Classics at the Hamburg Open Online University: Three Examples of eLearning*

In recent years, the departments of Ancient History, Classical Archaeology, and Classical Philology at the University of Hamburg have been engaged in integrating digital-learning methods into the teaching of classics. Each of their projects has been implemented in collaboration with the Hamburg Open Online University (hereafter: HOOU), whose mission is to provide an interuniversity online-learning platform. As a result, each department has developed a didactic design for educational technological scenarios within the scope of its project. In addition to conveying complex facts in a more comprehensible way, one of the shared goals of these projects is to create enhanced motivation for learning through attractive multimedia applications and playful learning scenarios, such as quizzes. The scope of this article is to give a short introduction to these three HOOU projects.

*eManual Alte Geschichte

The underrepresentation of Ancient History in schools makes facilitated access to Ancient History particularly important. Attractive learning scenarios such as the eManual, which was produced between 2016 and 2019 by a team of doctoral students under the direction of Werner Riess, can help overcome potential hesitation to learn about antiquity through the simple digital transmission of complex contents. The eManual Alte Geschichte¹ is a digital-learning platform offering an in-depth introduction to Ancient History through podcasts, quizzes, secondary literature, and a wide range of study materials. The platform presents Ancient History to a very broad target group with a high level of learning efficiency, and it is intended for users of all skill levels. The opportunity to study Ancient History online to this extent is innovative and suitable for home study as well as for use in upper-level secondary school classes and in all types of undergraduate-level scenarios. On the start page of the eManual you will find a selection of different contents

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* The video of the talk, presented at the online conference Teaching Classics in the Digital Age on June 15-16, 2020, is available at https://doi.org/10.5446/51788.

¹ https://emanualaltegeschichte.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/ (last accessed May 27, 2021).

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presented in four tabs, which can be used independently. Podcasts, which are the core component of this platform, are suitable for a basic introduction to a period of Ancient History, while advanced users can immediately access sources or secondary literature to delve more deeply into the content. A total of 39 podcasts in the form of 15- to 30-minute videos provide brief introductions to all periods, from the Minoan civilization to Late Antiquity (Fig. 1).

Below each podcast, the written text is presented, and contains links to additional useful tools. Every unfamiliar term is linked to the glossary, every place name is linked to a map, and you can find images drawn from the archaeological material (Fig. 2).

Through quizzes based on each podcast, students can check whether they have successfully absorbed the knowledge, and the scores achieved facilitate self-evaluation of the learning progress.

For more in-depth engagement with the material, the platform provides long source passages from each period. Every source is provided not just with the Greek or Latin original text and the English translation, but also with three guideline questions and comments. These comments, written by our doctoral students, can serve as role models for source analysis. The material is not confined to written sources but also includes archaeological evidence. Moreover, the students are prompted to compare both types of sources (Fig. 3).

For temporal orientation, a timeline has been created, which is linked to the podcasts. The timeline features significant historical events that the user can learn about in the podcasts, in which he or she can find more details about events and periods. The timeline is interactive in the sense that you can zoom in and out to obtain different levels of granularity. Along with the large number of podcasts, quizzes, and sources, secondary literature is another significant component of the eManual. The site provides...
Fig. 2: The written text of the podcasts.

Fig. 3: Source analysis: comparison between a scene from Homer and vase painting.
significant papers on various topics, available as PDF files and free to download. Like the sources intended to promote intensive study, each article is accompanied by guideline questions and detailed comments. The comments provide information about the author and explain difficult text passages for better reading comprehension. The Zotero library link offers access to about 800 titles of introductory literature, which can be searched by keywords.

Under the Material tab, you will find a document detailing the citation system, lots of content-related material, a glossary, pictures, and maps (Fig. 4).

The content-related material encompasses a broad range of graphics divided into periods, including timetables, constitutional and social structures, currency units, pedigrees of each dynasty, and a list of Greek and Roman writers. The user can download for free all of these materials as PDF files. The glossary summarises all technical terms in alphabetical sequence. Under Pictures, you will find a collection of archaeological material for every period. Moreover, the tab provides many maps of wars and expansions. The last tab includes video tutorials on how to use the eManual and its functions, guidelines for writing term papers, and suggestions for creating and giving presentations.

These valuable resources greatly facilitate intensive home study and provide both beginners and experts with an interactive learning scenario, a new experience of approaching Ancient History. The Hamburg Department of Ancient History has by now successfully established the eManual for its courses, seminars and lectures alike. The added value of such learning platforms can be seen in crises such as today’s COVID-19 pandemic, during which digital teaching is gaining more and more traction.
Online repetitorium *Ariadne – Grundwissen zur Kultur und Archäologie des antiken Mittelmeerraumes*

The online review course *Ariadne – Grundwissen zur Kultur und Archäologie des antiken Mittelmeerraumes*² was created at the Institute of Classical Archaeology from 2015 to 2017. From the beginning, *Ariadne* was intended to be a permanent learning resource for basic knowledge in Classical Archaeology. It aims to impart a genuine and sustainable fundamental understanding of the archaeological record with its artefacts and their primary data, such as dimensions, material, location, and chronology. At the same time, it offers sophisticated and cross-topic connections to enable more profound access to their socio-cultural meanings. Since an extensive fundamental knowledge of material culture is essential for cultural studies, it is usually taught in the first two semesters within an introductory course, to be expanded in the following semesters. However, it seems difficult for students to acquire this knowledge independently, merely through basic lectures. Therefore, *Ariadne* is intended to create interactive thematic learning environments to support the learning process through varied, sometimes playful repetition and contextualization, as well as the use of multiple media to guide students at the beginning of their studies.

Thus, *Ariadne* will be used in the first two semesters, parallel to the introductory lectures, as a blended-learning scenario for repetition and to deepen necessary knowledge through intensive self-study phases. Furthermore, it is open to anyone interested in archaeology for gathering information about the ancient Mediterranean.

For this purpose, we initially used the eLearning platform Olat, hosted by the university. To reach a wider public, the course was open without registration. However, since Olat is no longer supported, we immigrated the course this year to the new platform OpenOlat³, and used this opportunity to recreate and develop some of the sections. Unfortunately, the new platform is limited to users of the University of Hamburg only (Fig. 5).

The course itself is divided into 11 main chapters. The first, Theory and Methods, contains short explanations and references to further readings on topics like chronology or techniques for field working. The second section offers an overview of general developments within specific periods, beginning with the Aegean Bronze Age to Late Antiquity – this is based on the structure of our bachelor’s degree. The next units contain general information about different topics of archaeology, engaging most of the areas of Greek and Roman culture.

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² https://www.openolat.uni-hamburg.de/auth/RepositoryEntry/98634275/CourseNode/101592542087825 (last accessed: May 27, 2021; accessible only for users of Hamburg University).

³ https://www.openolat.uni-hamburg.de (last accessed May 27, 2021).
Each of these units is structured in the same way (Fig. 6). First, a general overview of the topic is provided, using a short screencast of 10-20 minutes and an explanatory text, followed by essential questions, sources, and references for further reading so that students can work independently on the single learning units. Each artefact mentioned in the video is linked within the text, so it is possible to get detailed information about unique monuments or objects at any time, but also to emphasise aspects in context (like chronological order for example). Every artefact can, therefore, be studied independently within the unit *Denkmälerkenntnis*. It is structured as a catalogue, containing objects and monuments from each period, and provides general data (measurements, material, placement, dating, etc.), historical context, sources, and references for further reading so that these artefacts can be learned like vocabulary. Final self-tests then record personal learning successes.

In addition to this object-based content, supplementary literature references and other web links support self-study beyond the online course; a glossary complements the learning portfolio.
Antike Heute in Hamburg

Antike Heute in Hamburg⁴ is an online quiz focusing on Graeco-Roman mythology. It was implemented in collaboration with the HOOU between May 2018 and February 2019. It was conceived as a project that would reach beyond the university and engage with a larger audience, while simultaneously creating innovative courses for students. Indeed, students from all levels can acquire knowledge or consolidate their skills in Graeco-Roman mythology in a playful manner. In doing so, the link between the content of their studies and their immediate environment is highlighted, so that the quiz raises the students’ awareness of how relevant the topics they learn in classics are for their present-day experience. The quiz should also provide them with the necessary skills to allow them to shape the dialogue with the public at large with their own personal contributions. Therefore, the project takes as its starting point the city of Hamburg, and incorporates into the teaching the place in which the students study. This choice also has the advantage of making a strong link to the public at large, so that it becomes easy to demonstrate the connection between a modern city and the academic field of classics.

⁴ https://antikeheutehh.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/ (last accessed May 27, 2021).
Fig. 7: AHinHH: entry 1: video and questions.

Fig. 8: AHinHH entry 1: additional guidance.
The quiz is designed so that for each of its entries the users find two questions that are related to an artefact found in the public space of Hamburg and presented in a short video. The first task consists of identifying the mythological figure represented by the artefact shown, while the second asks them to locate the artefact on a map of Hamburg (Fig. 7).

The users will find some additional guidance in case they are not familiar either with Graeco-Roman mythology or with the city of Hamburg. A detailed image with hints at some telling attributes of the mythological figure should facilitate its identification, while a map of Hamburg helps with the localisation of the artefact (Fig. 8).

Under the correct answer, the users may find further material. For the mythological figure, we provided some basic information about the figure with some indications for further readings. For the second question, we gave some background information on the artist who made the artefact, on the context in which it was created, and, if available, on the aspects of the mythological figure he or she decided to represent in this artefact.

None of these indications was meant to be exhaustive. They should leave room for further exploration, as the quiz, as well as its few questions, should trigger in the users a desire for more, so that they may go for a walk in Hamburg, or in their own cities, and look for other similar objects where mythological figures are represented in public spaces. Finally, with the quiz we also intended to highlight the richness of Hamburg with regard to artefacts in public space, and to draw attention to the substantial number of these with Graeco-Roman themes.

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Justine Diemke is working as a Research Associate at the Department of Ancient History at the University of Hamburg. For her PhD project, she examines the occurrence of depressive disorder and their assessment in ancient sources. She studied Ancient History and Classical Archaeology at the University of Hamburg from 2015-2020. After her master’s degree she has been a recognized student at the University of Oxford at the Department of Classics. As a student assistant, she has been involved in the project eManuel Alte Geschichte. Her research interests are situated in the areas of history of emotions and violence in antiquity, digital humanities, ancient senses and the role of night in ancient literature.

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well as the reception of ancient art in modern times. Since 2011 she incorporates different concepts of eLearning into her teaching, supporting and accompanying existing concepts, as well as using digital media for experimental projects and exhibitions. For this innovative usage of digital media, she earned a teaching award of the University in 2018.

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