

Creating a "Seven Steps to the Ethics of Epicurus"

Post by "Kalosyni" of July 12, 2024 at 6:04 PM

Here is a work-in-progress outline for a course on the Ethics of Epicurus. (I will be adding in more details, and still needing to incorporate the above tips by Don, and others, as well as add in from Cassius' wiki list: Epicurean Ethics).

The Ethics of Epicurus 7 Week Course

Week 1: Introduction to Epicurean Philosophy Basics

Topics:

- Epicurus' life and historical context
- Brief overview of basic concepts: a materialist universe of "atoms and void" and Epicurean canonics (senses, feelings, and anticipations)
- no supernatural gods and everything has natural causes (non-supernature nature of the universe)
- the nature of the soul, and death is the end of both the body and soul.

Readings:

- "Epicurus and His Philosophy" by Norman DeWitt - Chapter 2: "Samos and Athens"
- "[Philosophy for the Millions](#)" essay by Norman DeWitt

Week 2: The Nature of Pleasure and Pain

Topics:

- The definition of pleasure and pain based on sensation, and Nature's goal.
- Pleasure as the telos (highest good).
- The absence of pain as pleasure. Reframing the cognition of pleasure - there is no neutral state, so if you are not feeling pain then that is understood as feeling pleasure.
- The limits of pleasure and pain, and dealing with physical pain.
- The relationship of happiness to pleasure.
- Types of Desires: natural and necessary desires, natural but unnecessary desires, and vain desires.
- Choice and Avoidance - circumstance and outcome determines choiceworthiness.
- Continuous pleasure - the role of making and recalling happy memories.

Readings:

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3306-creating-a-seven-steps-to-the-ethics-of-epicurus/?postID=31439#post31439>

- Letter to Menoecus
- <https://newepicurean.com/the-true-natur...urean-pleasure/>
- Cicero's "On Ends" Torquatus section

Week 3: The Role of Virtue

Topics:

- The relationship between virtue and pleasure, instrumental value of virtues - tools not rules.
- "Good" and "evil" according to Epicurus.
- Prudence and Temperance, and how Epicurean beliefs lead to ethical living. "Moderation in all things" is an incorrect way to make choices -- prudence uses reason as well as evaluation or pleasure/pain and unique circumstances.
- Justice and how the choice of non-harming leads to a pleasant life.
- Courage - sometimes short-term pain must be endured to for the most pleasant outcome (or to avoid a worse pain) or for the health of the body

Readings:

Week 4: The Epicurean View of Gods and Death; Nature, Science, and Well-Being

Topics:

- Epicurean views on god(s)
- Working through the fear of death
- Nature and natural causes (no supernatural forces)
- Science vs Epicurean canonics (and the ancient idea of observations followed by hypothesis)
- Dealing with the incorrect notion of the need to find meaning (this comes out of Christianity or a lack of social connection)
- The "Epicurean Trilemma" (which was not originated by Epicurus)
- Removing religious anxieties of death and god (the nature of death and the soul) and developing rapport with Nature.

Readings:

Week 5: Friendship, Community, and Reverence for the Wise Man

Topics:

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3306-creating-a-seven-steps-to-the-ethics-of-epicurus/?postID=31439#post31439>

- Importance of friendship, social bonds, and community in achieving a pleasurable life.
- The role of studying together and the Twentieth celebration as community sustaining rituals.
- The role of honoring those who are wise in Epicurean understanding and practice.
- Tips on how to create strong friendships.

Readings:

Week 6: Freedom, Personal Agency, Self-Sufficiency, Tranquility vs Risk-taking, and Clear-minded Living

Topics:

- Definition of autarky
- Free will and personal responsibility - free will frees us from determinism and fate.
- Further discussion on choices and avoidances (natural, natural and necessary, natural and unnecessary, unnatural: vain/empty and unnecessary)
- Risk-taking as an individual choice (there is only this life)
- Sound mind in a healthy body

Readings:

Week 7: Applying the Philosophy of Epicurus in Modern Daily Life

Topics:

- Choice and avoidance and practical applications (thinking through career choices, marriage or staying single, and discussion of other practical dilemmas)
- Living with non-Epicureans who are religious or believe in supernatural powers
- The avoidance of being in the spotlight (pros and cons)
- Tips for starting an Epicurean philosophy study group

Readings: