

## Guidelines for Epicurus Paper

Suppose you have decided to live a life of maximum pleasure. Would you go about this in the way Epicurus suggests, or would you adopt a different strategy? Explain what you would do, and why, remembering that the goal is to have a *lifetime of maximum* pleasure.

**Purpose(s) of this assignment:** (1) Think critically about Epicurus's recommendations for living well. (2) Show a clear understanding of Epicurus's distinctions among different types of pleasure. (3) Improve your ability to write clearly and precisely.

### Structure and Content of your Essay:

- For the purpose of this assignment, *assume* that your goal in life is to experience as much pleasure as possible. I know that many of you have very different goals, but work on this assumption just for the purpose of this writing assignment.
- Before you begin writing this essay, read what Epicurus has to say about how to go about maximizing your pleasure. See pp. 110 – 114 in your textbook.
  - Pay particular attention to his recommendations about work, education, living a simple life, and friendship.
  - Also make sure you understand Epicurus's distinctions among different types of pleasure, and his reasons for focusing on mental, catastematic pleasures. See pp. 107 – 109 in your textbook.
- In writing your paper, you will have to make some choices: Either agree with all of Epicurus's recommendations about how to live a life of maximum pleasure, disagree with all of these recommendations, or agree with some and disagree with others. (I am interested in how you *defend* your views, not in which views you choose.)
  - In planning your essay, make a list of the recommendations Epicurus makes about how to live a life of maximum pleasure. E.g., Work as little as possible, avoid education, live a very simple life, etc.
  - In your essay, address each of these recommendations. Either agree that following that recommendation would lead to a lifetime of maximum pleasure, or disagree with it. Go through the entire list of Epicurus's recommendations, addressing each one.
    - If you agree that a particular recommendation should be followed, explain why. What type(s) of pleasure would result from following this recommendation? If someone failed to follow this recommendation, why would that person experience less pleasure?
    - If you disagree with a particular recommendation, explain why. Specifically, explain what else a person should do to experience more pleasure. Be sure to explain what type(s) of pleasure one should be pursuing.
- Epicurus says that we should pursue mental, catastematic pleasures. Again, I'd like you either to agree or disagree with this recommendation and defend your view.
  - Look at Epicurus's reasons for choosing mental, catastematic pleasures (pp. 109 – 110 in your textbook), and think about whether these reasons are convincing.

- If you were trying to have a lifetime of maximum pleasure, what sort of pleasure would you pursue? Why? Would you pursue just one type of pleasure, or some mixture of different types? Explain.

**General Guidelines:**

- I strongly prefer that your essays be typed and double-spaced. However, if meeting that requirement would be difficult for you, you may submit a handwritten essay. If you do so, please make sure it is double-spaced and written legibly.
- Don't worry about introductory and concluding paragraphs. Just get right to the heart of the matter.
- If you get stuck or if you're not sure you're on the right track, contact me and we'll talk about it. Either email me at: [baerralp@isu.edu](mailto:baerralp@isu.edu) or phone me at 282-3371.