

2025 TIP Winner

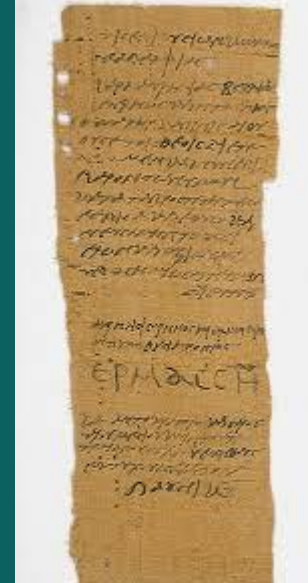
Modelling the art of tolerance and reason in a world that is seemingly intractably divided: Pagan-Christian podcasts featuring historical conversations across the cultural divide of late antiquity.

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Motivation for the Project

“Pagans and Christians,” highlighted the dynamics of cultural conflict in late antiquity in Fall of 2024, a time of immense cultural division in our own society. Artefacts of the 4th and 5th centuries- papyri, inscriptions, novels, philosophical treatises, and diaries revealed that a single people abruptly switched identities, leaving a trail of violence and persecution. Yet this deeply destructive rift appeared in communities with often shared values. How to discover and explore shared communal values through careful listening and respectful dialogue?



What is the project?

Students personified historical personae culturally divided from each other (Pagan vs. Christian) but historically proximate.

- created podcasts featuring conversations between them.

- posed as pairs in a role playing game, researched the personae they represented, jointly developed a script, ultimately creating pagan-Christian dialogues.

embodied ancient figures and asking them to find a way to coexist in the same Empire, despite cultural conflict.

- learned how to negotiate contemporary cultural divisions, using history, acting, honesty, rhetoric, and radical imagination to face off against the "other."



Outcomes: AI work-around

These methods advanced the sophistication, rhetoric, research, and argument of student writing while allowing creative expression and originality to come to the fore. It is a way of teaching history and philosophy that brings ancient texts alive and insists that students embody the ideas they are learning about, not just repeating the ancient arguments, but inhabiting them on a personal level. The podcasts and role playing games were a way to enliven the teaching of ancient history and to circumvent the all consuming encroachment of AI in the classroom, incentivizing original writing, scripting, and expression as well as face to face encounters with other students.

Outcome II: Podcasts

Another outcome came from the use of podcasting technology itself as a way to share the results of student work and to create a collective picture of the ancient world in the eyes of the students, allowing them to foster a community of understanding whereas in previous iterations of the class, the ideological divides in the ancient world and student faith affiliations posed an intellectual obstacle to learning. Students found ways to overcome their own preconceptions and to imagine the world from another's perspective. They also learned technical skills of recording and editing podcasts with support from LSA media staff.