

DECOLONISING THE CLASSICS AND ANCIENT HISTORY CURRICULUM: TOWARDS NEW HORIZONS

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INTRODUCTION

This year, department interns were asked to come up with a realistic and impactful solution to decolonise the curriculum for their departments. In other words, we were asked how we could implement a change that would help move away from eurocentric academia.

After examining the current module selection for Classics and Ancient History, I chose to work on the implementation of several short term and long term solutions, including the creation of a new module.



WHAT NEEDS CHANGING?

Examining the current curriculum revealed a main issue: almost all of the modules which are currently available study either Ancient Rome or Ancient Greece. Other ancient civilisations are rarely looked at, and often only in relation to Greece and Rome.

What this leads to is a eurocentric understanding of the ancient world. While Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome were undoubtedly very important in history and it is necessary to study them to understand the foundations of European societies, they were not the only ancient civilisations to have a lasting influence. To strengthen one's understanding of the ancient world, it is also important to understand how different empires grew and interacted, how some practices were shared while others remained very different, and how these civilisations shaped history.

My conclusion was that the curriculum would benefit from an extra instruction in different parts of the world.

THE PLAN

I put together a proposal of different short and long term measures to implement.

The short term solutions include spending more time on other civilisations in the current core modules, adding exams questions about these societies.

The long term proposals include promoting interdepartmental cooperation and adding a new module which would focus on Egypt and Persia. My goal for this module is for it to increase interest in a less eurocentric study of Ancient History, and lead to the creation of other similar modules.

METHODOLOGY

I met with the Director of Undergraduate Studies to discuss these measures. Together, we agreed on a number of action points. These include:

- Circulating my proposal through the Student Voice Committee and the Education Committee for comment and discussion.
- Encouraging the module convenors of core modules to spend more time on other Ancient Civilisations in the context of their modules.
- Introduce a proposal to change the name of the module 'Living in the Classical World' to 'Living in the Ancient World'.
- Requesting the Education Committee reflect on the possible future implementation of the module I created a lesson plan for.
- Renewing discussions with the Archaeology Department on the possibility of more cross-disciplinary collaboration.

IN THE FUTURE

In the future, I hope that the study of other ancient civilisations will become more popular. These measures are not meant to fix the curriculum on their own, or indeed to be the only ones implemented.

These should be the first step in changing the way we at Durham University think about and teach Ancient History.

TO SEE THE FULL PROPOSAL, PLEASE SCAN HERE!

