

Seminar in the History of Philosophy: Augustine's *Confessions*

Tuesdays, 3:05-5:50 pm, FAO 248

Dr Thomas Williams, Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies

Office hours: Tuesdays, 1:30-2:30, FAO 231 (4-5893)

Thursdays, 9:45-10:45, CPR 311 (4-2758)

Course Description

This course is designed as an intensive look at Augustine's *Confessions*: its literary structure and qualities, its philosophical and theological contents, and its place in Augustine's writings as a whole. A close reading of the whole text of the *Confessions* (not just the autobiographical parts) will be supplemented by other texts of Augustine and essays in *Augustine's Confessions: Critical Essays* and other sources.

Course Requirements

- (1) Consistent, well-prepared participation in class discussion
- (2) An APA-style paper (3000 words, reading time of 20 minutes), to be presented in class in a lively, charismatic, and engaging way. My hope is that many students will be able to submit these papers for presentation at an APA or other professional meeting – I've had success with that before.
- (3) Commentary (not to exceed 1200 words, reading time of 8 minutes) on another student's paper

Schedule of Topics and Readings

August 26	Introduction The development of Augustine's career The structure of the <i>Confessions</i>
September 2	<i>Confessions</i> 1 William E. Mann, "The Philosopher in the Crib"
September 9	<i>On the Teacher</i> Paul Bloom, "Word Learning and Theory of Mind" Gareth B. Matthews, "Augustine on the Teacher Within"

September 16	<p><i>Confessions</i> 2 <i>On Free Choice of the Will</i> 1 Scott MacDonald, "Petit Larceny, the Beginning of All Sin: Augustine's Theft of the Pears" William E. Mann, "Augustine on Evil and Original Sin"</p>
September 23	<p><i>Confessions</i> 3 Scott MacDonald, "The Divine Nature"</p>
September 30	<p><i>Confessions</i> 4 <i>City of God</i> 5.1-7 Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Suffering Love"</p>
October 7	<p><i>Confessions</i> 5 <i>Against the Academicians</i> 3.9.18-3.16.36</p>
October 14	<p><i>Confessions</i> 6 <i>City of God</i> 11.2-3</p>
October 21	<p><i>Confessions</i> 7 <i>City of God</i> 8.4-10, 10 <i>On Free Choice of the Will</i> 2</p>
October 28	<p><i>Confessions</i> 8 <i>City of God</i> 9.4-8, 14.2-3 and 6 Nicholas Wolterstorff, "God's Speaking and Augustine's Conversion"</p>
November 4	<p><i>Confessions</i> 9 Paul Helm, "Augustine's Grievs"</p>
November 11	<p>Veterans Day</p>
November 18	<p><i>Confessions</i> 10 Ishtiyaque Haji, "On Being Morally Responsible in a Dream" Garry Wills, "The Book of Memory"</p>

November 25 *Confessions* 11
Richard Sorabji, "Time, Mysticism, and Creation"

December 2 *Confessions* 12-13
On Christian Teaching 1
Thomas Williams, "Biblical interpretation"