

The Latin program at Ums-Wright is currently offered from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The school offers Latin I in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, Latin II in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, Latin III in the Junior year, and AP Latin in the Senior year. The program is designed to give students a thorough knowledge of the Latin language over a period of four years. Students who choose to stop their study of Latin at the end of their Sophomore year will have fulfilled the school's two-year language requirement.

In addition to obtaining an advanced knowledge of the language itself, Latin students at UMS-Wright also study Roman society and culture, Roman history, Roman philosophy, ethics, mythology, and Roman literature. Every year, students take the National Latin Exam corresponding to their level together with some 150,000 students in the United States. Every UMS-Wright Latin student also becomes a member of the NJCL (National Junior Classical League) and of the AJCL (Alabama Junior Classical League) and competes with other Latin students regionally at the state or national level.

There are many reasons why the study of Latin is important. First of all, it is important because some 60% of English words are derived from Latin. So, knowing Latin will help you have a better knowledge and understanding of English. From a practical point of view, it will help you raise your SAT or ACT scores. If we take for example the Latin word *mors, mortis*, which means "death", here are some of the English words derived from it: *mortal, immortal, mortality, immortality, morbid, moribund, mortgage*.

Second, Latin continues to be used today in such fields as science, theology, government, law and every day abbreviations. The following chemical symbols come from Latin for example: Fe (*ferrum*, iron), Au (*aureum*, gold), Pb (*plumbum*, lead), while many theological words passed from Latin into English, such as *grace, salvation, vocation, divinity, deity*. In government and law, many Latin phrases continue to be used today. We have all heard for example the terms *pro bono, referendum, veto, subpoena, alibi, bona fide*. In addition, many state mottos are in Latin. The motto of the District of Columbia is *Iustitia omnibus* (Justice for All), and the Latin motto of our own state of Alabama is *Audemus iura nostra defendere* (We dare to defend our rights). Many abbreviations we use every day come from Latin words. To name only a few: a.m. (*ante meridiem*, before the middle of the day); p.m. (*post meridiem*, after the middle of the day); P.S. (*post scriptum*, written after); etc. (*et cetera*, and so on); A.D. (*anno Domini*, in the year of the Lord).

Thirdly, the study of Latin will help you with your English grammar and your thinking skills in general. Because Latin grammar is so systematic, structured and logical, it will help you understand the key elements of languages in general and of English in particular. It will help you become a better writer and foster in you the desire to write well and to use the English language to its full potential. In addition, the study of Latin requires logic, rigor and attention to detail, which are all very important skills for the successful student to have and to apply to any subject. It will teach you to be more demanding of yourself and develop in you a desire for

personal effort when you encounter difficult problems or questions in academic subjects.

Finally, the study of Latin is important because it is an essential part of a Liberal Arts education. In fact, it is so central to education itself that many universities today continue to have their mottos in Latin. There would be many examples, but I will choose the motto of the University of Texas in Austin, which says: *Disciplina, praesidium civitatis*, Education, the Guardian of Society. The motto of UMS-Wright is also in Latin and reminds us of its Christian roots: *Timor Jehovae Initium Sapientiae*, The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom. The study of Latin is a very important part of the study of Western Civilization, which is at the heart of our cultural, intellectual and linguistic heritage. Latin will help you make connections between the world of today and the world of yesterday. It will help you understand the history of the western world and of western thought. It will also help you in your literary studies because there are so many literary references in English and American literature to Latin literature. For example, behind Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is the poem *Pyramus and Thisbe* by the Latin poet Ovid. This is another illustration of how Latin helps you make connections and have a better, more complete understanding of things.