reluctance, and encouraging students to state their own view as formed by their research, rather than parroting the view of another scholar.

One effective type of beginning is that taken by Chris Striker in this 2011 podcast about [Catullus 63](#), in which he asks the listener to imagine himself in the situation of the poem. A reference to something universal, like superstitions surrounding sneezing, can also be effective, as in this 2008 podcast about [Catullus 45](#) by Erica Pitcairn. One can begin with a vivid or striking quotation, as does Christina Errico in her podcast about [Patroclus' death in the Iliad](#) from 2014.

THE TRANSLATION

As is the case with the script itself, where ingrained academic habits can sometimes hinder the creation of an effective podcast, translation for a non-teacher audience involves a certain reorientation. The most common advice I give on the translations is "don't translate too literally; use good English." The article from *TCL* cited above (Lindgren et al.) contains an excellent discussion of how to help students to a more sophisticated understanding of the various modes of literary translation. One of the benefits of such assignments is that it forces students to confront the real dilemmas of a translator who wants to communicate the meaning and to give some sense of the style of a poem in a different language. As Lindgren et al. state, it is a good idea to ask the students for a literal translation first, to make sure the words are correctly understood, and then move on to the question of how to represent this meaning effectively to a contemporary audience.

THE RECITATION

Students of course have various levels of comfort when it comes to reading Latin and Greek aloud. In addition to working on pronunciation and metrics in class throughout the semester, I have a one-on-one meeting close to the due date of the recording. This I view as crucial for obtaining good results in the recordings. I ask the students to come in having previously scanned and practiced reading the poem or passage aloud. In the meeting I check the scansion. But the burden of the discussion usually has little to do with metrics. The advice that I typically give is as follows:

- read as if you understand what you are saying;
- emphasize the most important words;
- pause when appropriate to convey the sense, and for emphasis;
- convey emotion. “Sell it.”

I urge students to use natural word accent, and not to worry over-much about conveying the structure of the meter in the act of recitation. I use the example of Shakespearean verse, where the iambic pentameter has a structure, of course, but no one would want to listen to an actor who emphasized that structure to the exclusion of natural sense and dramatic flair. Once the meter is internalized, and the words are pronounced correctly, there is no need to harp on the meter. The other area of difficulty is elision. Students have varying abilities to recognize and deliver elisions well. Again, I urge them to try, and demonstrate myself how it can be done. But I urge them to be more concerned with conveying understanding, emphasis, and emotion, and say that if an elision or two falls by the wayside, I will certainly not penalize them. I also mention that there is some disagreement among scholars as to whether the elided vowels disappeared completely, or were included as semivowels, a fact which can set their minds at ease (See Brooks 40–42; Allen 78–82).

THE RECORDING

The technical requirements to make a podcast are as follows:

- A computer with an audio recording software installed, such as [Audacity](#) or [GarageBand](#). Audacity is free, and platform independent. GarageBand typically comes on Macs. The programs allow you to record and edit sound, add effects and music if desired, and to export the result as .mp3 or other sound file format. Various tutorials in their use are available on the internet, but if you can find an experienced person to help, so much the better.
- A headset or other microphone. These can be had cheaply at electronics stores, or in many schools’ media centers. Use of built in microphones on computers or other devices is not recommended, and will not produce good results.
- A quiet place to record.

I prefer to use Audacity, since it is free and platform independent. I spend one class period in a computer lab on training in the use of Audacity, discussing the podcast

medium, and giving advice on how to create an effective podcast. While recording and editing audio in Audacity itself is fairly straightforward, the exporting files in .mp3 format is a little tricky and requires the downloading of [a patch](#). Another quirk of Audacity is that each project prior to export as an .mp3 actually consists of two things, the project itself and a folder full of each of the individual recorded elements that are combined to make the project. These are identically titled but have different file extensions, and must be kept together in the same folder on one's computer prior to export as an .mp3.

One key to making a good podcast recording is to speak as naturally as possible, and to vary the tone of voice. A useful trick is to smile while speaking—while very unnatural, it can improve the quality a great deal. A natural, varied tone of voice can go a long way toward winning over the listener. Lucy's McInerney discussion of the dog [Argos in the *Odyssey*](#) provides a good example of a tone that is relaxed without being overly informal. Chris Holmes' 2013 podcast on [Ovid *Amores* 1.5](#) is a good example of a more informal style. He addresses the audience directly and thanks them for listening before proceeding. Likewise, pacing can have a big impact on the listenability of a podcast. Too fast, the listener cannot follow; too slow, and boredom swiftly ensues.

Editing and post-production might take the form of adding a musical introduction or sound effects. Copyright restricts the music that can be used. Students should not simply import a clip of their favorite song. Rather, they should be pointed toward the many sources of free and open-licensed background music and sound effects available on the internet for just these kinds of purposes, such as [CC Mixer](#) for music and [Freesound](#) for sound effects. Many students opt to begin with some appropriately atmospheric music, as in Elizabeth Schultz's 2013 podcast on [Catullus 5](#). Dinner party background noise is a natural lead-in for discussing [Catullus 12](#).

POSTING THE RESULTS

Once the .mp3 files have been created and delivered to the instructor, it is essential for the success of the project to find a way to publicly post them. There are public sites such as [Soundcloud](#) where anyone can upload audio. Some schools may have a corner of their websites available. But it is better, if possible, to establish a separate site using [WordPress](#) or another blogging platform. Blogging the podcasts makes it possible to

- collect, find, and save the podcasts over several years;
- include illustrations, texts, and links;
- display the podcasts chronologically, or organize them by topic or tag;
- provide space for comments from the public;
- style the site as desired by the owner of the blog.

Wordpress accounts can be had for free, but the free accounts will come with ads. Paying a subscription fee removes the ads and allows for more flexibility in styling. If your institution supports the use of Wordpress, it is best to take advantage of that support.

When posting a podcast I begin with a small written introduction at the head of the blog entry, intended to convey the essence of the content in an appealing manner and give credit to the student, for example, “Obscenity was not at all out of place in Roman poetry, argues John O’Connor, as he reads, translates and discusses a prime example, Catullus 32.” I also add a catchy title, preferably drawn from the podcast itself, and including a reference to the specific text under discussion, such as “Yolo, mea Lesbia (Catullus 5),” or “The Scream of Achilles (*Iliad* 18.217-238),” or “The Sacks on Our Backs (Catullus 22).” These are meant to draw interest and give a clear indication of topic. I also include in the blog entry the text of the student’s translation, and the original Latin or Greek text. That way listeners can follow along during the discussion. If possible I add an image, for similar reasons. Sometimes an illustration is essential, as in the case of Dan Plekhov’s discussion of chariot tactics in Homer, which draws on various bits of [material evidence](#) to make its case. (See Figure 2.)

Homer's *Iliad*

Selected passages discussed, translated, and read aloud in Greek

Chariot tactics in Homer (*Iliad* 4.297-309)

May 16, 2012

✚ audio mp3

Chariots appear frequently in the *Iliad*, but Homer notoriously seems to have little idea of how they would actually be used in combat. Dan Plekhov points out the exception, a passage that does seem to describe realistic chariot tactics, and argues that it reflects memories of Mycenaean culture, not the experience of contemporary societies of Homer's own day. *Iliad* 4.297-309, read, translated and discussed by Dan Plekhov.

ἰπιῆας μὲν πρῶτα σὺν ἵπποισιν καὶ ὄχεσφι,
 πεζοὺς δ' ἐξόπιθε στήσεν πολέας τε καὶ ἐσθλοὺς
 ἔρκος ἔμεν πολέμοιο· κακοὺς δ' ἐς μέσσον ἔλασεν,
 ὄφρα καὶ οὐκ ἐθέλων τις ἀναγκαίῃ πολεμίζοι. (300)
 ἰππεῦσιν μὲν πρῶτ' ἐπετέλλετο· τοὺς γὰρ ἀνώγει
 σφοδρὸς ἵππους ἐχέμεν μῆδ' κλονέεσθαι ὁμίλῳ·
 μῆδέ τις ἵπποσύνῃ τε καὶ ἡνορέηφι πεποιθὼς
 οἷος πρόσθ' ἄλλων μεμάτω Τρώεσσι μάχεσθαι,
 μῆδ' ἀναχωρεῖτω· ἀλαπαδνότεροι γὰρ ἔσεσθε. (305)
 ὅς δέ κ' ἀνὴρ ἀπὸ ὧν ὄχεων ἕτερ' ἄρμαθ' ἱκῆται
 ἔγχει ὀρεξάσθω, ἐπεὶ ἡ πολὺ φέρτερον οὕτω.
 ὦδε καὶ οἱ πρότεροι πολέας καὶ τεῖχε' ἐπόρθεον
 τόνδε νόον καὶ θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν ἔχοντες



Ancient Greek Funerary Krater
 From the Dipylon

Figure 2: screen shot of Wordpress blog containing a student podcast, with illustrations

In other instances the illustration is more ornamental, but important nonetheless in creating a pleasing package for the podcast. It is important again not to use copyrighted photographs, and to give full information about the image and its source wherever possible. I view my role as creating as attractive a presentation as possible, and finding ways to draw traffic to the site. To that end I promote the recordings via social media when they are posted.

Various models of grading rubrics for podcasts are available on the internet (e.g., Bell), and can be adapted to individual goals and made available to the students in advance. Some account should be taken of delivery and technical production.

CONCLUSION

Student reaction to this assignment, as seen in course evaluations, has been generally positive. Every year there is a student or two who finds the technology bothersome and would prefer to write a traditional paper. Another complaint, especially early on, was that more guidance was needed in how to do the writing. But most students seem to feel satisfaction and pride in the results. I have also gotten comments from other classes taught simultane-

ously wondering why they too did not have a chance to do a podcast. I too feel a sense of pride in the work, and it is a pleasure to be able to share it. But it would be unfair not to admit that podcasting takes considerable effort, and that it necessarily subtracts from the time available for other things. I persist because of the way it improves the writing process, gets Latin and Greek off the page, brings home the fact that Greek and Latin poetry was a performance art, and because of the creativity it evokes from the students. Podcasting can be an example of the use of technology that, rather than detracting from the core pursuits of the humanities, enacts some of its most important values: quality oral and written communication, close attention to language and meaning, and the analysis and comparison of cultural objects. At the same time it cultivates technological competencies that will be useful beyond the Latin and Greek classroom.

Getting good results depends on carefully explaining the rationale behind the assignment, on giving students sufficient time to complete drafts, on careful critiquing of drafts, and on one-on-one coaching sessions just prior to recording. It is also important to listen to professional podcasts, and to ask students to listen to both professional and student podcasts. As always, seek out colleagues who have done similar assignments, and take them to lunch. There is at the moment a lamentable dearth of spoken Greek and Latin on the internet, and I hope some version of the assignment I have discussed may inspire you to add your own and your students' recordings to the common store.

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APPENDIX: A PODCASTING ASSIGNMENT AND RUBRIC***Catullus: A Podcast***

Purpose:

- practice literary translation
- relate a Latin poem to its historical and cultural contexts
- identify and appreciate literary and stylistic features of a Latin poem (or a 10–20 line section of a longer piece)

Method:

- create an audio recording of a poem by Catullus
- including your own introduction and translation

The finished piece will be posted on the college blog (<http://blog.dickinson.edu>) and on iTunesU.

The assignment has two parts:

- I. A script for the introduction and translation, with full bibliographic information on the sources you used.
- II. A recording of you delivering your introduction, your translation, and reading the Latin, turned in as an mp3.

I. Write the script.

1. Research your poem in the standard commentaries on Catullus (in addition to Garrison's textbook) and any other books on Catullus that might be helpful (see list below). Take careful notes on what you read, including the bibliographic information of the books or articles you look at, and the exact pages of any quotable quotes. Commentaries and articles on classical texts often use abbreviations. Let me know if there are any you cannot figure out.

2. Here are some questions you may want to ask as you investigate your poem. Time is short, so you may not be able to include all of this in your podcast:

- a. What is known about the people mentioned, if any?
- b. Is there any indication of the exact date of the poem?
- c. What is the structure?
- d. Are there any Roman customs knowledge of which might help make the

- poem clearer?
- e. Are there any notable images? Why are they there?
 - f. What is the tone?
 - g. What is the poem “about”?
 - h. How effective is it?
 - i. Are there any problems or obscurities in it?
 - j. Do **not** include any general information about Catullus (“Catullus was a Roman poet who lived from 85 to 55 BC” . . .). I will put that into a brief series intro., which will precede your recording. Assume your listener knows who he was.
 - k. Length: the introduction portion should be no more than three minutes or so, shoot for about 525 words.

3. Write a translation of the poem. Remember this is for an audience who does not know Latin, so make sure the translation is faithful, but not too literal. Try to communicate the essence of the poem in good, clear English.

Tips and advice for creating an engaging podcast:

- a. Be creative! Make it enjoyable and entertaining.
- b. Think of a catchy lead to grab the listener’s attention right away.
- c. Interesting factoids or quotations about the poem can color the intro. Don’t just give a stuffy, dull description.
- d. Say what you like about the poem; give the listener a reason to want to hear it.
- e. Use metaphors and colorful language, as appropriate.
- f. Pay attention to the quality of the audio.
- g. Go online and listen to some podcasts to get a feeling for what works and what does not.
- h. Write for a general audience. Avoid using too many technical terms.

Recommended sources:

The commentaries of Quinn, Fordyce, and Thomson. Thomson has lists of articles on each poem. These are also good books on Catullus, and are on reserve:

Julia Haig Gaisser, *Catullus*. Chichester, UK: Blackwell, 2009. PA6276 .G348 2009

Marilyn B. Skinner, *A Companion to Catullus*. Malden, MA: Blackwell,

2007. PA6276 .C66 2007

Amanda Kolson Hurley, *Catullus*. London: Bristol Classical Press, 2004.
PA6276 .H87 2004

David Wray, *Catullus and the Poetics of Roman Manhood*. Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 2001. PA6276 .W73 2001

II. Record your intro., translation, and Latin reading, then hand it in to me as an .mp3.

Practice reading the poem in Latin until it sounds smooth and convincing.

Learn the meter and scan the poem. Meet with me to work on pronunciation. Most importantly, say it with inflections that suggest you understand what you are reading. Emphasize key words. Pause between clauses, as appropriate, to make the sense clearer. Sounding like you know what you are saying is more important than having perfect pronunciation. Put some emotion into it.

SAMPLE RUBRIC (BASED ON THE [PODCAST RUBRIC](#) OF ANN BELL):

Podcast Rubric

CATEGORY	Exemplary	Proficient	Partially Proficient	Incomplete	POINTS
Introduction	<p>5-6 points</p> <p>Catchy and clever introduction. Provides relevant information and establishes a clear purpose engaging the listener immediately.</p>	<p>3-4 points</p> <p>Describes the topic and engages the audience as the introduction proceeds.</p>	<p>2 points</p> <p>Somewhat engaging (covers well-known topic), and provides a vague purpose.</p>	<p>0-1 point</p> <p>Irrelevant or inappropriate topic that minimally engages listener. Does not include an introduction or the purpose is vague and unclear.</p>	
Content	<p>8-10 points</p> <p>Creativity and original content enhance the purpose of the podcast in an innovative way.</p> <p>Accurate information and succinct concepts are presented.</p>	<p>4-7 points</p> <p>Accurate information is provided succinctly.</p>	<p>3-4 points</p> <p>Some information is inaccurate or long-winded.</p>	<p>0-3 points</p> <p>Information is inaccurate.</p>	
Delivery	<p>5-6 points</p> <p>Well-rehearsed, smooth delivery in a conversational style. Highly effective enunciation and presenter's speech is clear and intelligible. Correct grammar is used throughout the podcast.</p>	<p>3-4 points</p> <p>Rehearsed, smooth delivery. Enunciation, expression, pacing are effective throughout the podcast. Correct grammar is used during the podcast.</p>	<p>2 points</p> <p>Appears unrehearsed with uneven delivery. Enunciation, expression, rhythm are sometimes distracting during the podcast. Occasionally incorrect grammar is used during the podcast.</p>	<p>0-1 point</p> <p>Delivery is hesitant and choppy and sounds like the presenter is reading. Enunciation of spoken word is distant and muddled and not clear. Poor grammar is used throughout the podcast.</p>	
Graphic and Music Enhancements	<p>5-6 points</p> <p>The graphics/artwork used (if any) creates an effective presentation and enhance the podcast. Music enhances the mood,</p>	<p>3-4 points</p> <p>The graphics/artwork (if used) relates to the audio and reinforces content and demonstrates functionality. Music provides supportive</p>	<p>2 points</p> <p>The graphics/artwork (if used) sometimes enhances the quality and understanding of the presentation. Music provides somewhat</p>	<p>0-1 point</p> <p>The graphics are unrelated to the podcast. Artwork is inappropriate to podcast. Music is distracting to</p>	

Technical Production	<p>quality, and understanding of the presentation. All graphic and music enhancements are owned by the creator of the podcast or copyright cleared.</p>	<p>background to the podcast. Graphic and music enhancements are owned by the creator of the podcast or copyright cleared.</p>	<p>distracting background to the podcast. Use of copyrighted works is questionable.</p>	<p>presentation. Copyright infringement is obvious.</p>
	<p>5-6 points</p>	<p>3-4 points</p>	<p>2 points</p>	<p>0-1 point</p>
	<p>Presentation is recorded in a quiet environment without background noise and distractions. Transitions are smooth and spaced correctly without noisy, dead space. Podcast length keeps the audience interested and engaged.</p>	<p>Presentation is recorded in a quiet environment with minimal background noise and distractions. Transitions are smooth with a minimal amount of ambient noise. Podcast length keeps audience listening.</p>	<p>Presentation is recorded in a semi-quiet environment with some background noise and distractions. Transitions are uneven with inconsistent spacing; ambient noise is present. Podcast length is somewhat long or somewhat short to keep audience engaged.</p>	<p>Presentation is recorded in a noisy environment with constant background noise and distractions. Transitions are abrupt and background noise needs to be filtered. Podcast is either too long or too short to keep the audience engaged</p>
TOTAL POINTS				