

FORUM

UTILIZING QUANTITATIVE ELEMENTS IN COURSES ON THE ANCIENT WORLD: AN OVERVIEW

At the CAMWS Southern Section meeting held in November 2006 in Memphis, Tennessee, the “Classics across the Curriculum” panel explored ways of connecting Classics with other disciplines in the classroom. Three papers from the panel considered the intersection of Classics with mathematics and science. Audience reaction indicated a growing need at many schools and colleges for ideas on how to insert quantitative elements into Classics courses, prompted by either a multidisciplinary approach to education or greater institutional emphasis on quantitative reasoning and quantitative literacy. Researchers such as Barnett and Ceci argue that transfer of learning is most likely if the quantitative concepts taught in one discipline are related to quantitative applications in other disciplines.¹ As a result, the following institutions, among others, have implemented quantitative aspects into traditionally non-quantitative courses: Hollins University (Ancient Art), Farmingdale State University of New York (Linguistics), Lawrence University (Anthropology) and University of Nevada – Reno (Art).²

With these thoughts in mind, the presenters of the CAMWS–SS papers that focused on the connection of Classics to mathematics and science offer their work here to a wider audience. “Lessons for Classics from the History of Mathematics” shows how famous mathematical problems from the Greek world can be incorporated into classical civilization courses, and how mathematical treatises and anagrams composed in Latin during the Renaissance can be introduced into Latin classes. “The Beauty of Measure and the Measure of Beauty” and “Quantitative Reasoning and Scientific Analysis in the Ancient Art Classroom” explore how the mathematics and numbers present in ancient art and architecture can be included in surveys of ancient art. The last paper also offers examples of how students can be introduced to the application of science in understanding ancient archaeological finds.³

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¹ See Susan M. Barnett and Stephen J. Ceci, “When and Where Do We Apply What We Learn? A Taxonomy for Far Transfer,” *Psychological Bulletin* 128 (2002): 612–37.

² See Rick Gillman, ed., *Current Practices in Quantitative Literacy* (Washington, DC, 2006) 41–79.

³ Classroom support materials related to these papers, including syllabuses, bibliographies and worksheets, are posted at <http://classicaljournal.org/forum.php> under *Forum Articles*.