Greek Summer Intensive Course

09/20/2021

Seven weeks, 10 credits, one Greek course

By: Lyndi Robins, CHaSS Communications Journalist

Utah State University collaborated with Brigham Young University to offer a summer intensive Greek course from June 21 to Aug. 12. This seven-week course, worth 10 USU credits, offered students a way to complete a full year’s worth of introductory Greek credits in one summer.

The course was under the direction of Charles Oughton, an assistant professor of classical studies at BYU, program coordinator and Aggie alumnus. Oughton taught this program at Utah State in 2018 with great success.

Oughton created the curriculum based on a teaching model developed at University of Texas at Austin by late scholar and professor, Gareth Morgan.

Morgan’s method was developed about 50 years ago. Alongside colleague James Patterson, lecturer in classics at The University of Texas Austin, Oughton has created an additional course reading to complement Morgan’s method with some updated techniques, more current linguistic theories and additional reading exercises.

Morgan’s teaching method exposes students to authentic Greek literature within the first few days of the program by simplifying the way Greek word formation is taught to the students.

“Most Greek and Latin programs teach students to memorize huge paradigms and charts full of word forms,” Oughton said. “Morgan’s method distills all that information into the simplest unit possible.”

These techniques grant students a firm understanding of the Greek language’s formation.

This summer Greek approach teaches students how words are formed,” said Daniel Porter, current teaching assistant and former student in the program. “After learning this method, it’s much easier to move between dialects. I can’t recommend this opportunity enough.”

Through the program, students were fully immersed in the study of Greek texts.

“The class feels more like a language lab than a classroom because the students spend so much time working through the material on their own or in a small group with their peers and with the instructors there to help,” Oughton said.

Previous experience with the Greek language was not required to be in the class. According to Oughton, students in the program ranged from incoming freshmen to Ph.D. students and retired professors.

“Students can walk in on Day One with no previous Greek knowledge and by Day 11, they’ll read completely unadapted Herodotus,” Oughton said. “Normally it’s not until the end of their second semester that students are able to read a passage of entirely unadapted Greek.”

In-person classes were held on both the USU and BYU campuses. The two classes were connected via Zoom with individual teaching assistants and instructors at both campuses. Oughton also taught many of the lessons himself.

With USU and BYU collaborating on this program, it was more available and affordable to students.

“There are summer Greek programs out there, but they tend to be very costly,” Oughton said. “Up until now, there hasn’t been a program like this in the Mountain West.”

The class was not limited to just USU and BYU students. It was offered to undergraduate, graduate, and nontraditional
students from campuses countrywide. It was also available to individuals interested in taking the class noncredit at a discounted price.

This collaboration between USU and BYU allowed students to choose to attend the program at the university that best fits their needs.

According to Oughton, this program offered students the best cost value because Utah has a low cost of living and because credits at USU and BYU are offered at a lower cost than comparable programs.

“As a nontraditional student with children, I was hesitant to commit to such an involved course, but I had taken Latin before and I love ancient literature. There was no question that I wanted to learn Greek,” said Marie Skinner, current teaching assistant and former student in the program. “I decided seven weeks of study is so much better than two semesters; I took the plunge.”

For information about future summer Greek intensive programs at USU and BYU, contact oughton_charles@byu.edu.