

Erasmus Academy Latin

Katherine A. McKee, Class of 2022

The Erasmus Academy program was an 8-week course that covered the first two semesters of college-level Latin, preparing students to begin second-year college Latin. Conducted online, I met with the fifteen-person class and the instructor twice per week, supplemented by extensive independent work, to learn the fundamentals of Latin reading. The course was geared toward graduate—and some undergraduate—students interested in obtaining reading knowledge of Latin.

As an Italian Studies major, my primary interest in pursuing Latin came from my research interests in medieval manuscripts and Italian literature. Many texts, particularly liturgical writing and pre-Dante poetry, are written in Latin instead of standard Italian. I plan to pursue an honor's project this year on the writing of St. Catherine of Bologna, and in order to consult both her text and outside sources, I need to be equipped with the linguistic tools to understand Latin. Beyond the honor's project, I intend to pursue graduate study in Italian Studies, for which I will need to be able to read Latin.

I thoroughly enjoyed this course and found that, by the end of the eight weeks, I could successfully translate Latin sentences. For me, reading Latin was like a puzzle; with an understanding of grammatical rules and the aid of a dictionary, the words begin to fit together and present themselves as comprehensive ideas. One of my favorite parts of the course was writing in sentences in Latin, for it allowed me to pull together all of the different concepts I was learning and create my own ideas. Throughout the course, we read works by authors ranging from Livy to Cornelius Nepos. Needless to say, my dexterity with a Latin-English dictionary improved immensely, and I have laid an excellent foundation for further Latin study.

The many hours hunched over my desk differentiating between ablative absolutes, passive periphrastics, gerundives, purpose clauses, and all of the very many cases, genders, and tenses in Latin will indeed prove to be fruitful. During the fall and spring of 2021 and 2022, I plan to enroll in Latin courses with Bowdoin's Classics Department to exercise my newly-acquired Latin capabilities and explore the influencers of some of my favorite medieval Italian writers. Reading Dante's *Divine Comedy* during the spring semester of 2021 had particularly piqued my interest in the *Aeneid* and *Metamorphoses*, both works that Dante cites liberally in his masterpiece. Thanks to this course, traces of Latin that have come up in my study of medieval Italian have already become legible. Etymological research has also become intuitive, for many words in Italian derive from Latin roots.

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Faculty Mentor: Dr. Rob Sobak

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