

Preserving Latin and Classical Studies at Philadelphia's Catholic Schools

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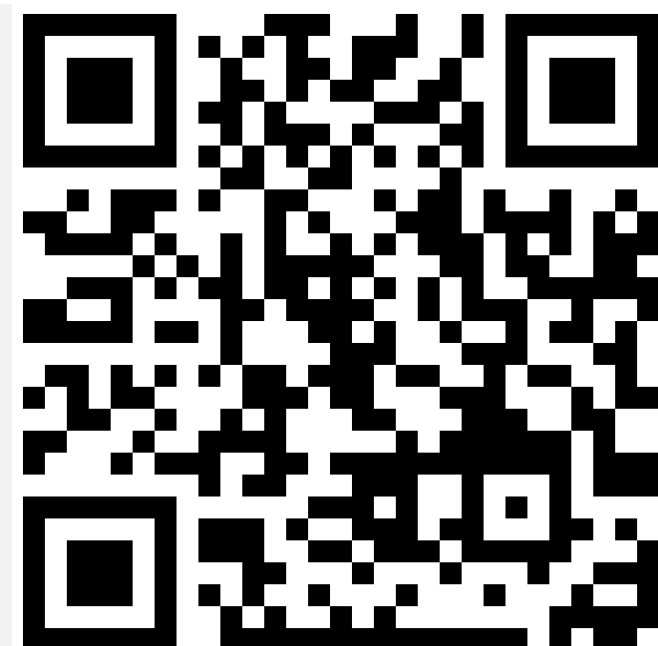
Abstract

- Latin has served as the official language of the Catholic Church since its founding and has always played a major role in Catholic education.
- Recently confronted with declining enrollment and increased operational costs, many Catholic schools in and around the United States have been forced to scale back their curricula, often making Latin one of the first classes to be eliminated.
- During this project, I investigated the past and present of Catholic, especially Jesuit, education and how Latin and Classical Studies have played an integral role in its formation and curriculum development.
- This inquiry synthesizes **history**, **pedagogical theory** and **doctrine**, and **first-hand accounts** of contemporary educators.
- I also provide several recommended methods to implement in Latin programs at local Catholic schools based on current trends in Jesuit education.

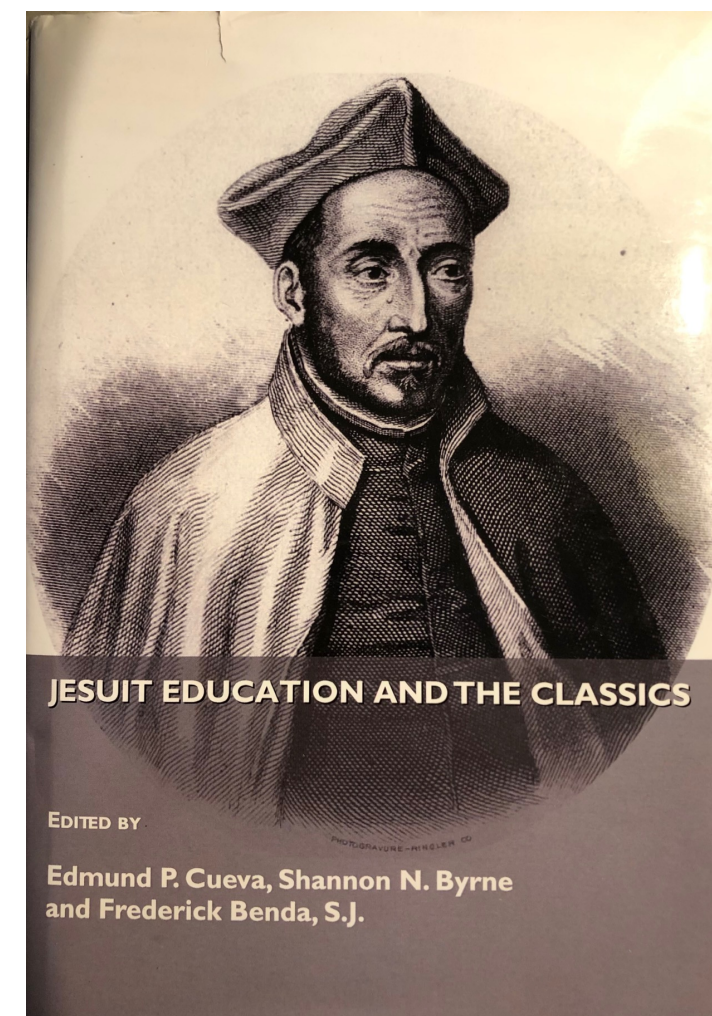
Materials & Methods

- The methods I have used to gather my research include:
 - Websites** of the secondary Catholic schools within the Archdiocese of Philadelphia
 - Various **academic articles** and **books**; especially *Jesuit Education and the Classics*, ed. Cueva, Byrne and Benda
 - Interviews** with local educator, Mary Brown, Ph.D., an adjunct professor of Latin at Saint Joseph's University (SJU) in Philadelphia
 - Discussions** and **activities** in which I participated during an Ignatian pedagogy workshop at Saint Joseph's University in June 2022.

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Findings

Status of Latin in Philadelphia's Catholic Schools:

- 4/34** Catholic high schools in the Philadelphia metro-area **mandate** Latin education for their students (including Philadelphia's only Jesuit high school).
- 20/34** Catholic schools **offer in-person Latin courses**, however, **only 15** offer Latin courses through **all four years** of high school.
- Schools offering Latin are mostly located in the suburbs outside of Philadelphia County, while urban, diocesan schools often lack funding and resources.

History of Jesuit Education and Pedagogical Doctrine:

- The original missions of the Society of Jesus were to propagate and defend the Catholic faith, while also promoting social welfare, cultural awareness, and good citizenship. ¹ It was, thus, inevitable that the Jesuits would eventually delve into formal education.
- Combining Renaissance humanism and Catholic theological tradition, the Jesuits constructed their own Ignatian Pedagogy.
- The Jesuits published the *Ratio Studiorum* in 1599 as their central curriculum and masterplan for their education system.

Jesuit Motivations for teaching Classical Studies: ²

- Latin was considered the **universal language** of law, science, diplomacy, and Western Christendom.
- Classical languages were believed to be the best means of **logical training** due to the systematicity of their grammar.
- The beauty of classical literature was able to inspire **appreciation for aesthetics**.
- Works of ancient pagans displayed **natural virtues** that Jesuits wanted their students to emulate (Cicero was especially valued for his morals and rhetorical style).

Insights from Interviews with Prof. Mary Brown of SJU:

- Consciously or not, she and her colleagues emulate the model Ignatian educator that the original *Ratio Studiorum* has promoted for centuries.
- Preservation of traditional teaching methods and philosophies has led to the resilience and robustness of Classical Studies within Jesuit institutions.

Recommendations

Current Pedagogical Approaches That Can Be Applied to Local Latin Programs Based on Ignatian Pedagogy Workshop at SJU:

- Question Storming and Socratic Seminars**
 - Students work together to compile a list of questions surrounding recent classroom topics before participating in a formal discussion or debate about said questions.
- Reacting to the Past**
 - Intricate role-playing games that help students immerse themselves in the cultures and ideas of key figures and movements from history.
 - Students deliver speeches, debate each other, and hold votes on resolutions to a historical conflict.
 - One game currently offered that could be implemented in a Latin class involves the Crisis of Catiline: Rome, 63 BCE.

Acknowledgements

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References

¹ O'Malley, John W. "Five Missions of the Jesuit Charism: Content and Method." *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 38, no. 4 (2006): 1-33.

² Schwickerath, Robert. *Jesuit Education: Its History and Principles Viewed in Light of Modern Educational Problems*. St. Louis: B. Herder, 1904.