

Classics Newsletter – St. Olaf College
July, 2026



Recognize those backdrops? Yes, they made it through yet another production (our 24th), this time of Plautus' fragmentary Latin play *Vidularia* ("The Lost Bag"). It was challenging to have to invent 9/10th of the plot, but that didn't faze the students. They did a great job, both on campus and during our tour to eight schools.

This year we had 11 senior majors (6 Classics, 2 Latin, 3 Ancient Studies; no Greek or Medieval Studies, but there are more in the pipeline), all wonderful students. Grace Lindquist (pictured with Kyle Helms and Peter Moench) earned distinction in Classics. She will begin the M.A. Classics program at the U. of Arizona, Emery Jansen at the U. of Colorado Boulder, and Rosemary Hartless (post-bacc program) at Georgetown U.



Each was thrilled to receive a Classics scholarship (\$5,000) funded by Greg Randall '96 and Toni Wilkes.

After an exciting Greek vs. Latin kickball game in September (the photo shows Florencia Foxley introducing her dog Daphne to the sport), we held our first-ever Homerathon (reading aloud of the *Odyssey*, in Emily Wilson's translation) on Oct. 10 from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., ending with pizza. We were pleased to have President Susan Singer and Provost Tarshia Stanley as two of our 40 readers. We also kept up our 40-year tradition of Classics Christmas caroling around town.



In March, seven students squeezed into a college van and drove to Kirksville, MO, for the Eta Sigma Phi convention at Truman State U., presided over by Violet Ecklund-Johnson '26 (at left). All costs were covered by donations to the department. Thanks a million! At the convention,



Julia Thomas '27 and Sylvia Fleck '27 were elected to be national president and national treasurer in 2026-27. The Ole contingent won 3rd prize in certamen (quiz bowl) and 1st prize for banquet attire; Violet took second in the Latin declamation. We celebrated these achievements with an ice-cream cake, kazoo-playing, and a triumphal procession across the campus!



Later we learned that we also had two winners in the national translation contests: Kassidy Goodell '28 won 2nd prize in Intermediate Greek, and Keri Hoatson '27 won 3rd prize in Advanced Latin. Yay! The income from the Groton and Loomis (= Groomis) endowments funded prizes for the winners of our local translation contests, as well as \$500 summer-project grants for three students doing fieldwork in Turkey and Portugal.



Speaking of Europe, here's a picture of 24 hungry Oles dining at the Hotel Forum in Pompeii during January. Classical Studies in Italy remains a very popular program. Kyle Helms, who taught the course this year (his 3rd time), has tweaked the itinerary to make it more chronological with focus on Etruria, Rome, the Bay of

Naples, and Ravenna. One of the students received a Groomis scholarship that covered the full program fee.



It was a delight to have not just one but two guest speakers on campus this past fall, both with long-standing ties to St. Olaf. The first, John Gibert, Professor of Classics at the U. of Colorado Boulder, started his teaching career here back in 1990-92. He visited our Greek Drama class and gave a fascinating talk (Oct. 28) on newly discovered papyrus fragments of Euripides.

Then came Matthew Steenberg '01, now His Grace the Rt. Rev. Irenei, Ruling Bishop of the Diocese of Great Britain and Western Europe for the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR). On Nov. 13 he delivered the 9th Annual James M. May Lecture in Classics, "'Cicero Speaks Norwegian': Reconsidering Perpetual Contextuality in Classical and Religious Studies." Bishop Irenei quickly endeared himself to all, including our Greek 231 class.





Be sure to put next year's May Lecture, April 6, 2027, on your calendars. The speaker will be Julia Dyson Hejduk, Rev. Jacob Beverly Stiteler Prof. of Classics at Baylor U. She is an expert in Augustan Age Latin poetry and a leader in regional, national, and international Classics organizations.

In February, we teamed up with Asian Studies to co-sponsor a talk by Prof. Ken-Ichi Takashima (U. British Columbia) on Ancient Oracle-Bone Inscriptions. Eerie!



A highlight this year for Anne Groton was receiving an outreach prize from the Society for Classical Studies in recognition of her decades of directing Latin and Greek plays. On April 9 she experienced what it's like to be a rock star when she gave a guest lecture at Martin Luther College in New Ulm and was mobbed by 100 screaming pre-seminarians, all eager to get their copies of her Beginning Greek textbook signed!



Kyle Helms, back from sabbatical, hired Rosemary Hartless '26 and Keri Hoatson '27 to assist him with his book *Royal Martyrs of Scandinavia* and to design a poster presentation ("The Passion and Miracles of St. Olaf"). The chance for him to meet Dr. Olav Fyske Tveit, Presiding Bishop of Norway, was a miracle, too! He

experimented with a "flipped classroom" in Greek 111, published an article inspired by his use of "Reacting to the Past" pedagogy, and won the 2026 Mel George Faculty Recognition Award, funding a research trip to Nidaros Cathedral this summer. With him in the fancy photo are Caitlin, Hattie, Phoebe, & Wally.



Peter Moench (pictured with Sarah, Felix, and Sylvie at Lake Harriet and canoeing in the boundary waters) was a model of versatility in 2025-26, teaching three courses in the Enduring Questions

program plus a Latin course and two Greek courses. He also published a book chapter and participated in a faculty panel on "The Politics of Teaching the *Odyssey*." We're very glad that he has accepted another two-year appointment at St. Olaf.



Florescia Foxley has now left us to join her fiancé in Boston. For next year, we welcome Francie Merrill (B.A., M.A. from U. Vermont; M.Phil., Ph.D., from NYU), who specializes in the letters of Pliny Jr. and who just spent a month at the Etrusco-Roman archaeological dig near Orvieto, Italy. Her chihuahua's name is Pickles!

We're happy that Kathryn Steed will return next spring to teach Sports and Recreation in the Ancient World. Recently, she and her family (Jesse, Robert, Henry) visited Ireland and met a lamb at Glengowla Sheep Farm.



Jim May is still a powerhouse, filling his days with construction projects, Gregorian chant, online teaching, handball, etc. At last count, his book *How to Win an Argument* had been translated into 13 languages! He and Donna

doubled their fun with two alumni trips to Greece this past year. On Dec. 3 their sixth grandchild, Lucia Magdalena, was born to Bethany and Joe. The rest of their fast-growing grands are (l-r) Gus, Ivy, Christina, Beckett, and Charlotte.



Here's a wedding photo of the Reece family (Steve and Rhonda; Taylor, Kayli, Ellie, Teddy; newlyweds Lukas Denk and Hannah, who just earned her D.N.P.) on June 12 in Bayfield, WI. Steve has had a banner year, publishing a book and

five (!) articles on Homer, Luke, and Acts. His new love is painting logos on the ice in St. Olaf's hockey arena!



Update on our request (4th time) to conduct a tenure-track search: the answer this year was "maybe." Well, at least it was not a "no"! Our enrollments are quite healthy, and we continue to teach overloads and do everything else we can to prove that a fully staffed Classics Department is indispensable. (That's what our graduating seniors believe; see their selfie.) Many thanks to all of you for your loyalty and support! Please stay in touch with us and drop by our headquarters on the 3rd floor of Tomson Hall whenever you're in the Northfield area.

