Lucretius

De rerum natura

The University of Edinburgh
School of History, Classics, and Archaeology
2011–2012, Semester 2
Lucretius (U03531)

You should use this course handbook in conjunction with the Honours Handbook 2011–2012. There you will find information on course protocol, in particular on plagiarism and penalties for late coursework and a section on assessment. If you do not have a copy of the handbook it can be downloaded from: http://www.shc.ed.ac.uk/undergraduate.

Course Organiser
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Brief Description of the Course
This course will look at Lucretius' poem 'De rerum natura'. The text will be read partly in Latin and partly in English translation and interpreted in its literary and philosophical contexts. Discussion will centre on the question of Lucretius' aims, the way he uses poetical imagery and rhetoric to achieve these aims, his treatment of the central question of (im)mortality of the soul and of the fear of death in book 3, and his theory of development of human civilization in book 5. Attention will also be paid to the enormous influence of Lucretius in the Renaissance and in the European Enlightenment.

Teaching Arrangements
PLACE: Old Medical School, Doorway 4, Room G. 13
TIME: Tuesdays in Semester 2 at 14.00–15.50.

Learning Outcomes
On successful completion of this course students should be able to
– translate fluently and accurately from the prescribed texts into clear and appropriate English
– produce problem-oriented, well-argued, well-researched, relevant, and coherent coursework essays on specific aspects of Lucretius' work and Graeco-Roman intellectual history
– demonstrate in written work and in class an informed understanding of the most important generic, cultural, intellectual, and literary issues raised by the study of Lucretius, Roman poetry, and intellectual history as well as of the most important scholarly approaches in the interpretation of Lucretius' work
– make judicious use of dictionaries, commentaries, works of reference, and critical studies

Participation and contact
There will be classes on all Tuesdays in Semester 2. In most meetings interaction and discussion rather than passive listening will be the norm. You are expected to prepare in advance for each meeting, in particular by reading thoroughly the relevant Latin text.

Attendance is of course expected, and it will be appreciated of students who for whatever reason cannot attend a particular meeting give notice of this by e-mail. Spare copies of handouts will be available. Persistent absence without sufficient justification will be reported to the student’s Director of Studies.
Messages about the course may be circulated to students by e-mail. It is now a University requirement that students must respond to e-mails sent to their University e-mail address and it will be assumed that every member of the class can be contacted at this address and checks incoming mail regularly.

Feedback from students is always welcome. You may either contact the course organiser personally or speak to the Class Representative. At the end of the course, you will be asked for your anonymous comments on a course assessment questionnaire.

Teaching programme (provisional)

Week 1:    Tabula Rasa: Lucretius in Context
Week 2:    Poetry, Philosophy, and Religion: Lucretius’ mission, didactic plot, and intellectual and poetic achievement
          – Lucr. 1.1–158 & 1. 921–951
          – On reading Lucretius, and freeing your mind
Week 3:    Nothing to Fear in God I: Lucretius’ Psychology
          – Lucr. 3.1–93 & 94–230: Is soul material?
          – Lucretius and ancient theories of the soul
Week 4:    Psychology and Fear of Death: L’Homme Machine?
          – Lucr. 3.417–669 & 3.670–829
          – Lucretius and arguments for, and against, the immortality of the soul
Week 5:    Fear of Death & Danse Macabre: Readers in the Underworld
          – Lucr. 3.830–1094
          – The speech of nature and the ‘diatribe’ against the fear of death
Week 6:    Nothing to Fear in God II: Lucretius against Creationism
          – Lucr. 5.1–234
          – Creationism and its Critics: From Hesiod to d’Holbach
Week 7:    The Origins of Life on Earth: Evolutionary Theory vs. Myth
          – Lucr. 5. 772–1010
          – Golden Age, lost Paradise, and ancient theories of progress
Week 8:    Primitive Man and Development of Human Civilization 1
          – Lucr. 5.1011–1160
          – Social contract, justice, and the origin of language
Week 9:    Development of Human Civilization 2: The Beginning of the End
          – Lucr. 5. 1161–1240
          – Invention of religion – discovery of atheism
Week 10:   History of Human Civilization 3: Primitivism vs. Progressivism
          – Lucr. 5.1241–1457: Civilization and its consequences
          – Lucretius’ theory and progressivism versus primitivism
Week 11:   Lucretius and the Radical Enlightenment: Then and Now
Assessment

This course will be assessed by a combination of prescribed coursework, which will count for 40% of the final mark, and a two-hour examination, which will count for the remaining 60%. There is no resit examination for this course, unless it is being taken as part of an Ordinary degree programme.

Assessment: Coursework

There will be one essay (ca. 3,500 words), worth 40% of the marks for the course, due by 12 noon on Friday 6 April 2012. The essays can be more ‘literary’ or more ‘philosophical’ in approach or deal with the – literary and/or intellectual – reception of Lucretius in Antiquity or in modern Europe. They should, however, focus on the set portions of the text. If you wish to choose your own subject please consult with me about the title by seventh week. Otherwise try one of the following topics. Feel free to adapt the wording.

1. A poet? A philosopher?
2. ‘It is obvious that Lucretius was a pessimist.’ Discuss
3. Why, and in which ways, does Lucretius use poetry to accomplish his philosophical mission?
4. Why, and in which ways, does Lucretius use myth to combat common religious beliefs?
5. What are Lucretius’ methods of argument?
6. ‘The Lucretian argument could not prevail over instinctive human hopes and, therefore, Platonic reason, which supplanted that hope, and Christian faith won the victory over the European heart and mind.’ Discuss.
7. What makes Book 3 of Lucretius’ poem so shocking and revolutionary?
8. Why did Lucretius’ theology and his view of common religiosity and organised religion earn him the name of atheist?
9. "Lucretius' history of human civilization in Book 5.1011–1457 is not logically structured and inconsequent." Discuss
10. Write an interpretative analysis of one of the following passages:
    DRN 5.110–234 (against creationism); DRN 5.1028–1090 (origins of language); DRN 5.1161–1240 (invention of religion)
11. What made Lucretius such an important, controversial, and divisive figure in the European Enlightenment?
12. Discuss the role Lucretius and his poem play in the work of one of the following philosophers of the European Enlightenment: Spinoza, Hobbes, John Toland (esp. Letters to Serena), La Mettrie, Rousseau (esp. Second Discourse), Hume, Herder, d’Holbach (esp. The System of Nature).
13. What role does Lucretius play in the development of contrat social theories of the 18th century?

Assessment: Degree Examination

The degree examination (two hours) will consist of translation and interpretation of passages from the prescribed texts and an essay question.
Bibliography

1. Prescribed Edition:

2. Translations:

3. Commentaries:

   **Book 1**

   **Book 2**

   **Book 3**
   - Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura Book 3, ed. by E. J. Kenney* (Cambridge 1971; repr.)
   - Lucretius *De rerum natura III, Ed. with transl. & comm. by M. Brown* (Warminster 1997)
   - T. Lucretius Carus, *De rerum natura Buch III, erklärt von Richard Heinze* (Leipzig : Teubner, 1897)

   **Book 4**
   - Lucretius, *De rerum natura IV. Ed. with transl. & comm. by J. Godwin* (Warminster 1986)

   **Book 5**
   - Lucretius, *De rerum natura V. Ed. with introd. & comm. by M. Gale* (Oxford 2009)

   **Book 6**
   - Lucretius, *De rerum natura VI. Ed. with transl. & comm. by J. Godwin* (Warminster 1991)

4. Epicurus and Epicurean Philosophy

4.1. Epicurus: Texts
   - P. von der Muehll (ed.), *Epicuri Epistulae tres et ratae sententiae a Lucretio Diogene servatae* (Stuttgart: Teubner 1922, repr.)
4.2. Hellenistic philosophy in general and Epicureanism in particular

- M. Erler/R. Bees (eds.), *Epikureismus in der späten Republik und der Kaiserzeit* (Stuttgart 2000)

4.3. Philosophy and intellectual life in the Late Roman Republic:


5. Didactic Poetry in General

- W. Kroll, ‘Lehrgedicht’, *RE* 12 (1925) 1842–57

6. Lucretius

6.1. General Introductions:

- M. Gale, *Lucretius and the Didactic Epic* (London 2001)
- S. Gillespie/P. Hardie (eds.), *Cambridge Companion to Lucretius* (Cambridge 2007)
6.2. Bibliographies


6.3. Collections of Articles:

- D. R. Dudley (ed.), *Lucretius* (Routledge, 1965)
- C. J. Classen (ed.), *Probleme der Lukrezforschung* (Hildesheim 1986) [most articles are in English]
- K. A. Algra [et al.] (eds.), *Lucretius and his Intellectual Background* (Amsterdam 1997)
- M. Beretta & F. Citti (eds.), *Lucrezio, la Natura e la Scienza* (Firenze 2008)

6.4. Lucretius: Books

- P. H. Schrijvers, *Horror ac divina soluptas; etudes sur la poetique et la poesie de Lucrece* (Amsterdam, 1970)
- J.D. Minyard, *Lucretius and the Late Republic* (Leiden, 1985)
- P. R. Hardie, *Virgil’s Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford 1986), ch. 5
- R. Jenkins, *Virgil’s Experience* (Oxford 1999), part 3
- D. Marković, *The rhetoric of explanation in Lucretius’ "De rerum natura"* (Leiden 2008)

6.5. Lucretius: Articles

- F. Jacoby, ‘Das Prooemium des Lucretius’, *Hermes* 56 (1921) 1–65
- P. Friedlander, ‘The Epicurean Theology of Lucretius’ First Prooemium (Lucr.1.44-49)’, *ZAP* 70 (1939) 368–79
- P. Friedländer, ‘Pattern of sound and atomistic theory in Lucretius,’ *AJP* 62 (1941) 16–34


6.6. Books and articles on DRN Book 3

- B. Wallach, Lucretius and the diatribe against the fear of death: De natura III 830–1094 (Leiden, 1978)
- Ch. Segal, Lucretius on Death and Anxiety (Princeton 1990)

6.7. Books and articles on DRN Book 5

- B. Holmes, ‘Daedala Lingua: Crafted Speech in De Rerum Natura,’ AJP 126 (2005) 527–585
- D. Sedley, Creationism and Its Critics in Antiquity (Berkeley 2008)
7. Reception of Lucretius in the intellectual history of Europe

7.1. General

- G. R. Hocke, *Lukrez in Frankreich von der Renaissance bis zur Revolution* (Köln 1935)
- G. Passannante, *The Lucretian Renaissance* (Chicago 2011)

7.2. Renaissance and Humanism

- E. Belovski, *Lukrez in der französischen Literatur der Renaissance* (Berlin 1934)
- V. Prosperi, "Di suoi licor gli orli del vaso". La fortuna di Lucrezio dall’Umanesimo alla Controriforma (Torino 2004), see review by Á. J. Traver Vera in *BMCR* 2006.10.07
- M. Paladini, *Lucrezio e l’epicureismo tra riforma e controriforma* (Napoli 2011)
- G. Passannante, *The Lucretian Renaissance* (Chicago 2011)
7.3. Enlightenment

- G. R. Hocke, *Lukrez in Frankreich von der Renaissance bis zur Revolution* (Köln 1935)
- J. W. Schmidt, ‘Diderot and Lucretius: The De rerum natura and Lucretius’ legacy in Diderot’s scientific, aesthetic, and ethical thought’, *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 208 (1982) 183–294