

Maximum length: 1700 words
Due: Saturday, Feb. 10th, 5 p.m.
in your conference leader's Eliot Hall mailbox.

Topic 1 "It was a Greek man who first dared to raise his mortal eyes against religion, and who first fought back against it." (1.66-7)

In this and the following lines, and throughout the whole poem, Lucretius casts Epicurus as something like an epic hero. What, exactly, does Epicurus struggle against and how does he manage to win (if he does)? Why, and with what literary devices, does Lucretius attempt to convey Epicurean philosophy in this way?

Topic 2 Explicate and critically assess what you take to be the central parts of Lucretius' argument, that it is unreasonable to fear death.

Topic 3 Very early in the *Early History of Rome*, Livy makes this comment on the purpose of his text:

I invite the reader's attention to...the process of our moral decline, to watch, first, the sinking of the foundations of morality as the old teaching was allowed to lapse, then the rapidly increasing disintegration, then the final collapse of the whole edifice, and the dark dawning of our modern day when we can neither endure our vices nor face the remedies needed to cure them. The study of history is the best remedy for a sick mind; for in history you have a record of the infinite variety of human experience plainly set out for all to see; and in that record you can find for yourself and your country both examples and warnings; fine things to take as models, base things rotten through and through to avoid. (*Early History*, 1.1)

Discuss this theory, or justification, of history, in reference to one or two major episodes in the text. How, if at all, is this concept of the historical text as, alternately, remedy, warning, or model, at work in the episode(s) you have chosen? You might consider, in addition, the extent to which Livy leaves these matters open for interpretation.

- Topic 4** Women play a much more important role in Livy's history than in those of Herodotus or Thucydides. How do actions by, and the treatment of, women serve to define essential characteristics of what it is to be *Roman*, in Livy's account?
- Topic 5** Both Augustus and Suetonius attempt to locate the actions of Augustus in relation to both "traditional" Roman virtues, and Rome's constitutional heritage. Focusing on either the *Res Gestae* or *The Twelve Caesars*, examine how the work relates Augustus to the moral and political traditions of Rome elaborated by Livy and Polybius.
- Topic 6** What is Clifford Geertz' definition of religion, and does it adequately capture what is meant by the term in the writings of Polybius, Lucretius, or Livy? (Focus on one, or, at most, two of these three. You might also consider whether Geertz' definition applies to Epicurean philosophy, as used by Lucretius.)
- Topic 7** Discuss one or more of the important scenes or features of the *Ara Pacis*, and show how it relates to the larger ideological project of the monument.
Your response should include attention to the viewer's physical relationship to features of the monument (for example, its size, the relative position of the scenes or elements discussed, the approach to the monument) and to formal and iconographical elements such as: depth or shallowness of the relief (carving), disposition of figures, symmetries and asymmetries, placement of scenes, and choice of figures and motifs.
- Topic 8** In consultation with your conference leader, write on a topic of your own devising.