

Starting a closed in-person/zoom/social media mixed Epicurean Study Group; Utilizing this Website and Where to Start

Post by “Root304” of March 5, 2023 at 4:18 AM

This feels like a mix of "Activism" and "Epicurean Practice", but it seems right to put this here in Activism.

I decided I wanted to set aside time with some interested folks I know to read Epicurean texts and engage in discussion. Most if not all of the folks interested consider themselves Epicureans, are sympathetic to Epicurus or are sympathetic to Naturalistic worldviews. Some are already familiar with each other so I'm expecting it will be pretty laid back. It's more of a private group with friends, family, mutual acquaintances; rather than an open, public group.

Anyway, I had questions and concerns:

- I'm wanting to make it pretty leisurely for people new to philosophical discussion (like myself). I'm also not trying to set myself up as an authority on Epicureanism or represent myself as some authority from EpicureanFriends.com . However, I will likely promote the philosophy more or less as it's presented here, as that is how I generally came to an understanding of it. So, I would like to encourage participants who seem very interested in the details of the philosophy to check out this forum. Would it be welcome and appropriate to send people from the group here, or make mention of this site? Also, would using any memes or graphics from this site be welcome?

- I'd like to get to DeWitt's Epicurus and his Philosophy with a group one day. However, I think starting with a shorter text might be welcome with this group, and using free resources would be best so as not to exclude or dissuade anyone from participating. I'd also like to utilize audiobooks, video if quality content exists, or even suggested Lucretius Today podcasts if that would be welcome; as I know some would much prefer those ways of engaging. Where would be a good place to start, that might be shorter as well as having audio or video support? Should I just stick with the tried and true, with DeWitt?

Any other thoughts, concerns, considerations or tips are welcome. Thanks!

Post by “Martin” of March 5, 2023 at 5:22 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2939-starting-a-closed-in-person-zoom-social-media-mixed-epicurean-study-group-utiliz/>

Yes, please mention/recommend this site.

Using memes, graphics and the Lucretius Today podcasts from this site within your study group should be fine.

Since Emily A. Austin has published "Living for pleasure", her book is my new recommendation to start with. It is not for free but way cheaper than DeWitt's book "Epicurus and his Philosophy", which would then be great as the next book for completeness.

Audio/video material on Epicurus from BBC (within a BBC series on philosophy) seems to be fine but I do not know it firsthand and do not have a link.

It seems you already have enough future participants, which is great because the biggest hurdle to start a group is usually to find enough participants.

To avoid unproductive and divisive debate, it is best to establish rules which outline the scope of interest and exclude partisan politics (unless everybody in the group is politically on the same page, but then, there is no point in discussing politics either.)

Post by “Cassius” of March 5, 2023 at 6:21 AM

Root304 I agree with Martin's comments. You are certainly welcome to refer people here and use our material - that is what we are here for.

As for books that is something I continue to think a lot about. There many categories of people who might be your target audience and you need to pick your text according to your group. I agree Living For Pleasure is the best general introduction for new readers but if your group is "advanced" enough in philosophy then Dewitt still might be more appropriate, or even "A Few Days In Athens" or something else - even Lucretius or Diogenes Laertius.

For example, if your group is heavily weighted toward former or partial Stoics who were attracted to Stoicism because they wanted to "live like an emperor" I would possibly suggest starting with Lucretius - but you will need to give them a good clear translation and lead them through it so that they don't get bogged down.

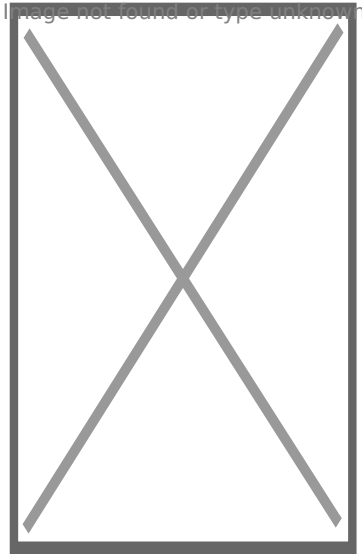
I would be interested to hear more about what you think of your group's interests. If they are into "lifestyle improvement" then definitely Living for Pleasure. If they are into technicals of philosophy and the decline and fall of western civilization, then that is another approach where we can make other recommendations.

This discussion makes me think we need a "Study Guide to Lucretius."

Post by “Don” of March 5, 2023 at 6:57 AM

Agreed that Dr. Austin's book is the best starting place currently. If you don't want to make people buy her book, my suggestion would be to start with the several podcasts she's done both here and on other shows. If you need links, I think we've added them to the podcasts/modern books section but I can try to consolidate of that would be helpful.

If you're looking for free resources, DeWitt is available on Internet Archive:



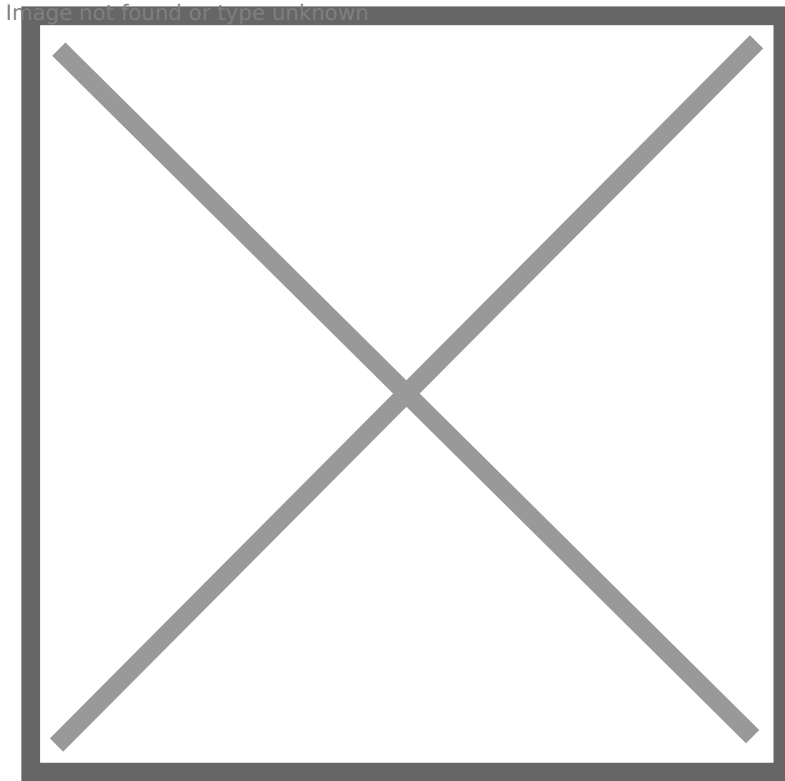
[Epicurus And His Philosophy : Epicurus : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

Epicurus And His Philosophy
archive.org

But, honestly, I'm not as big a fan of his than some on this forum. I think his content is fine, his scholarship is first rate, but his style and vocabulary (and other details) can be a bit off-putting for me. He's not always an easy read. For me ****personally**** : 👍👍 on his organization and general direction. 👎 on writing style, expanding references beyond what they say, and Christianity around every corner. That said, he's what we have (or had, until Emily's book).

As an aside: I've recently become interested in Dr. Michael Rucker and his work on including more "fun" in our lives. I've listened to the audiobook of his "The Fun Habit" and even bought the print book and am slowly going through it. I hope to make a (positive) Epicurean response to it some day. He also has a website:

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2939-starting-a-closed-in-person-zoom-social-media-mixed-epicurean-study-group-utiliz/>



[A counterintuitive method to ensure 2023 is your most fun year ever.](#)

michaelrucker.com

with a lot of resources.

I think it is an eminently Epicurean book albeit without mention of Epicurus. It could easily have been called *The Pleasure Habit*, because I think both pleasure and fun have been maligned in our culture, at least in North America.

I also want to re-read *Lonesome Dove* by Larry McMurtry since Dr. Austin brought up the Epicurean example of Augustus "Gus" McCray in that book, set against his friend Woodrow Call, the Stoic.

Early morning thought. Good luck on your project!!!

Post by “Kalosyni” of March 5, 2023 at 7:48 PM

I would recommend studying and discussing the Letter to Menoceus, the [Principal Doctrines](#), The Vatican Sayings, and the Torquatus section of Cicero's *On Ends*.

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And also be sure to interpret everything in accord with the following aphorisms (and these will help you avoid the danger of over-emphasis on "minimalism"/"tranquility")

[PD05](#)

[PD08](#)

[PD27](#)

VS14

[VS71](#)

Post by “Don” of March 5, 2023 at 8:01 PM

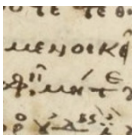
[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I would recommend studying and discussing the Letter to Menoceus, the [Principal Doctrines](#), The Vatican Sayings, and the Torquatus section of Cicero's On Ends.

If I may, in addition to the more scholarly/narrative translations, I'll offer my translation and commentary of the Menoikeus letter if you're interested:

File

[Epicurus's Letter to Menoikeus - A New Translation with Commentary](#)



An in-depth translation and commentary of Epicurus's Letter to Menoikeus.



Don

July 19, 2023 at 11:25 PM

Post by “Root304” of March 6, 2023 at 3:53 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2939-starting-a-closed-in-person-zoom-social-media-mixed-epicurean-study-group-utiliz/>

Thank you all for your supportive responses! It means an enormous amount to me. The forum regulars and the regulars on Lucretius Today are like rock stars to me. 😊😊

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I would be interested to hear more about what you think of your group's interests. If they are into "lifestyle improvement" then definitely Living for Pleasure. If they are into technicals of philosophy and the decline and fall of western civilization, then that is another approach where we can make other recommendations.

From what they have expressed and from what I intuit, most folks are more interested in discussing practicable things like how to live a more pleasurable life, some are interested in studying hedonistic thought more generally and others are just quite new to philosophy but whom I have gotten interested in Epicurus. I don't think I'm going to have to contend with a pronounced Stoic influence with this group. These are more culturally Left folks. I think my goal is to balance getting into the weeds on philosophy and Epicurean history, with philosophizing about practices to live a more pleasurable life. In terms of studying philosophy, I want to start with studying Epicurus as in-depth as we need to go, and then if the group lasts beyond that, move into Cyrenaic, Utilitarian and other sensual philosophies and authors. Establishing that base Epicurean lens would be appropriate as I want to make the very best case for "hedonistic" and "sensual" philosophy first.

Mulling over these replies today, I think I'm pretty adamant about keeping everything free at least in the beginning. So with this access to DeWitt, I think I'm going to start out with some selections from "Epicurus and his Philosophy" that would give a good historical and philosophical context. I won't "assign" the entire book chapter by chapter right out of the gate unless people are really into it. I know when I read the first chapter or two, naïve as it is, I had to just stop for awhile and ponder what this meant for my entire view of history. It really got me excited about Epicurus.

Then, as [Kalosyni](#) suggests, perhaps we could move into reading some Epicurus, and some other ancient source material that may be of interest to Epicurean "practices" to start the discussion on what some folks came for. I realize that studying and contemplating the philosophy is the major way one practices Epicureanism, and I think people would come to appreciate that idea once they have a bit of a longer look at it. Yet there are also ways we can talk about branching out from that as well.

Going over some of the [Principal Doctrines](#) with my partner who doesn't have a philosophical background, I felt confident enough to provide some decent contextual clues and cues drawn from the many hours of listening to Lucretius Today that I could help her draw more from the rather dense text, pointing to the various philosophical moves Epicurus was making. Along the way, I could point to the DeWitt text for further reading, as well as, Lucretius Today podcasts

for listening. As the group assembles a direction of inquiry, we could chart a course on where to go next in terms of texts we read together, whether that's Dr. Austin's book if we need more of a refresher, or Dr. Rucker's book as [Don](#) shared or something like it to keep things in the realm of practices, or deeper down the Epicurean rabbit hole with Lucretius. I've only read parts of Lucretius so I personally would like to get to that sooner rather than later. 😊

Let me know what you think of this path if you like, and thanks again for the replies!

Post by “Cassius” of March 6, 2023 at 5:01 AM

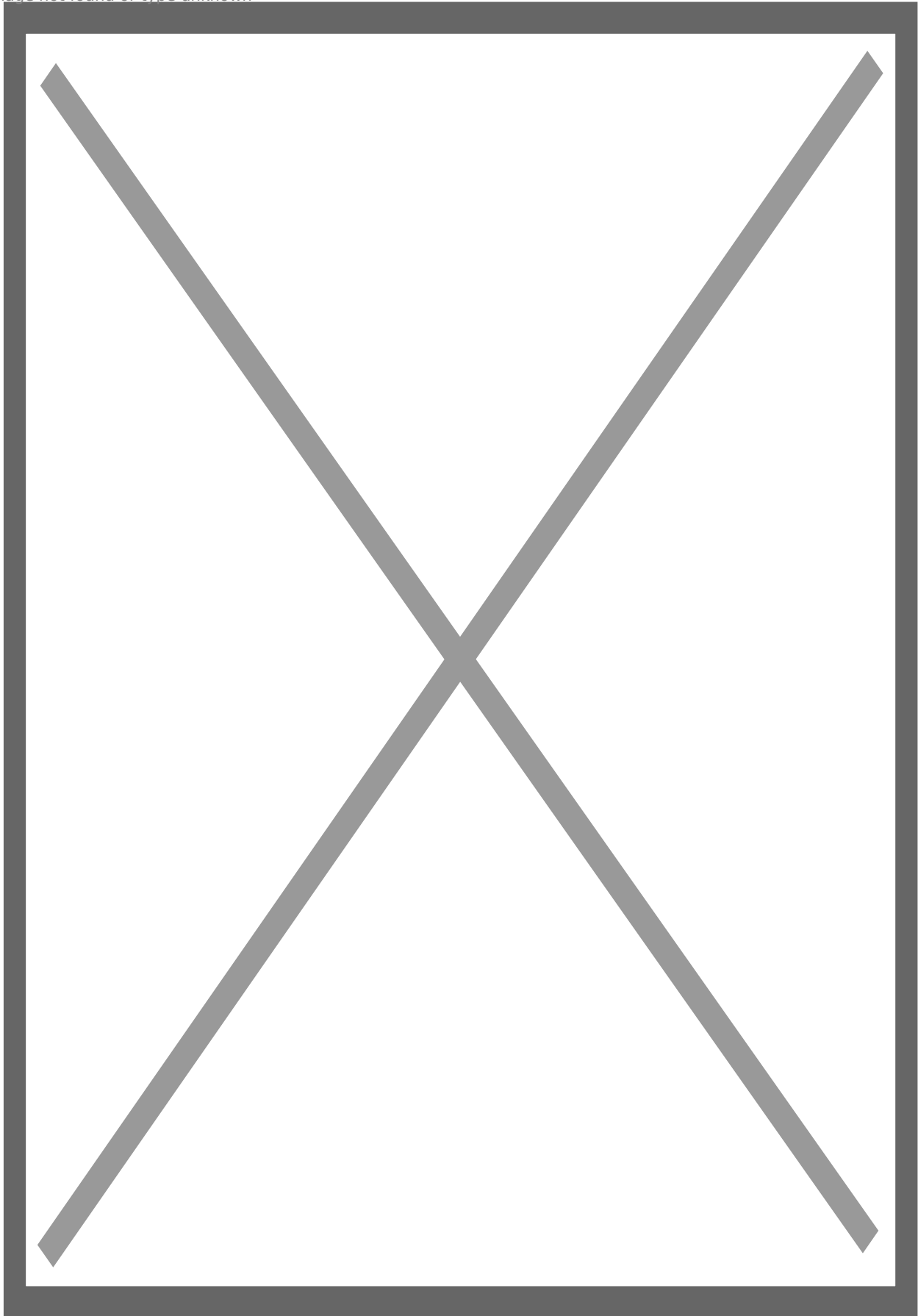
Sounds very good please keep us posted!

Post by “Kalosyni” of March 6, 2023 at 8:22 AM

Another option would be to follow an outline of some kind, and think there are many different outlines here on the forum.

You may have seen that we've been working on creating an Epicurean Week program, and potentially this could be of help:

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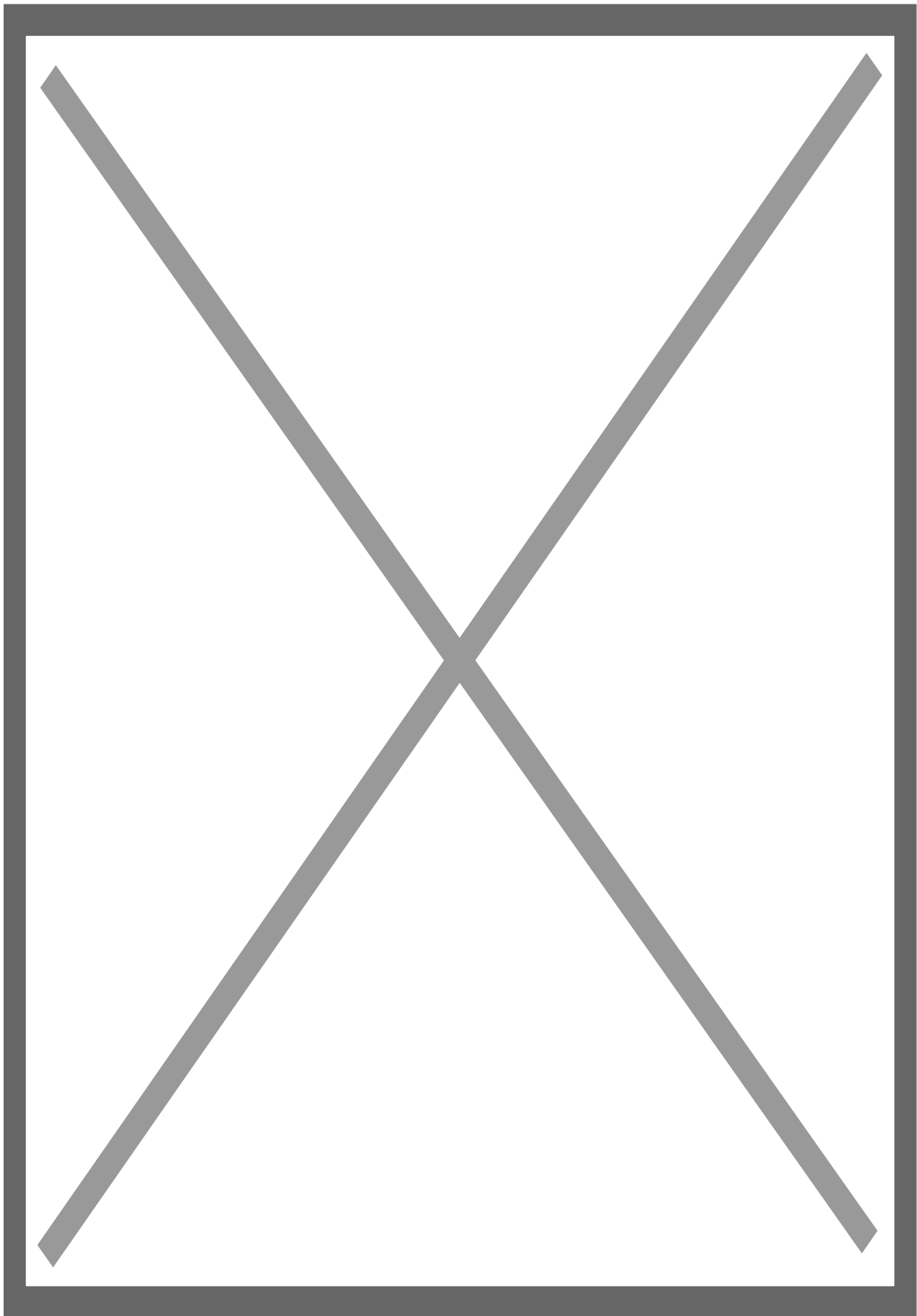


<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2939-starting-a-closed-in-person-zoom-social-media-mixed-epicurean-study-group-utiliz/>

[Epicurean Week Development Project - Epicureanfriends.com](http://www.epicureanfriends.com)

www.epicureanfriends.com

It isn't very developed yet, but in the coming weeks this should be fleshed out a bit more, including practical exercises:



Post by “Little Rocker” of March 8, 2023 at 3:00 PM

I want to second all of these great suggestions and wish you luck with your group! Austin has done some podcasts, and I myself think the best of them is the two-part episode with Lucretius Today, accessible for free on this site and wherever podcasts are found.

Post by “Kalosyni” of March 8, 2023 at 3:20 PM

Yes and I think audio material is great for "newbies"...for ease of reference here are some links:

Part: 1

Thread

[Episode 156 - Lucretius Today Interviews Dr. Emily Austin - Part One](#)

Welcome to episode 156, a special two-part Episode of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the only complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world. Each week we walk you through the Epicurean texts, and we discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. If you too find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at EpicureanFriends.com, where...



Cassius

January 10, 2023 at 12:58 AM

Part 2:

Thread

[Episode 157 - Lucretius Today Interviews Dr. Emily Austin - Part Two](#)

Welcome to episode 157, part two of a special two part Episode of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the only complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world. Each week we walk you through the Epicurean texts, and we discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. If you too find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at...



Cassius

January 19, 2023 at 10:13 AM

And the YouTube version which is all in one piece:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=q2v-G6wBEIq>

Also, this particular YouTube was helpful for me when I first started out:

"Major Aspects of Epicurean Philosophy" (Cassius gives an overview)

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=fobzlg-x6s0>

Post by "Kalosyni" of March 12, 2023 at 8:36 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I would recommend studying and discussing the Letter to Menoecus, the [Principal Doctrines](#), The Vatican Sayings, and the Torquatus section of Cicero's On Ends.

And also be sure to interpret everything in accord with the following aphorisms (and these will help you avoid the danger of over-emphasis on "minimalism"/"tranquility")

[PD05](#)

[PD08](#)

[PD27](#)

VS14

[VS71](#)

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I just realized that VS21 is another very important guide for interpretation of the Epicurean philosophy, and to point out that it is more than just necessary desires that we seek to fulfill -- and therefore a "simple life" of "minimalism" and "tranquility" is not the Epicurean goal. (And btw what I mean by "tranquility" is a life of dawdling or being like a stick in the mud, and so probably another word other than tranquility is needed.) And the true goal could also be better understood by the word "engaged" -- actively engaged with pursuing pleasure.

Vatican Saying 21: "Nature must be persuaded, not forced. And we will persuade nature by fulfilling the necessary desires, and the natural desires too if they cause no harm, but sharply rejecting the harmful desires."