

HT6305: Life and Theology of Augustine

Reformed Theological Seminary, Atlanta

Summer 2023

June 5–8 (M–TR), 9:00a–4:30p

Your Professor

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Adjunct Professor

Office Hours: By appointment

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Emails received after 3 PM, or 6 PM on days that our class meets, will receive a response on the next school day.

(1) Course Description

This course examines the life and theology of Augustine of Hippo and considers his thought in context through a chronological/biographical framework. Key teachings will include: grace and the Christian life; the interpretation of Scripture; the nature of the Church; the Trinity; and the relationship between the Church/Christian and the world.

(2) Course Objectives and How They Will be Measured

(a) Students will display critical thinking as they actively engage in a conversation between themselves, their peers, and Augustine. In doing so, students will demonstrate the ability to perform thorough, attentive, and annotative readings of Augustine's writings and to draw meaningful thematic and logical connections among them.

Evaluation: Theological Reflections, Socratic Discussions, Final Paper

(b) Students will exhibit the ability to read specific passages of assigned texts closely, with an awareness of the text's historical and theological dimensions. Students will effectively present their conclusions in both speech and writing.

Evaluation: Theological Reflections, Socratic Discussions, Final Paper

(c) Students will develop an aptitude for engaging in effective discussions. This includes knowing when to speak, when to listen, and how to respond thoughtfully and dialectically to peers, to the professor, and to the text.

Evaluation: Socratic Discussions

(d) Students will construct a specific argument about a text that incorporates historical and theological issues. Students will present their argument in clear, concise, and correctly written prose.

Evaluation: Socratic Discussions, Final Paper

(e) Students will understand specific aspects of Augustine's life and theology as well as his milieu.

Evaluation: Theological Reflections, Socratic Discussions, Final Paper

(3) Required Texts

Augustine. *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. ISBN: 9780199537822.¹

Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*. Translated by R. P. H. Green. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. ISBN: 9780199540631.

Possidius, *The Life of Saint Augustine*. Translated by Herbert T. Weiskotten. Christian Roman Empire Series 6. Merchantville: Evolution Publishing, 2008. ISBN: 978-1889758909.²

- * All other readings will be available on Canvas so that you can print them. While not required, I highly recommend you read Peter Brown's biography of Augustine, which is listed in Section 8, 'Recommended Reading.'

(4) Assessments

Socratic Discussions (50%)

Our Socratic discussions will form the backbone of this course, and you will be graded on how well you prepare for and participate in these discussions. See Section 5 of this syllabus for details.

Theological Reflections (25%)

Your preparation for both lectures and Socratic discussions will be threefold: before each class session you will need to (1) mark your own physical copy of the text that we will be discussing, (2) record any relevant notes in a physical notebook,³ and (3) submit a theological reflection on that reading. Your text and notes are for your reference during our Socratic discussions and for the rest of your life. Your theological reflection on the text will push you to analyze, critique, and integrate what you are reading into your life and ministry.

Your theological reflection can be either typed or handwritten and will be submitted via Canvas. Your theological reflection will receive full credit as long as you: (1) cite and interact with a specific passage from the reading for that unit, (2) connect the idea(s) in that passage

¹ Match the ISBN number listed for each book so that you purchase the correct edition. Having the correct edition will make your participation in Socratic discussions much easier. (As of the writing of this syllabus, there are many used copies of each of these texts available online for purchase at a reduced price.)

² This biography was written by Possidius, who knew Augustine personally. It was written with the goal of encouraging the Christians who would read it in their faith. It is not a critical biography of the sort we are used to seeing in the twenty-first century.

³ If you are not in the habit of doing so, I would recommend that your personal notebook contain an outline. The outline should be twofold, both (1) outlining Augustine's logic/argument in the whole reading for that discussion and (2) specifically outlining the logic of a specific argument that catches your interest within the text. For example, when reading *Confessions* 7, your broad outline would show the logical progression of his thought and narrative without providing too much detail. At the same time, if his argument for his thesis on the origin of evil is of interest to you, your outline would be much more detailed at the points in Book 7 where he is arguing for his thesis on evil's origin (e.g., VII.5.7, VII.12.18, etc.). In the end, your outline will show the general logic of Book 7's progression as well as the specific development of his argument on the origin of evil, and you would arrive at our Socratic discussion prepared to discuss both. Your markings within your copy of the text would thus aid you in pointing our class to specific passages to justify your reading of Augustine.

to your own ideas and/or life, and (3) write at least a few paragraphs. Note that these are only minimum requirements. Often you will need much more space to develop your thoughts. And, as you progress in your readings, you should begin to make connections across readings—both within a single work and across Augustine’s corpus. You may either type your theological reflections directly into the assignment on Canvas or upload a legible scan of what you have written.

□ Final Paper (25%)

You will write one brief final paper, 4–5 pages, double-spaced, in a standard 12-point font, with 1-inch margins all around. The paper is your chance to synthesize your reading of a passage from either *Confessions* or *On Christian Teaching* in order to advance an interpretive claim about that passage. In this way you will be doing the work of an historical theologian and pastor.

As you begin to think about your paper, you should identify a specific passage in a text that is particularly interesting to you. For a paper of this sort, your selected passage should be no more than three lines in length.

- Successful papers will: (1) state a clear thesis and make a claim about the significance of a passage to Augustine’s theology; (2) analyze the passage in a way that demonstrates mastery of the entire work, including the Augustine’s positions and the logic supporting them; (3) provide compelling and accurate evidence, chiefly from the text itself and/or other texts by Augustine, arranged in a way that persuades the reader of the merit of his/her thesis (this presentation of evidence will constitute the majority of the body of the paper); (4) consider the significance of the paper’s findings to the text’s historical-theological context and to the contemporary church at the end of the paper, after an argument has been made for the thesis; and (5) lack any spelling and grammatical errors, imprecise use of words, rhetorical questions, and informal language. For more details, see the rubric that is posted in Canvas under the module ‘Syllabus, etc.’
- When you refer to the text, include parenthetical references with appropriate book/chapter/section numbers (e.g., *Confessions* VIII.9.21). You may use any text that we read for class to interpret your chosen passage. You may also use other texts by Augustine and, of course, the Bible as sources for your analysis and argument. But beyond these, do not use outside sources, whether in print or online. The goal is for you to learn to trust your training and especially your native wits when reading texts, however difficult they might seem; it is therefore important that you not lean on scholarly or popular resources as a crutch when developing your interpretation.
- The paper is due four weeks after the end of class, by 11:59 PM on Friday, July 7th. Your paper should be uploaded into the relevant assignment on Canvas.

(5) Socratic Discussions

Our class sessions will include both lectures and Socratic discussions. Through our Socratic discussions we will learn through testing your interpretations of the readings in collaborative and collegial dialogue. Your responsibility begins with preparing all of the assigned material in advance: reading thoroughly and carefully, marking your text(s) and making notes for yourself, and entering class with passages ready to discuss and insightful questions to offer to our group. Substituting shortcuts, such as Cliffs Notes or Spark Notes, for engagement with the actual text will hinder your learning and the growth of your ability to read and analyze a text.

In these discussions you are also responsible for the flow of conversation; class time is not ‘owned’ by the instructor, but by all of us collectively. Your task is not simply to talk, but also to listen and respond appropriately. If you see a problem during the course of discussion, it is your responsibility to enter the field and respectfully steer the conversation in a more helpful direction. We are seeking to engage in an open-ended, respectful dialogue with one another as peers. The goal is not to impress others, but to open our minds to what the texts have to teach us with regard to our lives and our ministries. We can—and should—disagree, but we must do so in a way that is marked by charity, humility, and self-awareness.

Remember too that a significant element of participating in a discussion is listening attentively and carefully. Body language communicates a great deal; sleeping during class and giving looks of disinterest are quite disrespectful and disruptive.

Participation will be graded for quality as well as quantity. Excellent participation in the discussion reflects careful participation and contributes to the flow of conversation without dominating it; such a student raises one or more significant insights, making careful reference to the text. Good participation refers to the text, shows some degree of preparation, and raises good questions for discussion. Adequate participation reflects only basic preparation, makes minimal reference to the text, and the themes or questions raised are not necessarily conducive to class discussion. Inadequate participation reflects inadequate preparation and/or rarely refers to the text. For more on assessment, see the rubric in the ‘Syllabus, etc.’ module.

(6) Technology in the Classroom

All computing devices are prohibited in the classroom (laptops, tablets, phones of any sort, recording devices, etc.). This guideline might appear draconian, but it exists strictly for the benefit of everyone involved. Although many may feel that their use of technology makes them better scholars, the [best research](#) says that [it does not](#). In fact, studies show that it significantly impairs your learning and [the learning of others around you](#). Taking notes by hand [improves recall](#) and apprehension, as does [reading on paper and not on screens](#). During class, phones will be completely silenced. Even then, if you are dependent on your smartphone, its mere presence—even if powered off—[has been](#)

[proven to diminish your cognitive capacities](#). We will thus use our brief time together to practice a little asceticism (or, if you prefer, Luddism).

- In accordance with this stipulation, you are required to have physical copies of the course texts; e-books are not allowed. You should also bring to class the requisite tools for note-taking (pen and paper).
 - Recording is prohibited, as is sharing course content through any platform (like social media).
 - If, of course, you have a school-approved accommodation for the use of technology in the classroom, you are welcome to use approved devices during class. Please notify me via email or a personal conversation of this accommodation.
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(7) Other Policies

(a) Attendance

Since the Socratic discussions are the backbone of our course and this is a summer intensive course, you are expected to be at all class sessions. Should you find it unavoidable to miss class, you must contact me within 24 hours of the class session, if possible. There are two types of absences. Absences are excused if you have an unavoidable emergency, such as the illness of an immediate family member, or a significant life event which you must attend, such as a wedding. Other absences will be categorized as unexcused. Your second unexcused absence, and each unexcused absence which follows, will result in a grade of 0 for that session's Socratic discussion. Furthermore, since this summer intensive course relies heavily on what we will accomplish during class, missing more than five hours of class time could make it impossible to fulfil the requirements of the course.

(b) Academic Honesty

I will not tolerate academic dishonesty. This includes plagiarism. Plagiarism is academic theft—a person steals ideas from an internet page, book, article, or some other source and then copies or paraphrases those ideas as though they are his/her own (i.e., without citing the source). Work you submit must be your own. Any infraction will be immediately elevated to the office of the Academic Dean and I will recommend that, at the very least, the assignment be awarded a 0. A detailed discussion of plagiarism is available in the course catalogue and the student handbook.

(c) Zoom Policy

Your professor may allow you to Zoom into class or watch Zoom recordings for excused absences based on the professor's discretion and subject to the availability of equipment. Students should contact their professor well in advance of the class meeting. For a third absence the Registrar should be consulted. Your professor may require additional interactive assignments to offset the absence of classroom interaction. Sync or Remote Live courses have priority for the limited Zoom equipment.

(d) Extension Policy

All assignments and exams are to be completed by the deadlines announced in this syllabus or in class.

Extensions for assignments and exams due within the normal duration of the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. Extensions of two weeks or less beyond the date of the last deadline for the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. A grade penalty may be assessed.

Extensions of greater than two weeks but not more than six weeks beyond the last deadline for the course may be granted in extenuating circumstances (i.e. illness, family emergency). For an extension of more than two weeks the student must request an Extension Request Form from the Registrar's Office. The request must be approved by the Professor and the Academic Dean. A grade penalty may be assessed. (RTS Catalog p. 46 and RTS Atlanta Student Handbook p. 18)

Any incompletes not cleared six weeks after the last published due date for course work will be converted to a failing grade. Professors may have the failing grade changed to a passing grade by request. (RTS Catalog p. 49)

(e) Late Assignments

Extensions will be granted only in cases of serious illness or family emergency. Otherwise, late assignments will receive a penalty of 10 percentage points per day.

(8) Recommended Reading

Augustinus-Lexicon. Edited by Cornelius Mayer et al. Basel, Schwabe & Co. AG, 1986–present.

- This encyclopedia of Augustine's thought is still in process. The work is being done in alphabetical order and has an approach that is more philological in nature than *Augustine Through the Ages*. Articles are written in English, German, and French and thus might not be as accessible to students who do not yet have proficiency in German or French.

Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia. Edited by Allen Fitzgerald et al. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1999.

- This is an accessible encyclopedia focused on Augustine's life and thought. The articles are peer-reviewed, written by scholars, and include brief bibliographies for further reading on each topic. It is an excellent starting point when beginning any inquiry into Augustine's life or thought.

Ayres, Lewis. *Augustine and the Trinity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

- This is the standard text on Augustine's thought on the Trinity. If you are unfamiliar with the ideas behind the Nicene Creed, I would recommend reading Ayres's *Nicaea and its Legacy* before engaging this text.

Ayres, Lewis. *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

- This offers the best narrative of the development of Trinitarian doctrine in the Christian East. It was written in order for Ayres to provide context for his book on Augustine's theology of the Trinity.

Brown, Peter. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. Forty-Fifth Anniversary Edition. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.

- Brown's biography, originally published in 1969, remains the definitive biography of Augustine. Be sure to read the substantial epilogue, which has two chapters. In it Brown discusses, among other things, ways in which he would reframe his presentation of Augustine based upon new pieces of evidence discovered in the late 20th century—the Divjak letters and Dolbeau sermons.

Cameron, Michael. *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine's Early Figurative Exegesis*. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology. Edited by David C. Steinmetz. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

- This is the best treatment of Augustine's method scriptural interpretation. It is also quite accessible. Cameron intentionally wrote this text to be comprehensible to both scholars and educated laypeople.

Wetzel, James. *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

- Wetzel's text lays out Augustine's understanding of will and notes the influence of Stoic philosophy in Augustine's thought.

*This is a broad and (quite) brief list of readings. Please feel free to contact me in the future if you have questions about where to begin reading about other areas of Augustine's life and thought.

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: HT6305 : Life and Theology of Augustine
 Professor: Brian Gronewoller
 Campus: Atlanta
 Date: Summer 223

MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes		Rubric	Mini-Justification
<p><i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i></p> <p><i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None 	
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Strong	Emphasis on understanding Augustine’s theology and historical context through oral engagement, Socratic discussions, theological reflection journals, and a final integrative paper.
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Moderate	Students will engage Augustine’s scriptural interpretations and his hermeneutic. They will compare and contrast Augustine’s hermeneutic with Reformed hermeneutics and modern hermeneutical approaches.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	Augustine is a fountainhead for Reformed Theology, so students will gain a deeper appreciation for how he shaped our theological tradition.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.	Strong	Students will learn to appreciate how God shaped Augustine from unbeliever to mature Christian, and how he can be a model for our Christian lives. They will also learn how Augustinian’s Christology affected the Council of Chalcedon and our understanding of our unity with the Trinity.
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Moderate	Students will be encouraged to conform all of their lives to Scripture by engaging Augustine’s lifelong attempt to do so.
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Strong	Students will engage Augustine’s winsome ethos and his consistent attempts to accommodate the gospel message to particular situations and recipients while maintaining fidelity to its content.
Pastoral Ministry	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading, and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Xns.	Moderate	Students will learn how Augustine pastored and expounded the Scriptures, thus gaining examples of effective ministry.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

All readings are to be completed *before* class begins on the day they are listed.

Overview

Monday AM (9:00a–12:00p)

Lecture and Socratic Discussion of Units 1–2

Monday PM (1:00p–4:30p)

Lecture and Socratic Discussion of Units 3–4

Tuesday AM

Lecture and Socratic Discussion of Units 5–6

Tuesday PM

Lecture and Socratic Discussion of Units 7–8

Wednesday AM

Lecture and Socratic Discussion of Units 9–10

Wednesday PM

Lecture and Socratic Discussion of Units 11–12

Thursday AM

Lecture and Socratic Discussion of Units 13–14

Thursday PM

Lecture and Socratic Discussion of Units 15–16

Unit 1: Survey of Augustine's Life (Monday AM)

Reading

- Possidius, *Life of Augustine*
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Unit 2: Augustine, Moral Psychology, and Beauty (Monday AM)

Reading

- Augustine, *Confessions* I–III
-

**Unit 3: Augustine, Manichaeism, and Evil
(Monday PM)**

Readings

- Augustine, *Confessions* IV
 - Manichaeism Readings
 - ‘Turbo’s Book of Mani’ in Epiphanius, *Panarion* 66.25.3-31.7 (Vol 2; Brill, 1994; pp. 245-53)
 - ‘The Hymn of the Pearl’ in *The Acts of Thomas* 108.1-113.105 (Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 2, pp. 380-385)
 - Augustine, *On 83 Diverse Questions* 4–6
-

**Unit 4: Knowledge and Moving Away from Manichaeism
(Monday PM)**

Reading

- Augustine, *Confessions* V–VI
-

**Unit 5: Willing, Being, and the Good
(Tuesday AM)**

Readings

- Augustine, *Confessions* VII
 - Augustine, *On the Nature of the Good* (Burlleigh, *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, pp. 324–52)
-

**Unit 6: Scripture and Seeing God
(Tuesday AM)**

Readings

- Augustine, *Confessions* VII (cont’d)
 - Augustine, *On 83 Diverse Questions* 46
 - Augustine, *On the Magnitude of the Soul* 68–81
 - Plotinus, *Ennead* I.6
-

**Units 7–8: Free Will, Pelagius, and Salvation
(Tuesday PM)**

Readings

- Confessions VIII
 - Augustine, *To Simplicianus 1, The 2nd Question on Rom 9:10-29*
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**Units 9–10: Augustine’s Scriptural Hermeneutic 1
(Wednesday AM)**

Reading

- Augustine, *On Christian Teaching* 1–2
 - Augustine, *Exposition of Psalm 45.6–7*
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**Units 11–12: Augustine’s Scriptural Hermeneutic 2
(Wednesday PM)**

Reading

- Augustine, *On Christian Teaching* 3–4
-

**Unit 13: The Trinity
(Thursday AM)**

Readings

- Augustine, *Sermon 52*
 - Augustine, *On the Trinity* 13.10.13—13.20.26
-

**Unit 14: Augustine’s Christology
(Thursday AM)**

Reading

- Augustine, *Answer to the Arian Sermon* 2.3–27.4
-

**Unit 15: The Donatists and Ecclesiology
(Thursday PM)**

Reading

- Augustine, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John* 1–3
-

**Unit 16: Sexual Sin, The Two Cities, and the Eschaton
(Thursday PM)**

Reading

- Augustine, *City of God* 14.6–26
-