

HIST 328 Discussion 5 Questions: Athanasius, *Life of Anthony*
Prof. Williams Fall 2007

Prepare to discuss the following questions in class on Tuesday 12/4.

1. How does Anthony begin his ascetic career, according to Athanasius's *Life*? What inspires his asceticism? What practical steps does he take to carry out his resolve?
2. What is the social context of Anthony's withdrawal? Answer this question for each stage of his career: his first experiments as a monk; his early life as a hermit; and his later life as a monastic leader and example.
3. What is Athanasius's intention in portraying the relations between Anthony and the various people he encounters when he visits Alexandria? Specifically, what is at stake in the debates between Anthony and the philosophers?
4. How realistic do you think Athanasius's portrayal of Anthony is? How much is Athanasius's own invention?
5. The *Life of Anthony* was the first example of a new literary genre, hagiography, or the life of a saint (holy person). On the basis of this example, how would you describe the characteristics of this genre? What earlier literary genres (Christian or non-Christian) is it modelled on? What is new about this genre specifically?