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Toward Ending the Crisis for Classics

"Here and there some exceptionally gifted classical teacher, mostly by sheer attractiveness of general temperament, enlists in his classes larger numbers than the average for his subject, but even if every classical instructor possessed the erudition and charm of the Admirable Crichton and the horse-power drive of a Ford tri-motor plane, the struggle would still be an unequal one as between the classics and most other subjects."

—William Alexander Hardy, "The Amiable Tyranny of Peisistratus" (1937)

"Without a clear statement of why the ancients are worth studying, classical education loses its purpose."

—Robert E. Proctor, "The *Studia Humanitatis*: Contemporary Scholarship and Renaissance Ideals" (1990)

Where Are We Coming From?

The academic culture wars reinforced the marginality of classical studies in American higher education. Although observers have noted—and bemoaned—the humble standing of the classics at US colleges and universities,[1] this marginality is even more severe than many have supposed. The public debates over the canon that took place in the 1980s and 1990s demonstrated that neither side perceived the classical languages as an integral element of the proper education of young Americans. In a prolonged dispute regarding the role of the humanities that piqued the public's interest, classical studies remained on the periphery. This must amount to one of the most regrettable missed opportunities in the field's history.

Classics departments were largely irrelevant to the well-publicized struggles of the period. Even the *Black Athena* controversy—the one classically based

1. E.g., Hallett 1985; Skinner 1987a: 181; Richlin 1988a, b; Susan Guettel Cole 1989; Galinsky 1991: 452–53; Daniel Walker Howe 2011.

row in the culture wars that received wide exposure—did not really highlight the classics, but instead focused on African American studies and their relation to the United States' fraught racial history. The *AJP* affair, though interpreted as a struggle typical of its time, hinged far more on pragmatic than on ideological concerns. Although *Who Killed Homer?* had pronounced links with the traditionalistic tracts from the academic culture wars, the book launched a replay of earlier struggles, and this, combined with its late appearance in the skirmishes, ensured that it would attract more debate among classical scholars than the populace at large. The connection between *Who Killed Homer?* and a wider audience, moreover, centered on its mimicry of culture wars contestations over the study of English literature in America. Classics professors, Hanson and Heath implicitly contended, were producing scholarship as opaque and politically tainted as their colleagues in English departments.

Given the discipline's outsized role in the earlier history of American colleges and universities, classical studies should have played a pivotal part in a struggle centered on teaching and research in the humanities. But they did not. Instead, the classical controversies analyzed in this book often underscored the irrelevance of Greco-Roman studies to US higher education. Estimations of these controversies in the popular press either reinforced preconceptions of American classicists as elitist and reactionary (the *Black Athena* debate) or modish leftists, like other humanities scholars (the *Who Killed Homer?* controversy). In short, during the culture wars, the classics were always an afterthought.

Scholars underestimated the insignificance of classical studies in the era of the culture wars in part as a consequence of misunderstandings about the place of the ancient Greeks and Romans in the pedagogical conceptions of academic traditionalists. Amy Richlin and Karl Galinsky, for example, presumed that critics such as William Bennett and Allan Bloom supported a vision of educated Americans that placed the classics in a central position.[2] Yet this was not the case: most culture wars traditionalists, although slightly more amenable to classical studies than some of their opponents, did not stress language study and proved hostile to the minute philological analysis that is the hallmark of much classical scholarship. In reality, neither side in the wider debates focused on the classics.

The failure of classical scholars to promote the significance of the ancient Greeks and Romans to contemporary Americans must have reinforced impressions of the discipline's irrelevance. At least since the late twentieth century, classics professors in the US have said little about the importance of their subject to the general education of Americans. The decreased popularity of Western civilization sequences (or required world civilization courses) and the concomitant dominance of the smorgasbord approach to undergraduate curricula has left the field incapable of articulating a broadly supported vision of Greco-Roman studies as crucial to an educated person.

Undoubtedly, the pervasiveness of the *Altertumswissenschaft* ideal in the discipline has helped leave American classical scholars in the dark about earlier traditions connecting ancient authors to salutary character formation. The shock surrounding *Who Killed Homer?* partly pertained to Hanson and Heath's bold insistence that the Greeks and Romans were indispensable subjects of study for *all* educated Americans.[3] Such pronouncements appear unpopular in an intellectual environment dominated by a free-market approach to general education. Accordingly, classicists nowadays have no more to say for their subject's significance than do biologists, political scientists, or engineers about their own. And unlike many other specialists, classical scholars cannot rest on their laurels, content to presume that students will flock to their classrooms in search of either vocational advantages or easy As.

Classical studies played a minor role in the academic culture wars in large measure because most classical scholars allowed this to happen. Although a number of American classicists took part in these debates, the large majority shied away. As raucous and unpleasant as these skirmishes could be, refusing to engage proved to be a mistake, especially for such a small and embattled field in the increasingly embattled humanities.

There are many reasons why classical scholars declined to participate in the academic culture wars, and some of them are not specific to their discipline. For example, the nature of academic advancement—the cardinal importance of peer-reviewed scholarship to the cursus honorum—is by no means a feature of higher education unique to classicists. But other issues that helped keep classics on the sidelines are likely more influential on the field than on others. The defining influence of *Altertumswissenschaft* puts a premium on minute, specialized research and encourages classical scholars to eschew broader topics and themes. The dominance of this approach in the discipline has also disconnected classics from the ideals of Renaissance humanism and from the Great Books tradition. And this leaves classics professors increasingly unwilling—or even

2. Richlin 1989: 58; Galinsky 1991: 448. For similar views, see also Bernal 1989b: 72; Skinner 1989: 200.

3. Hanson and Heath (1999b: 179) expressed surprise that some classicists did not agree on this point.

unable—to vouch for the value of their subject to undergraduate education. In their own ways, both the Italian humanists and the Great Books enthusiasts stressed the significance of classical antiquity for people living in the contemporary world, either through the development of good character or by gaining an understanding of the grand narrative of the West. Without such ingredients, classical studies present no greater claim to our attention than any other subject in the university buffet. This is not a recipe for success.

Continuity and Change

This should not lead us to believe that the 1980s and 1990s were decades of abject failure for American classical studies. In fact, the controversies examined in this book allow us to take stock of changes—both for better and worse—in the field since the dawn of the culture wars. To help us with our conclusions on this and other topics, this chapter includes the relevant results from a survey I conducted of members of the Society for Classical Studies with American mailing addresses.[4] These results—from the first broadly representative survey of its kind—give us a better sense of what American classicists think about their discipline, its current place in US higher education, and its prospects for the future.

American classical studies now appear markedly more equitable for female scholars than was the case in the 1980s.[5] The *AJP* editorial board currently boasts more female than male members, and it is hard to imagine the journal returning to the state of affairs during Luck's second editorship, when it had only one female representative. The journey of the Women's Classical Caucus from maverick outsider to established insider in the world of American classical studies helps demonstrate its successes in establishing a fairer discipline. For younger scholars, some of the field's former practices—the nonanonymous review of scholarly papers, the widespread relegation of female classics professors to women's colleges—must now seem unfathomable.

4. The Web survey was conducted from April 27 to June 15, 2015. The names of 500 randomly selected SCS members with American street addresses were obtained by purchasing the SCS's mailing list (which included 2,693 members with US postal addresses). Of the 500 members invited to take part in the survey, 317 completed it (a 63.4% response rate). The survey asked for relevant demographic data, queried members' opinions on political and ideological matters, and offered participants the opportunity to voice their opinions about the current state of the discipline. Since this book focuses on classical studies in the US, the survey confined itself to scholars with US mailing addresses. The SCS did not prove helpful in this process. The organization's Professional Matters Committee denied my request to use its e-mail list to send out the survey. Instead, the SCS allowed me to purchase the mailing list, which does not include e-mail addresses. Thus I had to search for each scholar's e-mail address individually. This has a minor influence on the survey's results: some categories of SCS members (e.g., graduate students, high school teachers, emeriti) have e-mail addresses that can be more difficult to find than others.

5. This does not suggest that all is well in this regard, of course, or that we should not remain on guard about current and future problems.

In regard to the participation of underrepresented minorities, however, the field does not appear to have been anywhere near as successful. The Web survey demonstrated the paucity of minority professors among American classicists. Of the SCS members with US addresses surveyed, 88.6 percent self-identified as white, 2.3 percent as Asian, 2.3 percent as Hispanic or Latino, and 1.3 percent as black. No respondents self-identified as a native Hawaiian or from another Pacific Island. Thus the profession remains notably short of minority professors, despite the fact that Bernal's *Black Athena* helped inaugurate a wellspring of scholarly interest in the topics of race and ethnicity in antiquity. Bernal's work and the reaction it engendered in the popular press reinforced perceptions of classical studies' conservatism.[6] Although this impression predates Bernal's project, the publicity surrounding debates between Afrocentrists and classical scholars did not help matters. In that sense, *Black Athena*, with its faultfinding generalizations about contemporary classical scholars, caused problems for the discipline. Such misperceptions not only contribute to a dearth of ethnic minorities in classics, but also underscore (incorrectly, I think) the presumption that the field is hidebound, at odds with other disciplines in the contemporary academy. Indeed, Bernal offered a strikingly different view of classical studies from that promoted by Hanson and Heath. To some degree, this must have been the result of the elite education Bernal experienced in Britain during his youth, but he soon recognized that his portrait of the field was a caricature. Nevertheless, by the time he did so, the damage was done.

Issues of class also continue to plague the discipline. The star system that Hanson and Heath scorned in *Who Killed Homer?* is still very much with us. Its effects, however, seem more noticeable in other (less marginal) fields, which lavish comparatively large salaries, light teaching loads, and other perquisites on a few academic *optimates*. None of this should be surprising, since major structural changes in American academia would have to take place for this class system to disappear. Thus the field—like so many others in the contemporary academic universe—remains afflicted by the prevalence of poorly paid visiting professors, lecturers, and adjuncts.[7] Despite the increase in attention to the topic in recent years, the effects of a large professorial underclass on instruction

6. Beard (2012: 50) notes that the classics are not inherently conservative.

7. On this topic, see table 1 and below.

in colleges and universities seems slow to resonate with the American public.[8]

Academic elitism, though by no means confined to the discipline, could cause more problems for classical studies than for healthier fields. It can hinder crucial reforms. Those in the profession's top tier are, by dint of their institutional affiliations, most likely to be shielded from the existential dangers facing other classics departments. And classics professors at prestigious, Ph.D.-granting institutions play an outsized leadership role in the field.

Are the Classics in Crisis?

Despite the problems we have catalogued, classical studies continue to limp along on many American campuses. Some departments seem notably successful in attracting student interest, others less so. One could hardly characterize the field as vibrant. If anything, the classics remain a "boutique" discipline, a status marker for elite state and private institutions.[9]

Does this state of affairs suggest that American classical studies have been experiencing a prolonged period of crisis? The language of crisis dogged the discipline throughout the culture wars.[10] Thus Luck's *AJP* editorial statement led to the publication of *Classics: A Discipline and Profession in Crisis?* and the WCC's report "Is Classics Dead?"[11] Hanson and Heath's dire prognostications for the field demonstrate that a sense of gloominess prevailed more than a decade after the *AJP* affair. Classicists on various sides of disputes spoke of crisis: to some, the field's failure to heed changes detectable in other humanities disciplines signaled classics' imminent demise; to others, the jettisoning of the Great Books approach meant doom.

Undoubtedly reinforcing this sense of crisis has been a spate of more recent pieces in the popular press lamenting the deterioration of the humanities in American higher education.[12] As administrators chase STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) dollars and increasing percentages of students adopt a vocational approach to their studies, the humanities have been left behind, the sick man of US colleges and universities.

8. This may be related to the politicized way in which this topic is discussed in many academic circles. A less partisan approach would prove more successful in engaging the American public's attention than neo-Marxist discussions about the vicissitudes of the neoliberal university.

9. For the percentage of US colleges and universities with classics programs of some sort, see Connor 2014b. Connor (1970–71: 139) specifies that these tend to be elite institutions.

10. See Beard (2012), who notes a sense of gloominess on the topic and attempts to fight it.

11. Richlin 1988b; Culham and Edmunds 1989.

12. E.g., Hutner and Mohamed 2013; Pulizzi 2014. Cf. Russell A. Berman 2006–7; Hayward 2014: 22–23.

Recent work on trends in American institutions of higher learning has attempted to question this narrative of the humanities' decline.[13] What the media report as a steady, inexorable drop in humanities students really amounts to a more complicated pattern. Doom and gloom about the humanities in America, furthermore, rely heavily on figures relating to the percentages of humanities majors in the past fifty years or so. As critics suggest, this is a problematic metric: the great expansion in preprofessional concentrations at most American colleges and universities since the 1960s suggests that the percentage of humanities majors would flag during this period. Figures on the percentages of majors also cannot give us a sense of how many students take classes in the humanities—as part of their concentrations, general-education requirements, and electives. Before the late nineteenth century, there were *no* classics majors—because the major and minor system did not yet exist. Yet one could not argue from this fact that the classics played an inconsequential role in early American collegiate education.

Despite this more complex picture, there are indeed reasons to fret about the place of classical studies in the US. Employment prospects for classics Ph.D.s remain grim.[14] According to statistics gleaned from recent editions of the *APA Newsletter* (see table 1), the total number of nontenured jobs filled through the placement service operated by the American Philological Association (APA) (which was never robust to begin with) has tanked in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. In the 2006–7 academic year, for example, 117 candidates landed nontenured jobs. By 2008–9, that number had dropped to forty-nine.

In 2010–11, US universities awarded eighty-five Ph.D.s in classics (see table 2). Yet only fifty-nine pre-tenure positions were filled during that year. Prospects for gainful employment become bleaker in light of the fact that many who received Ph.D.s in prior years remain on the market, in search of permanent positions, and because some people earn non-American doctorates but find academic jobs at US institutions.[15] Under the circumstances, as table 2 shows, it is striking—even alarming—that recent years have witnessed a gradual uptick in the number of classics Ph.D.s earned at US universities.

To make matters worse, an increasing percentage of available jobs in classics are visiting positions (i.e., off the tenure track). As table 1 illustrates, in 2007–8, almost twice as many positions filled through the APA placement service were for tenure-track professors as for visitors and postdocs. By 2010–11, however,

13. E.g., Connor 2013a, b, c; Schmidt 2013a, b.

14. Cf. the prematurely rosy views of Hubbard (2000).

15. The reverse is also true, however: classical scholars with doctorates from American institutions can obviously land teaching appointments outside of the US.

the total number of visiting positions had nearly equaled those for tenure-track professors. America's economic recovery may lead to improved employment opportunities for prospective classics professors, but the increasing pace of the adjunctification of instruction in US higher education is not cause for optimism. Though these days only around 40 percent of students entering classics Ph.D. programs complete their studies,[16] those who earn degrees face a slim chance of landing tenure-track positions.

These problematic job prospects continue, as Latin enrollments in American higher education have risen and fallen in recent years. Since 1958, the MLA has collected data on foreign-language enrollment in US colleges and universities. Prior to 2009, those numbers grew slightly for Latin.[17] In 1980, for ex-

TABLE 1. Pre-Tenured University and College Appointments Filled through the APA Placement Service

Academic Year	Number of Assistant Professor (i.e., Tenure-Track) Positions Filled	Number of Visiting Assistant Professor, Lecturer, and Postdoctoral Positions Filled	Total Pre-Tenure Positions Filled
2010–11	30 (51%)	29 (49%)	59
2009–10	21 (38%)	34 (62%)	55
2008–09	24 (49%)	25 (51%)	49
2007–08	60 (65%)	32 (35%)	92
2006–07	78 (67%)	39 (33%)	117
2005–06	59 (63%)	35 (37%)	94
2004–05	51 (63%)	31 (37%)	81
2003–04	71 (59%)	50 (41%)	121
2002–03	52 (68%)	25 (32%)	77
2001–02	87 (63%)	51 (37%)	138
2000–01	77 (55%)	63 (45%)	140
1999–2000	52 (64%)	29 (36%)	81
1998–99	67 (60%)	44 (40%)	111

Source: Data from *APA Newsletters*, https://classicalstudies.org/publications-and-research/apa-newsletter

Note: I counted the number of the relevant positions advertised as filled in the respective issues of the *APA Newsletter*. Some issues of the newsletter are not available online, so the data are incomplete. In addition, some institutions may not advertise their hires, and some classics Ph.D.s may land academic jobs through other avenues. Despite these limitations, the data present an idea of the job market for recent classics Ph.D.s.

16. According to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences Humanities Indicators (anonymous 2014), the median completion rate for doctoral students in classics who matriculated between the 1996–97 academic year and 2005–6 was 40%. This completion rate is in the middle of the pack for doctoral programs in the humanities.

17. See Goldberg, Looney, and Lusin 2015. See also Furman, Goldberg, and Lusin 2010. Cf. LaFleur 1987b, 1998, 2000.

TABLE 2. Number of Ph.D.s Awarded in Classics in the US

Academic Year [*Digest* Table #]	Ph.D.s Awarded in Classics
2012–13 [318.30]	92 (48 men; 44 women)
2011–12 [318.30]	99 (52 men; 47 women)
2010–11 [317]	85 (47 men; 37 women)
2009–10 [290]	77 (48 men; 29 women)
2008–09 [286]	79 (40 men; 39 women)
2007–08 [275]	75 (49 men; 26 women)
2006–07 [275]	68 (46 men; 22 women)
2005–06 [265]	72 (44 men; 28 women)
2004–05 [258]	63 (30 men; 33 women)
2003–04 [252]	70 (39 men; 31 women)
2002–03 [253]	76 (45 men; 31 women)
2001–02 [255]	56 (32 men; 24 women)
2000–01 [255]	51 (31 men; 20 women)
1999–2000 [258]	56 (32 men; 23 women)
1998–99 [258]	66 (39 men; 27 women)
1997–98 [257]	75 (42 men; 33 women)
1996–97 [258]	51 (29 men; 22 women)
1995–96 [253]	63 (39 men; 24 women)
1994–95 [253]	54 (28 men; 26 women)
1993–94 [244]	77 (43 men; 34 women)
1992–93 [241]	60 (34 men; 24 women)
1991–92 [242]	58 (36 men; 22 women)

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics*, http://nces.ed.gov

Note: Although the table numbers differ among issues of the *Digest*, the table titles remain largely the same: "Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctor's Degrees Conferred by Degree-Granting Institution, by Sex of Student and Discipline Division [Field of Study]." Prior to 2004, the categories for classics concentrations (listed under "Foreign Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics") included "Classics," "Greek (Ancient and Medieval)," and "Latin (Ancient and Medieval)." Beginning with the 2004 *Digest of Education Statistics* (which reports on the 2002–3 academic year), different categories were used for classics concentrations: "Classics and Classical Languages, Lit., and Linguistics, General"; "Ancient/Classical Greek Language and Literature"; "Latin Language and Literature"; and "Classics and Classical Languages, Lit. and Linguistics, Other."

ample, 25,035 students took Latin classes at US institutions. By 2009, that number was up to 32,606. The MLA's most recent figures, however, demonstrate an alarming plunge: Latin enrollments in 2013 dropped to 27,192—a 16.2 percent dip since 2009. And there are other grounds for worry. Small percentages of collegiate Latin students enroll in upper-level courses,[18] and this leaves many of these classes precariously small.

Ancient Greek has charted an even more perilous course, with enrollment figures remaining low. For example, in 1980, 22,111 students took ancient Greek courses. By 2009, that number had diminished to 21,476.[19] The figures for 2013 are even more depressing: 17,014—a 20.8 percent decrease over the preceding four years.[20] Such figures can scarcely be deemed healthy.

Courses in English—typically less taxing on students than classes in the ancient languages—now undoubtedly constitute the bread and butter for most US classics departments, but no systematic data have been collected on enrollments in such courses.[21] Without popular classes in classical mythology, Greco-Roman history, and literature in translation, however, many departments likely would have folded years ago. The field's successful transition to teaching these courses must be considered a triumph. Without demonstrating such adaptability, American classical scholars would likely have found their subject as marginal in today's academy as Egyptology or Sanskrit.

Increases in the number of classics majors over the past few decades are also somewhat encouraging. Hanson and Heath noted that a frightfully small group of American college students graduated with classics majors in the mid-1990s.[22] Table 3 shows that these numbers have risen steadily. Whereas only 714 American undergraduates earned B.A.s in classics in 1991–92, by 2012–13, this figure had nearly doubled to 1,333. Table 3 also demonstrates that the percentage of classics B.A.s in US higher education has also gradually increased. Whereas .06282 percent of recipients of bachelor's degrees from American colleges and universities majored in classics in 1991–92, that percentage rose to .0848 percent in 2009–10.[23]

18. Furman, Goldberg, and Lusin 2010: 4; Goldberg, Looney, and Lusin 2015: 7.

19. Goldberg, Looney, and Lusin 2015: 29.

20. Ibid. Recent changes in the categorization of ancient Greek courses are likely responsible for some of the reductions. The authors of the 2009 MLA report suggest that "enrollments in Ancient Greek appear lower by 9.4% than in 2006, but we take this loss to result from the refining of categories in premodern Greek courses in a handful of institutions" (Furman, Goldberg, and Lusin 2010: 3). But the 2013 numbers account for these changes (see Goldberg, Looney, and Lusin 2015: 29 [table 1c]).

21. See Adelman 2004, which examines collegiate transcripts from 1972 to 2000. The study does not prove illuminating about the classics, however.

22. See Hanson and Heath 1998b: 3. Their statistic pertained to 1994. For a different figure for that year, see chapter 5.

23. A slight downturn occurred in the percentages in the following years, however, potentially as a consequence of the economic collapse of 2008.

TABLE 3. Number and Percentage of Undergraduate Classics Degrees Granted by Four-Year Institutions in the US

Academic Year [*Digest* Table #]	Number of B.A.s Awarded in Classics	Total Number of B.A.s Awarded	Percentage of Classics B.A.s
2012–13 [318.30]	1,333	1,840,164	.07243%
2011–12 [318.30]	1,332	1,791,046	.07436%
2010–11 [317]	1,287	1,715,913	.075%
2009–10 [290]	1,328	1,650,014	.0848%
2008–09 [286]	1,290	1,601,368	.08055%
2007–08 [275]	1,303	1,563,069	.08336%
2006–07 [275]	1,303	1,524,092	.08549%
2005–06 [265]	1,181	1,485,242	.07951%
2004–05 [258]	1,036	1,439,264	.07198%
2003–04 [252]	1,097	1,399,542	.07838%
2002–03 [253]	1,014	1,348,503	.07519%
2001–02 [255]	999	1,291,900	.07732%
2000–01 [255]	915	1,244,171	.07354%
1999–2000 [258]	843	1,237,875	.0681%
1998–99 [259]	800	1,200,303	.06664%
1997–98 [257]	814	1,184,406	.06872%
1996–97 [258]	714	1,172,879	.06087%
1995–96 [253]	735	1,164,792	.0631%
1994–95 [253]	722	1,160,134	.06223%
1993–94 [244]	756	1,169,275	.06465%
1992–93 [241]	741	1,165,178	.06359%
1991–92 [242]	714	1,136,553	.06282%

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics*, http://nces.ed.gov

Note: Although the table numbers differ among issues of the *Digest*, the table titles remain largely the same: "Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctor's Degrees Conferred by Degree-Granting Institution, by Sex of Student and Discipline Division [Field of Study]." Prior to 2004, the categories for classics concentrations (listed under "Foreign Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics") included "Classics," "Greek (Ancient and Medieval)," and "Latin (Ancient and Medieval)." Beginning with the 2004 *Digest of Education Statistics* (which reports on the 2002–3 academic year), different categories were used for classics concentrations: "Classics and Classical Languages, Lit., and Linguistics, General"; "Ancient/Classical Greek Language and Literature"; "Latin Language and Literature"; and "Classics and Classical Languages, Lit. and Linguistics, Other." Degree recipients in classics do not include the more diffuse categories "Classical, Ancient Mediterranean/Near Eastern Studies/Archaeology" and "Ancient Studies/Civilization." They also do not include education majors specializing in Latin Teacher Education or history majors focusing on Greco-Roman history. Thus, the table may undercount the number of "classics majors" receiving degrees each year.

Such gains are remarkable, given the challenges facing the contemporary humanities. But they should not be cause for celebration. According to classicist and higher education expert Robert Connor, the US is currently home to around four hundred classics departments.[24] This means that in 2010–11 (when 1,287 students graduated with B.A.s in classics) departments averaged slightly more than three graduating classics majors.[25] Despite a recent pattern of increases, this average remains dangerously low.

Although counting the number of majors may seem like a problematic way to determine the health of a given discipline, such figures can play a crucial role in decisions that university administrators make—about the possibility of replacing retiring faculty members and the retention of various disciplines on campus.[26] It also seems unlikely that US classics professors would be happy to learn that their subject amounts to a service discipline on campus, offering a taste of belle lettrism to students who choose to focus their studies on, say, business, communications, or criminal justice. In addition, strong enrollment figures in classics courses in English can mask the fact that the enrollments in Latin and ancient Greek classes, especially at the advanced level, are often miniscule and at many institutions are either canceled or routinely taught as overloads.[27] It is no secret that the study of the ancient languages has for centuries formed the heart of the classics. Without healthy enrollments in Latin and ancient Greek, it is unclear whether the discipline can retain its philological core in an administrative environment that watches enrollment figures for individual courses more closely than in the past.[28]

Further, discontent about the direction of American classical studies festers among some in the early stages of their prospective careers. A quick gander at the blog FamaeVolent (a website devoted to the job market for classics Ph.D.s) should lead even optimistic scholars to worry. FamaeVolent allows anonymous commenters to vent about the indignities associated with hunting for a much-coveted position in the field. Posts on the site include many bitter recriminations and dejected laments. One commenter from 2013, for example, wrote, "I poured so much of my life, of myself, into a career in Classics, and have so hopelessly failed, that I no longer have any fears or concerns in life. Death, for

24. Connor 2014c.

25. See ibid.

26. For a related point about the importance or lack of importance of producing classics majors, see Connor 1970–71: 140.

27. See Furman, Goldberg, and Lusin 2010: 4, which details the small percentage of undergraduate Latin students enrolled in advanced courses in the subject.

28. The old notion of service courses with large enrollments allowing for the teaching of "boutique courses" seems no longer to apply at many institutions.

instance, seems trivial by comparison." Another contributor noted, "Classics is not a career. It's a gamble. Bad economy or not, the chances of meaningful . . . employment in Classics will always be much lower than in most other fields which require a similar degree of education. Anyone who decides to give it a shot should be aware that he or she is taking a huge professional risk. This doesn't make it any less heartbreaking, but trying to be a Classics professor is just as hard as trying to make a living as a concert pianist." Yet another ridiculed the APA, which recently recast itself as the Society for Classical Studies (SCS): "Let it be known that when Classics PHDs were struggling to get even part-time jobs; when Classics programs were folding; and when the place of the humanities in American culture was being undermined, the discipline's professional organization successfully took the singular visionary initiative to change its name. (Take that, Nero and fiddle.)"[29]

Such anonymous commentary may not be indicative of young classicists' attitudes about the discipline's future. It may not even signal what classics job seekers as a whole feel about their personal prospects. But kindred opinions—strewn throughout FamaeVolent or gleaned from conversations with graduate students on the job market—create the sense that all is not well for American classical studies.

Not surprisingly, therefore, pessimism about the field's future was manifest among respondents to my survey (see figure 1). In the sample, 61.1 percent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "The field of classics in the US is currently in a state of crisis." Only 18.2 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with this sentiment, and 20.8 percent professed neutrality about it. A majority of American classical scholars, then, appears to believe that the discipline currently finds itself in the midst of a calamity.

In a recent opinion piece, Mary Beard, a distinguished classicist at Cambridge University, cleverly observed that the language of crisis and decline has consistently hounded those studying the Greeks and Romans, even during antiquity.[30] Inherent in examinations of the "classical" period of human existence is a sense of worry about later societal degeneration. Beard correctly notes that the West has a long history of fretting about the erosion of Greek and Latin studies. But this should not lead to the conclusion that such lamentation is merely a cultural artifact. In the context of American higher education, such anxiety is not misplaced. For many American classics professors, in fact, these apprehensions are all too real.

29. "Benny Blue, You're All Through" thread, FamaeVolent.blogspot.com.

30. Beard 2012.

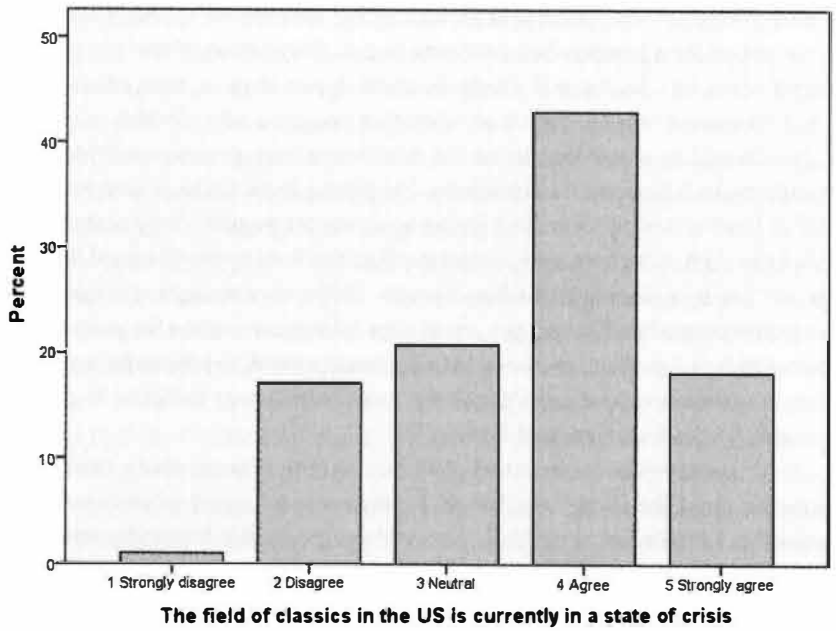

Fig. 1. Responses to the survey question, "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The field of classics in the US is currently in a state of crisis."

Fighting against the Free-Market Curriculum

The term *crisis* may or may not be the mot juste to describe the current state of classical studies in US institutions of higher learning, but the discipline undoubtedly has played an inconsequential role at most American colleges and universities for some time. In many respects, the current intellectual climate on campuses—averse to language study, resolutely presentist,[31] and increasingly preprofessional in its orientation[32]—has left classics departments dwindling and in danger of termination.[33] The field did not fare well during the culture wars, despite the fact that the public debate about the place of the humanities in American higher education could have proved a boon for classical scholars eager to advertise their discipline's relevance. Under the circumstances, it seems

31. See Connor 2014a.

32. See Rawlings and Aoki 2013.

33. For a sample of other opinions on the future of classics, see Finley 1964; Settis 2006; Beard 2012; Connor 2014a. For a view on the future of the humanities, see Bruce A. Kimball 2014.

imperative for classical studies to reform so that the field can survive and thrive in an uncongenial intellectual and pedagogical atmosphere.

The recommendations included here deliberately steer clear of the theoretical and abstract sorts of solutions Lee Pearcy articulated in *The Grammar of Our Civility*, as well as of the unapologetically utopian ideas of Hanson and Heath.[34] Instead, I offer concrete steps to limit problems for classical studies in American higher education, focusing particularly on reforms that classics professors can enact on their own, with limited support from their home institutions. Such suggestions may lack the appeal of more dramatic proposals but have the merit of presenting serviceable first steps for a field that has too long spun its wheels while mired in the mud of long-standing troubles.

We must never lose sight of the fact that many of the most serious challenges for the discipline of classics in the US stem from broader structural issues regarding American higher learning and its democratization. For this reason, unless they find themselves in the role of university presidents or senior administrators, classical scholars cannot radically alter the nature of their institutions. No individual professor, for example, can abolish large lecture courses nationwide, reintroduce a prescribed curriculum, end the reliance on exploited adjunct labor, or dramatically alter the nature of the contemporary corporate "multiversity." This places unfortunate but undeniable constraints on possible reforms.

We must also come to terms with the fact that classicists at research universities and at many liberal arts colleges cannot significantly reduce their scholarly output without jeopardizing their careers and alienating their departments from their home institutions. Even scholars at colleges and universities with a paramount focus on teaching are not immune to the research imperative, especially if they hope to move on to other institutions. On their own, classical scholars lack the power to reshape general education curricula, let alone to alter Americans' rationales for attending colleges and universities. In addition, all institutions of higher learning in the US are not the same, and proposals that fit one college may not work at another. Classicists must ponder localized solutions that are most likely to succeed in their specific environments.

Given these limitations, the courses of action I recommend may be insufficient on their own to curb the crisis for American classical studies. All the same, they do provide some concrete steps for reform that will help increase

34. See Pearcy 2005; Hanson and Heath 1998b. Some overlap exists, however, between the recommendations offered here and those proposed by Pearcy and Hanson and Heath. Since both *The Grammar of Our Civility* and *Who Killed Homer?* contain thoughtful suggestions for reform, there seems no reason to ignore them.

interest in Greco-Roman antiquity among students and the general populace without alienating the discipline from the contours of contemporary US higher education.

Without a change of course, the marginality of classics in American higher learning is, if anything, likely to become more severe. Much of this sorry state of affairs pertains to the nature of general education curricula for undergraduates at most American colleges and universities.[35] Whatever its faults, the Great Books approach to general education possesses pragmatic boons for classics: although less robustly than Renaissance humanism, it foregrounds the importance of classical civilization to the modern world. Undergraduates of various intellectual interests receive the message that the Greeks and Romans are important—a crucial message that can fight presentism and preprofessionalism. Thanks to the withering of the Great Books tradition in the second half of the twentieth century, American academia is now run by a generation that for the most part did not experience this approach to education. Contemporary administrators and faculty members thus are less likely to perceive classical antiquity as deserving a special place—or even any place at all—in the collegiate curriculum.

All this has occurred, furthermore, in an environment increasingly hostile to the humanities as a whole. It is difficult to imagine that a general education system based on distribution requirements (now the dominant model in the US) could ever lead to the flourishing of American classical studies. Such a system implicitly informs students that no subject is more worthy of attention than any other. How will this message—a dubious message, in any case—induce large numbers of students to enroll in taxing courses in ancient Greek and Latin? Both the prescribed curriculum of the antebellum colleges and the core curricula of the interwar universities provided an intellectual rationale for the study of classics. The distribution model offers no such rationale, and this, combined with the countercultural nature of classical studies in contemporary American society, spells disaster for the field. To prosper in such an inhospitable environment, the classics—and the humanities—need more help than this system of general education can offer. Simply put, the cafeteria-style curriculum of undergraduate studies at most American institutions of higher learning is a major part of the problem.[36]

35. A total of 85.7% of the SCS survey respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "Classics should play a stronger role in general education in American universities and colleges." This signals that the overwhelming majority of American classical scholars perceive the current state of undergraduate general education as wanting.

36. Perhaps for this reason, the distribution requirements system was less popular among my survey respondents than one might have expected. Asked "What system of general education do you prefer for undergraduate students?," 41.1% of respondents favored distribution requirements, only slightly outnumbering the 39.1% who preferred some sort of core curriculum. Only 4.7% favored no requirements at all.

The lack of a core curriculum at American colleges and universities also signals specific challenges for classical scholars. American classicists have often recoiled from broad discussions that highlight connections between classical antiquity and the present. Mostly the products of the pick-and-choose undergraduate curriculum, classical scholars are typically unschooled in the systematic influences of the Greeks and Romans on later peoples. Especially since graduate education in classics must remain tied to rigorous language study, most professional classicists are unable to articulate compelling defenses of their discipline. Hence, many of these academics shied away from the debate over *Who Killed Homer?*; it was easier to criticize Hanson and Heath's notion of "Greek wisdom" than to express a convincing rationale for classical studies. Such rationales are sorely needed.

The simplistic notion that Greco-Roman antiquity is "interesting" will not suffice. While true, this is thin gruel. Lots of subjects have intrinsic interest, and many of them do not require onerous language study. Some disciplines also offer perceived pragmatic benefits that Americans do not associate with an undergraduate degree in classics. Blasé assurances about the field's importance will not cut the mustard, either. Classical studies in the US have never rebounded from the demise of Renaissance humanism in the late nineteenth century. We need to formulate new ideals of similar heft to survive in the university of today.

For these reasons, despite the obvious difficulties involved, American classical scholars (as faculty members, department chairs, and administrators) must fight against the distribution requirements system and support alternatives that offer greater guidance to students and a more concrete picture of what it means to be an educated person. This ought not entail—indeed, it cannot entail—a wistful return to the Great Books as Robert Hutchins and Mortimer Adler envisioned them. But it does suggest that classical scholars should be at work on approaches to the undergraduate curriculum that present a particular vision of higher education's goals. They would not be alone in this attempt: scholars in many other fields (especially in the humanities) find themselves in similar predicaments. Recent years, in fact, have witnessed a groundswell of criticism for the cafeteria-style curriculum favored at most American colleges and universities.[37] This suggests much dissatisfaction with the pedagogical status quo. To many observers—and undoubtedly to many students—the smorgasbord approach to general education rings hollow.

37. E.g., Harry R. Lewis 2006; Kronman 2007; Deresiewicz 2014.

Professors have reason to esteem the distribution requirements system: it minimizes disciplinary turf wars and requires little deviation from specialized teaching on the part of faculty members. For antitraditionalists, the great amount of student choice afforded by such schemes also has its appeals. But far more profound reasons exist for both traditionalists and antitraditionalists disapprove of this model of general education. Some unexpected consensus among educators of rival outlooks can help drive opposition to the university buffet.

Nor are the objections only pragmatic in their inspiration. A system of distribution requirements feeds anti-intellectualism on campus insofar as it implicitly presumes that uniform content is unimportant and suggests that certain disciplinary ways of thinking are the sole attainments of an educated person. That is to say, distribution requirements signal that the content of an education is immaterial, or, to put it another way, that all content is equally important—which is merely another way to say the same thing. The distribution system also reinforces a consumer model of education, according to which students determine an institution's curriculum by voting with their feet. Many academics bemoan the increasing sense of entitlement they have detected among undergraduates in recent years.[38] The lack of core curricula on campuses nourishes this impulse. Disesteem for the neoliberal university ought to direct attention to the distribution requirements system, which amounts to the curricular embodiment of free-market principles. Although some libertarian thinkers might support such an approach, they too seem discomfited by the lowbrow offerings and grade inflation that are part and parcel of the consumer approach to higher education.[39] Antitraditionalists may hail the cafeteria curriculum as a victory for antiauthoritarian, progressive education, but in reality, it is a victory for the neoliberal university—which will soon see no need for classical studies.[40]

It is, of course, quixotic to suppose that localized movements against distribution requirements could lead to the overturning of such a dominant system in American higher education. But why not propose the addition of a novel approach to a core curriculum as an option for incoming undergraduates? Yale University, for example, boasts a popular—and optional—version of a core

38. See Greenberger et al. 2008; Bell 2011; Lavigne 2011: 24–25; Elmore 2014. Cf. Kirp 2003; Bousquet 2008.

39. See, for example, various entries to Phi Beta Cons, the education blog associated with *National Review* (www.nationalreview.com/phi-beta-cons). Many of its authors are libertarian in their leanings yet often complain about the lack of rigor in undergraduate curricula.

40. On the interplay between John Dewey–style student-centered approaches to education and the culture wars, see Hartman 2015: 72–73, 204, 213.

curriculum, Directed Studies.[41] At Connecticut College, students once had the choice of signing up for the Freshman Focus program—a variant on the Great Books approach to general education that was well known to be home to many of the most intellectually engaged students on campus. The cultivation of such optional core curricula for undergraduates amounts to a fruitful way to signal to some students the foundational importance of classical antiquity to the liberal arts and the educated person. Such programs compel professors to teach more broadly than they may be accustomed to doing, but many classicists, especially given the recent popularity of classical tradition studies, seem like ideal candidates to offer these sorts of classes. The more involved in the general education of undergraduates classicists on campus become, the more likely classics departments will be a destination for students.

Some American college students, to be sure, approve of the distribution requirements model, most likely because it maximizes student choice and allows them to hunt for the easiest options. But for plenty of undergraduates—and plenty of the best undergraduates—this system is unsatisfying. Why should classicists not spearhead a reaction against this system—a reaction that will not perfectly resemble Allan Bloom's desiderata, but will highlight, inter alia, the importance of classical antiquity to the West? Classical scholars should take advantage of this rare example of ideological consensus between traditionalists and antitraditionalists to promote optional core curricular programs that highlight the value of classical antiquity and language study. In such efforts, classicists should seek out the help of other humanists on campus along with sympathetic representatives from the arts, social sciences, and natural sciences.

To some, this insistence on the cardinal importance of Greco-Roman antiquity to educated Americans may seem problematic. Yet if classical scholars are uncomfortable with making such wide-ranging pronouncements on the classical pedigree of life in the modern West, how will they advertise the importance of the Greeks and Romans to contemporary American college students? This sort of Grand Narrative of Western history fostered in Great Books courses is open to criticism—criticism that can and should be voiced in such classes. But without such a Grand Narrative or the more robust vision of the classics offered by the Renaissance humanists, how will classical scholars insist on the necessity of studying the Greeks and Romans? This is a particularly urgent question in the current academic and cultural environment. Many contemporary American college students appear to have a dim sense that ancient Greece and Rome are fitting topics for study—these are the sorts of quintessential elements of the

41. See Kronman 2007: esp. 251–54, 261–65.

undergraduate curriculum. This notion among students, by now disconnected from its historical rationale, amounts to the last gasp of Renaissance humanism. If undergraduates lose this impression, what will remain of our classical heritage? If classical scholars are unwilling to vouch for the fundamental importance of the classics, who will study them—and why?

Such underscoring need not take the form of Hanson and Heath's controversial trumpeting of "Greek wisdom." As Pearcy has addressed, the long-standing engagement of the postclassical world with the ancient Greeks and Romans also demonstrates the paramount importance of classical civilization to later world history.[42] This suggests the potential value of classical reception studies to proselytizing for the classics. But scholars must also routinely and unashamedly broadcast this importance, both in their classrooms and to the general public, instead of presuming that American culture already values the study of antiquity. For this, minute scholarship on a given author's use of the classics will not do: we need to advertise sustained reflection on the legacy of Greco-Roman antiquity in the later world. At a time when many Americans fear their country's decline and agonize over potential global shifts in power, it is especially appropriate to reinvigorate interest in the history of the West, what the West means, and in what direction it might be heading, by examining its past and what made it great (as well as what made it problematic).

Connecting Ancient and Modern

Classics departments also can do much. A department's curriculum should advertise the prominent role of classical antiquity in shaping the modern world. A focus on the legacy of the classics ought to be a major feature of a department's courses in translation, especially at the introductory level. My colleague Gregory Staley, for example, has pioneered a class at the University of Maryland called Are We Rome? It highlights the classical educations of the Founding Fathers, the Roman pedigree of the US Constitution, and the fixation on the fall of Rome in American popular culture, among other topics. This sort of course not only appeals to a large student population, but also signals to undergraduates that the classics are foundational for an educated person—a point unexpressed by the dominant approach to general education on college and university campuses. The liberal arts tradition is itself of Roman origin. Why do classics courses throughout the country not broadcast this fact?

42. Pearcy 2005.

It is also a mistake for classical scholars to divorce their courses from fundamental questions associated with the living of a good life.[43] The infusion of morals and ethics in the classics classroom will always be a tricky matter: teachers should not prove heavy-handed in this regard, and there is always a danger that classical studies will become mired in presentism.[44] But if classicists aim to attract sizable populations to their courses, distancing them from life's animating questions seems like a serious blunder.[45] Some subjects practically call out for such an approach. At Connecticut College, my late mentor, Dirk Held, taught a phenomenally successful first-year seminar on Socrates. It produced scores of classics majors. And no wonder: in it, Held skillfully introduced undergraduates to the ways in which Socrates's questioning (as relayed in the writings of Plato) could lead students to ponder their own goals, desires, and philosophies of life. This is the sort of course that can make the classics wildly popular. As one survey respondent put it, "Classical studies in America will be vital to the extent that it emphasizes questions of character and value and addresses the everyday lives and concerns of students and the public at large. It will lose vitality to the degree that it focuses mainly on narrow philological issues."

In contrast to Allan Bloom's arguments, classical studies should not mutate into a branch of moral philosophy. And unlike the Italian humanists, we must not treat ancient authors as infallible prophets or purveyors of timeless wisdom. But classicists ought not discard hundreds of years of humanism in their approach to classical antiquity. In an astute 1971 article, Robert Connor worried that the high percentage of classics majors who choose to attend graduate school in the discipline signaled that classics departments in the US are better at training future professionals than broadly educated human beings.[46] The same concern still haunts us. If anything, this suggests that departments must develop their curricula more in the spirit of the liberal arts college than the research university.[47] Many problems plaguing the classics cataloged in this book stem from the fact that American higher education has tilted too far in the direction of the German-style research university and too far away from

43. See the valuable thoughts of Putnam (1969).

44. Proctor (1990: 813) notes other potential problems with moral education in the contemporary context.

45. Cf. Connor 2014c.

46. Connor 1971: 26.

47. This seems a difficult challenge, however, insofar as American liberal arts colleges themselves increasingly sponsor curricula more in tune with research universities than liberal arts colleges. After all, the distribution requirements system is an innovation associated with American research universities that spread more slowly to the nation's liberal arts colleges. It now dominates in institutions of both types.

the classical colleges.[48] Since the late nineteenth century, liberal arts colleges in the US (especially but not exclusively the most prestigious among them) have engaged in great efforts to mimic many of the workings and priorities of research institutions. It is high time for a reversal: scholars can learn much from the comparative intellectual breadth, curricular cohesion, and focus on the classroom associated with the old colleges. Coursework in classical studies that connects with earlier traditions of humanism can do a small part to rebalance higher learning in the US.

The ancient languages can play a role in this rebalancing. It is obviously essential for American classics professors to fight to retain, reintroduce, or even bulk up undergraduate language requirements at their home institutions. To do so, they need to muster a broad array of arguments in favor of the languages. The defense of the foreign languages on campus cannot be merely pragmatic in inspiration. Rather, classicists should also present a historically informed case. From its foundation in colonial America, the liberal arts tradition in the US—like its forebears in Europe—has been uniquely intertwined with the study of Greek and Latin, among other ancient tongues. The curricula of the antebellum colleges placed paramount emphasis on language learning. Accordingly, a college or university that drops its undergraduate language requirement may call itself many things, but it no longer justly lays claim to the banner of the liberal arts. Classical scholars should be unapologetic about saying so.

To make the classical languages appealing to a wider assortment of students, it would also help to fight against the culture of machismo (for lack of a better word) that can surround their study. Many newcomers to the classics must find unbecoming the competitive environment associated with philological abilities that is cultivated in some precincts. To be sure, students of classical studies must learn their languages as well as other skills. But teachers ought to treat this as a unique opportunity for students to gain direct access to the ancients, rather than as an exercise in linguistic one-upmanship.

Pitching a Big Tent

The previous chapters allow us the opportunity to reflect on intellectual disagreements that have troubled classical studies in the recent past. Intramural squabbling about methodological matters and the proper ideological bearings

48. Cf. Bruce A. Kimball 1995: 239.

of classical studies departments are potentially harmful to a field that needs to appeal to as many students as possible. Classics programs must attract the linguistically gifted who see Latin and Greek as antidotes to the prevailing currents in the contemporary humanities; feminists intrigued by ancient gender relations; devotees of the History Channel enraptured with Greco-Roman military matters; incipient critical theorists who are taking a shine to the ideas of Barthes and Foucault; and fans of the Great Books who yearn to learn about the glories of Greece and Rome. As a result of its comparative heterogeneity, the field of classical studies in the US has the wherewithal to appeal to *all* such students and more.

The discipline's failure to agree on its self-presentation, although troublesome on other fronts, in one respect amounts to a core strength, and departments should cultivate this asset by hiring scholars of disparate interests, outlooks, and temperaments. One additional benefit of this approach is that, as this book demonstrates, the American public has proven curious about different conceptions of teaching and scholarship and, provided the disagreements are presented fairly, ruminations on this topic allow the field to connect with nonacademic audiences.[49]

Scholars must take advantage of this core strength because various liabilities plague the discipline. In comparison with many other humanities fields, classical studies remain an unlikely conduit for scholarly trailblazers. The necessity for aspiring practitioners to master two difficult ancient languages (and to learn at least a few modern ones) does not leave much time in graduate school for those who seek to come up with the Next Big Thing in scholarship. The rigors of language training mean that incipient classicists can leave their graduate programs cut off from the intellectual milieu of other disciplines. Hence, ancient historians trained in classical studies departments may never have experienced a seminar on historical methods, and philologists may never have read Butler, Lacan, Latour, and their critics. It is no wonder that modish classical scholars typically apply advances from other disciplines, rather than create these advances themselves. This arrangement undoubtedly offers some benefits: by the time scholarly novelties creep into classical studies, most—if not all—of the overreaction to their newness has faded, and more levelheaded applications of such ideas thus tend to prevail. But this state of affairs also guarantees that classical studies will seldom earn a reputation in the academy as a lodestar of innovative research. This is likely to become more pronounced in the years to

49. E.g., Hanson and Heath 1998b; duBois 2001.

come, as students commence their study of the classical languages increasingly later in their academic careers. This is yet one more reason that classical scholars must play a more noticeable role in American intellectual life.

Developing a Sense of Public Spirit

An insufficient number of classics professors involved themselves in the wider struggles of the academic culture wars.[50] For professors in a small field such as classics, staking positions on contentious topics can be perilous; scholars adopting unpopular stances undoubtedly risk harm to their professional reputations. But the discipline's failure to embrace the intellectual skirmishes of the 1980s and 1990s amounted to a squandered opportunity.

Nor is this the only example of such squandering. In response to the Bush administration's 2003 invasion of Iraq, the popular press was abuzz about the possibility that the United States was a new Roman Empire. Magazines and newspapers devoted much ink to this topic, in some cases with articles accompanied by portraits of President George W. Bush clad in a laurel crown and toga.[51] This supplied a perfect occasion for classical scholars to enter the fray and offer pronouncements on a subject of popular importance. By in large, though, these scholars did not take the bait: whereas many journalists examined the topic, few Romanists contributed op-eds, articles, or books. General readers thus learned about America's debt to Roman antiquity from *The Atlantic*'s Cullen Murphy, whose book-length explication demonstrates only passing familiarity with ancient history.[52]

All this speaks to a discipline especially at home with the professionalization and specialization of the present-day academy. While such features have their value, overadherence to them is hazardous. One undeniable benefit of postmodern theory (whatever one's thoughts about its merits and demerits) is that it tends to encourage its practitioners to engage in political topics of great

50. There were, of course, pragmatic reasons behind their lack of participation. Classical scholars were less likely to respond to the provocations of the humanities' critics, since such critics did not have classical scholars in their sights.

51. E.g., Freedland 2002; Kimberly Kagan 2002; Hanson 2003c; Fisk 2006; Vlahos 2006.

52. Murphy 2007. Moses Finley (1964: 21–22) offered a good response to this state of affairs: "It is not good enough to decry the invasion of amateurs who write the popular books at second hand and who, on the whole, cannot help doing it inaccurately and superficially. Unless the experts are prepared to abandon a narrow guild approach, others will inevitably step in to fill the void because there is a need, a demand, which has to be met." This sentiment anticipates ideas promoted by Hanson and Heath (1998b). Hanson (2003c) was among the few classical scholars in the aftermath of 9/11 who wrote an op-ed on the differences between US foreign policy and Roman imperialism.

relevance to contemporary life. Such engagements may not be written in the clearest prose and may lack the rigor of investigations of social scientists, but at least they speak to topics of current concern. This theoretical orientation arguably freed many professors of English literature to take part in the academic culture wars.

Classical scholars need not transform into devotees of critical theory. But they should replicate the inclination of professors from other disciplines to engage in popular debates. It may seem more comfortable for classicists to remain in their specialized worlds of, say, Mycenaean archaeology or late antique social history. But American classics professors no longer have this luxury. When subjects pertaining to Greco-Roman antiquity connect with the general public, scholars must take this opportunity to address a wide audience. To make the most of such occasions, the field needs to encourage a greater sense of public spiritedness—a commitment to promoting the discipline in everyday American intellectual life. Cultivating this impulse appears especially urgent among established senior scholars.

Senior scholars are often at a career stage where they are unencumbered by many of the constraints associated with the research imperative. Hanson and Heath's appeal to all classicists failed in part because their recommendations—useful as many of them are—did not address the systematic tensions facing classics professors in the American university setting. Early and mid-career scholars cannot abandon their specialized research profiles in favor of taking up heavier teaching loads and composing essays for the popular press. Doing so, sad to say, would be career suicide for professors at many American colleges and universities—and following this path would lead not only to numerous tenure denials, but also to the alienation of classics programs from their institutional settings.

Full professors, however, possess a degree of autonomy not granted to those still working their way up the academic totem pole. Many such scholars (understandably) no longer contribute to peer-reviewed journals: they have already proved their specialized mettle and thus can avoid the indignities and inconsistencies of peer review.[53] But what sorts of scholarly avenues should senior researchers pursue? Instead of contributing to umpteen edited collections and companions, why not choose to engage with a wider readership? Freed from the shackles of peer review, established professors could write books, articles,

53. One ray of sunshine from my Web survey pertained to respondents' assessments of peer review. A majority (58.8%) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "The peer-review system for works of classical scholarship (books and articles) is fair." A total of 13.6% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this sentiment, whereas 27.6% expressed neutrality on this score.

and blogs that help increase the visibility of Greco-Roman antiquity among the American populace. Such work could fuel a sense of public-spiritedness in the field and prolong the classical tradition.

To promote this approach, the discipline must cultivate a radically different perspective on public intellectual work from that currently prevalent among its practitioners. It would be a mistake for scholarly reviewers of such work to see it as an opportunity to sharpen their knives: monographs and articles for general readers necessitate a degree of simplification, and this might compel some critics to pounce. This is a misstep. Classicists should be able to evaluate the merits of public intellectual work without holding it to a standard appropriate for specialized scholarship. One would not presume that a book on Greek metrical analysis must live up to the stylistic felicities of popular novels, so why must monographs addressed to general readers require standards of proof appropriate for research aimed at fellow experts?

Such public intellectual writing on the part of American classical scholars is urgently required. Two of the most attention-grabbing books on the classics from the 1980s and 1990s did not go through peer review. *Black Athena* proved too capacious, daring, and inconsistent with the norms of contemporary classical scholarship to pass muster with academic referees.[54] *Who Killed Homer?* was too incendiary to appear under the auspices of a university press. Yet both works, despite their faults, touched a nerve with the American public and compelled classicists to take stock of their field. The discipline's limited visibility in intellectual life strongly suggests that many more efforts of this sort are desirable.

This is not to say that all American classical scholars have failed to try their hands at more accessible approaches. Eric Cline, Page duBois, Donald Kagan, Eva Keuls, Daniel Mendelsohn, and Barry Strauss, for example, have all produced laudable examples of this sort of writing. Yet in such matters, Americans seem to take a backseat to the British.[55] Why has no American classicist produced a blog as entertaining and popular as Mary Beard's "A Don's Life"? Why do no American magazines carry a feature akin to Peter Jones's "Ancient and Modern," which graces the pages of *The Spectator* each week?

The APA/SCS and the field in general must do a better job of encouraging

54. One might counter this point by noting that Bernal's work contained errors that the peer-review process could have fixed. But *Black Athena*'s faults (as well as its strengths) were cataloged in numerous reviews. It would be difficult to argue that the debates surrounding *Black Athena* left classical scholars unaware of such demerits. And the field of classics in the US surely gained much from the wide-ranging and serious conversation Bernal inaugurated. On this topic, see chapter 4.

55. As Hanson and Heath (1998b: 266) note.

public intellectual work.[56] This seems especially true in the case of blogs, since an increasing percentage of Americans aiming to learn more about classical antiquity surely will do so through the auspices of the Internet. Although the SCS currently offers an outreach prize, this is insufficient for the considerable tasks at hand. As small steps in this direction, the organization should sponsor a series of well-publicized and well-remunerated annual awards for writing aimed at general readers: best classics book from a trade press; best classically themed magazine article; best classically themed op-ed; best blog devoted to Greco-Roman antiquity. These awards must not only be the purview of the few eminent classical scholars whose contributions to specialized research and elite institutional affiliations allow them access to prestigious national and international outlets. Rather, they should encourage *all* classical scholars—regardless of their academic pedigree and the status of their publishing venues—to receive official praise for work of cardinal importance to the discipline's survival. American classical studies need more Mary Lefkowitzes, more Eva Keulses, more Peter Greens, more Bernard Knoxes, and more Victor Davis Hansons.

Other steps on the part of the discipline's professional organizations could be helpful. Since 1982, the putative commencement of the academic culture wars,[57] only three presidents of the APA/SCS have been affiliated with non-Ph.D.-granting departments, and even these three had pedagogical links to such programs.[58] This narrow record of leadership is a mistake.

I do not mean to slight the contributions of past APA presidents or to criticize my colleagues at research universities. But such colleagues are most likely to work at the wealthiest and most prestigious institutions in the country and thereby to be least accustomed to the pressures facing the large majority of American classical scholars. With classics departments across the nation encountering serious—even existential—challenges,[59] the dominance of elite leadership in the discipline appears problematic.

It would prove more useful to the field's survival if only professors from non-Ph.D.-granting departments were eligible to serve as SCS presidents in al-

56. Hayward (2014: 27) points out that writing for the general public can harm one's academic career. This is sadly true. On the need for more accessible writing from classical scholars, see anonymous 1910, 1962: 5; Finley 1964: 21–22; Jones 2003: xi–xii.

57. On this topic, see chapter 1.

58. The three APA presidents in question are Helen H. Bacon (1985), Martin Ostwald (1987), and James O'Donnell (2003). Bacon, a professor at Barnard College, also had an affiliation with Columbia University. Ostwald, a longtime member of the classics department at Swarthmore College, divided some of his teaching time with the University of Pennsylvania. O'Donnell, though APA president while a faculty member at Georgetown University, previously taught at the University of Pennsylvania.

59. See Daniel Walker Howe 2011: 31; Hutner and Mohamed 2013.

ternating years. This would help connect the discipline more strongly to the field as a whole and would signal to members that a strong research profile is not the sole mark of a successful classicist. If classical studies played a more robust role in American higher education, this step might seem unnecessary. With numerous departments concerned about their future, the leadership of American classical studies cannot be formed from one elite class alone. A mix of SCS presidents from non-Ph.D.-granting (and preferably non-M.A.-granting) institutions would help the field confront the serious challenges of the present.

Nor is this the lone instance in which the field must become more inclusive. Classics professors remain cut off from secondary school teachers at their peril. The more students who enjoy Latin in high school, the larger collegiate enrollments in the classical languages will be. Participation in talks at high schools; outreach to local primary and secondary schools; writing textbooks—all these activities should play a weightier role in tenure and promotion cases at American colleges and universities.[60] Departments must fight to make such vital service to the profession count far more for the professional advancement of classical scholars.[61] For many years now, jobs for aspiring high school Latin teachers have abounded.[62] Why are classics departments across the nation not prominently broadcasting this fact on their websites, especially in an economic and cultural environment so conducive to preprofessionalism? If undergraduates desire to major in a subject chiefly because of its strong career prospects, they would be well served to focus their studies on Latin.

Outreach remains a key to many needed reforms. This includes appealing to as broad a swath of Americans as possible. Conservative visions of higher education have altered dramatically since the conclusion of the academic culture wars. Traditionalists such as Bennett, Bloom, and Kimball perceived the humanities as of paramount significance to the education of young Americans and to the future health and vibrancy of the United States. Although some traditionalists still voice such views, the past two decades have witnessed an increasingly libertarian bent in conservative critiques of higher education. Charles Murray, for example, has supported the scrapping of the B.A. degree altogether in favor of a vocational and applied approach to education.[63] Many

60. See Davis 1991: 30–32.

61. As Connor (2014c) recently noted, a surfeit of high school Latin teaching jobs remains available. LaFleur (1987b: esp. 6) and Davis (1991: 33–34) demonstrate that this has been true for some time. This fact should be advertised to prospective classics majors and their parents: if they want a concentration that virtually assures gainful employment upon graduation, they can hardly do better than Latin.

62. See LaFleur 1987a: xv; Connor 2014c.

63. Murray 2008.

contributors to Phi Beta Cons, *National Review*'s blog on higher education, support for-profit universities, MOOCs (massive open online courses), and other elements that they hope will lead to the demise of the humanities, at least as they are currently taught.[64]

In such a climate, classical scholars need to attract as many Americans as is feasible. In part as a consequence of its long-standing role in Western higher education, the classics have earned the esteem of many political centrists and conservatives.[65] Some observers see a focus on ancient Greek and Latin as a natural antidote to the modishness of much of the contemporary humanities. Although it would be an error to redirect classical studies to appeal solely to conservatives or moderates, alienating *any* potentially sympathetic constituency remains counterproductive. Thus the MLA may pass political proclamations about all and sundry, but the SCS must not follow suit with such grandstanding.

This does not intimate, of course, that individual scholars should ensure that their published work is anodyne and inoffensive. The previous pages have demonstrated that daring and ideologically charged scholarship tends to attract more interest among the general public. But the SCS and other organizations should avoid turning off disparate constituencies. Official declarations from professional organizations on topics outside their purview lead the public to believe that the organizations are politically imbalanced and that their members engage in political hectoring in the classroom. Especially given the increasing popularity of classical Christian education in the US, such maneuvers possess no advantages.

Such a warning appears crucial in light of the dominance of left-of-center views among American classical scholars (see figure 2). Fewer than 8 percent of SCS members I surveyed characterized their political views as either conservative (7.1 percent) or far right (.7 percent), and only 18.9 percent professed to be centrists. Self-described liberals dominated (57.8 percent), whereas a smaller coterie (15.5 percent) considered themselves far left. In such an imbalanced ideological environment, classicists must remain vigilant about eschewing groupthink, in part to ensure that the field will be as inclusive as possible.[66]

These reforms all represent small steps, but together they will help revivify

64. See www.nationalreview.com/phi-beta-cons.

65. As Rush Limbaugh discovered on his nationally syndicated radio program. On this topic, see chapter 5.

66. SCS members' self-professed affiliations with US political parties demonstrate an even more glaring imbalance. Those surveyed were asked, "If you are an American citizen, with which US political party do you most strongly identify?" Among respondents, 66.2% replied Democrat, 4.7% Republican, 5.1% Green, .7% Libertarian, and 16.7% independent.

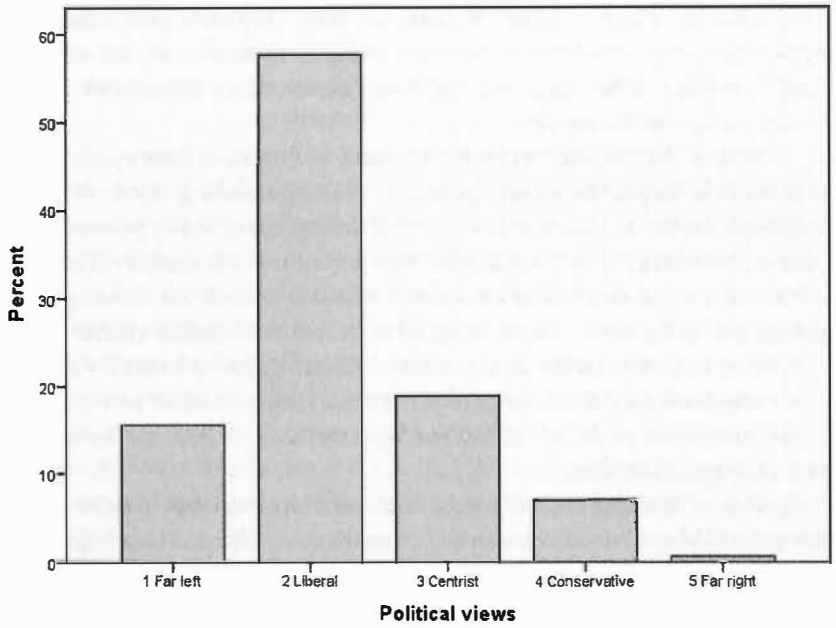

Fig. 2. Responses to the survey question, "How would you characterize your political views?"

classics' public voice and provide much-needed increases in the profession's sense of public-spiritedness.

Rejoining the Conversation

"Who do you think is right, Bernal or Lefkowitz?" It was 1996, and the question was asked by my coworker at a record store. The questioner, a middle-aged man who was living paycheck to paycheck, was not a traditionally educated person: he had never been to college, and I am not certain that he had finished high school. Having read about the *Black Athena* controversy in the local newspaper, he asked me, an aspiring classics graduate student, what I thought. Was Bernal a quack? Was his lack of formal training in linguistics his downfall? Or had he demonstrated that racial bias pervaded much classical scholarship?

At the time, I did not have terribly convincing answers to these questions. But I enjoyed our conversation nonetheless. After the conclusion of my shift, inspired by our back-and-forth, I rushed to the nearest bookstore and bought

a copy of Mary Lefkowitz's just-released *Not Out of Africa*. It was exciting, I thought, that intellectually curious Americans displayed great interest in a topic pertaining to classical civilization.

Such opportunities do not regularly present themselves. When the next one comes along, it will be high time for American classical scholars of all dispositions to capitalize. The future of the profession—and, more important, the continuation of the classical tradition—may very well depend on it.

Classics, the Culture Wars, and Beyond

Eric Adler

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