Lucretius was a Roman philosopher of the first century BCE who wrote an epic poem called On the Nature of Things. This poem’s main heroes are neither warriors, nor gods, but atoms and the void. Over six books, Lucretius outlines the material components of the cosmos, the human body and the world around us, exploring the ethical implications of a universe composed entirely of matter and nothingness. Should we worry about death? What’s the best way to maximize pleasure? Do the gods even care about our actions? This course will examine Lucretius’ answers to these questions by closely reading sections of his text in Latin, while also reading through the work as a whole in English.

This course is primarily intended for students in their third year of studying Latin, but second-year students with strong Latin skills are also welcome.