Great Books, Big Ideas from Antiquity (Rome)

Note: Prior participation in the first part (Greece) is recommended but not required.

SYLLABUS

1. Week (Jan 10):
   “Nothing from Nothing:” **Lucretius, De Rerum Natura** (sel.): 1.1-145 (preface),
   146-634 (first-bodies, the void), [2.1-61 (philosophy)], 3.1-93 (death?), 3.830-1094 (it’s folly to fear death), 4.1058-1287 (love’s disease), 5.1011-1457 (the beginnings of civilization), 6.1138-1286 (the plague of Athens – *once* again).

2. Week (Jan 17):
   “An end to the long silence:” **Cicero, the Caesarian Speeches: In Behalf of Marcellus** (and, possibly, The Poet Archias)
   ➢ Concept, topics: Rhetoric (in the face of power): the rhetorical system; Cicero’s problem; the meaning of authoritarianism

3. Week (Jan 24):
   “Gaul, in its entirety, is divided into three parts …:” **Caesar, Gallic War** (sel.),
   1.1, 4.1-19, 7; **Plutarch, Caesar** (sel.): 1-10, 55-69.
   ➢ Concept, topics: The Cold Eye of Reason: war as a game of chess
   o Further readings: M. Bowden, “The Killing Machines. How to think about drones.”

4. Week (Jan 31):
   “Of arms and Men …” **Vergil, Aeneid** 1, 4, 6, 12
   ➢ Concept, topics: The (personal) cost of empire (darkness visible); a teleological concept of history; the Roman character and mission; personal sacrifice
   Additional reading, study objects: Caroline Alexander, “Out of Context.”

5. Week (Feb 7):
   “On to something new…” **Ovid, Metamorphoses** (sel.): 1.1-415 (Creation),
   ➢ Concept, topics: Intertextuality
   Additional reading, study objects: Virgil, Rilke, *Orpheus, Eurydice, Hermes* — Jess, Narkissos

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6. Week (Feb 14):
   “This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah:” The *Gospel of Matthew*
   - Concepts, topics: Story, History, Religiosity.

7. Week (Feb 21):
   “The City of Rome …:” *Tacitus, Annales* 1-4 (sel.): 1.1-15, 55-72, 72-81, 3.65, 4.23-41; 57-59; 67
   - Concepts, topics: Tiberius’ totalitarian rule: cooking the books in the first century; the problem of historical objectivity

8. Week (Feb 28):
   “*Germania*, in its entirety:*” *Tacitus, Germania* (sel.), 1-28, 29 + Final Two
   - Concepts, topics: The creation of a communal past; imaginary communities; reception of ‘a most dangerous book’

9. Week (March 7):
   “Great art thou, O Lord:” *Augustinus, Confessiones* 1, 2, 4, 7-9

10. Week (March 14):
   Recap, final discussion. (TBD)