



PERSONAL STATEMENT – COURSE II A/B #1

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Personal Statement ~ Course II A/B

For me, an understanding of Classical Studies is crucial for understanding the modern world. Whether it be literature, art, architecture or philosophy, the influence of the classical world reaches us in so many ways today.

Through a taster course at UCL, I found a real passion for the effect that classical literature has on societies. I particularly enjoyed learning about Roman drama and its parallels to Greek drama. The fact that Euripides' *Electra* and *Medea* were both adapted by Seneca intrigued me. It was fascinating to learn how the morals and themes in the Roman versions were modified to fit into a Roman society which was fundamentally different to the Greek audience for which they were originally written. For example, Euripides' portrayal of *Medea* shows that revenge was a part of being a hero. By contrast, Seneca portrays her in derogatory manner, taking pleasure in murdering her sons. Also in June, I attended a Classics master class at Cambridge University, where we further explored the different aspects of a Classical Studies degree. While both the history and literature aspects are compelling, it is Greek and Roman drama that have really captivated me. Sophocles' portrayal of family and love in *Antigone* is uniquely interesting. *Antigone's* refusal to let herself be intimidated by a man - no less a king - is conceptually fascinating, particularly in the historical context of a male-dominated society. That *Antigone* believes what she is doing is right and would die so her brother has a proper burial, is quite incredible for a piece written at this time.

In April 2017, I visited Pompeii and Herculaneum to further extend my knowledge of and interest in the lives of the citizens of these ancient towns. We navigated through the rocky streets of the towns, analysing the buildings, sympathising with the thousands of people who would have lost their lives there, learning how they lived, about the social and cultural functions of the amphitheatres and brothels. The House of the Faun was a personal favourite of mine, as it is incredibly well preserved, contains a marvellous mosaic depicting the battle between Alexander the Great and Darius III, in addition to the famous 'HAVE' mosaic near the entrance. The collection of poems called *Come Close* by Sappho has also become a subject of real fascination.

I like the freedom of expression and the depiction of love and women in the poems. Although much of her poetry remains lost, and what remains is in fragmentary form, her poems still influence many writers of today. Moreover, the themes explored by her reach into many aspects of modern life, such as feminism, spirituality and gay issues too. In the time, female relationships were not explored in literary texts, making this group of poems unique and bringing a new spin to the portrayal of women, as they are seen as pure, feminine creatures rather than sexualised.

Beyond my schoolwork, I currently work at Costa Coffee, a job in which I have a professional qualification in as a barista. I have also developed my interest in film through this line of work, since the cafe is



attached to a cinema. I like the way that films bring people together and can teach us all moral and political lessons in an accessible format. Moreover, I am interested by the parallels between the modern film industry and the theatre culture in the classical world.

In Ancient Greece and Rome, plays were an event that everyone who was deemed worthy could enjoy, bringing together people of all different classes, giving them a common interest and mutual cultural frames of reference. The film industry performs a similar function today, as it has done since the late 1920s when cinema first became a part of mass popular culture. Overall, I feel that I have both the aptitude for and the desire to study in this area to make me a good candidate for a place on this course. I hope very much that I can be given the opportunity to take this interest further at your institution.

