

PHIL 285J
GREAT CHRISTIAN THINKERS
AUGUSTINE (354-430)

COURSE OUTLINE

Semester: Fall 2019

Course weight: .5 (half a credit)

Type of contact hours: three lecture hours

Schedule: Tuesday and Thursday 10:00-11:20

Room: STJ 3016

Professor: Bruno Tremblay

Department: Philosophy (St. Jerome's / University of Waterloo)

Office and phone number: SH 2001, 884-8110 (# 28248)

Office hours (subject to change): Monday 1:00-2:30 and Friday 9:00-11:00

Email: btrembla@uwaterloo.ca

It is very easy to meet outside of office hours. Just get in touch with me and we'll find a time.

Short Calendar Description

An introduction to and examination of the thought of one important figure of Christian philosophy, such as Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, or Kierkegaard. The choice of the philosopher studied varies from term to term.

General Description

Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.) — or St. Augustine, as he was more often called not long ago — occupies a strange position in the history of philosophy. Few of his works are purely philosophical, at least according to how we understand that discipline today. Yet, it would be difficult to overstate his importance not only in the shaping of Catholic and Christian thought, but also in the development of philosophy itself. That influence, combined with the intrinsic value and seriousness of what he has to say on some of the most fundamental problems of philosophy, amply justifies the great attention that has been paid to him for more than 15 centuries.

Leaving aside themes that have made Augustine the theologian famous and that are usually seen as being outside of the purview of philosophy — such as original sin, salvation, divine grace and the Trinity —, the course will focus instead on other important topics for which an entirely (or mostly) rational or philosophical treatment can be found within Augustine's numerous works.

Learning Objectives

- To foster one's capability of reading and thinking about philosophical problems.
- To introduce some of the main philosophical topics encountered in Augustine's works, such as the possibility of knowledge, happiness, the soul, God, and evil.
- To show the importance and the relevance of Augustine's philosophical thought.
- To foster one's capability of reading on one's own Ancient/medieval philosophers and Augustine in particular.

Course Content

Introduction (± 0.5 week)

- a) Augustine's life, works and importance
- b) The philosophical (rather than theological) scope of the course

1. Presuppositions (± 2.5 weeks)

- a) The value of philosophy as a source of truth and its relationship to faith (± 0.5 week)
 - Reading: *City of God*, VIII, 2-12
- b) Can philosophy really achieve true answers? Getting rid of skepticism (± 2 weeks)
 - Reading: *Against the Academicians* + chosen excerpts from diverse works

2. Life and its meaning (± 4 weeks)

- a) Does life have a meaning? What do human beings live for? (± 1 week)
 - Reading: *On the Happy Life*
- b) What has been the meaning of MY life? What have I, Augustine, lived for? (± 1 week)
 - Reading: *Confessions*, I-IX
- c) The contrast between our life and our Final End's existence — the analysis of time (± 1 week)
 - Reading: *Confessions*, XI
- d) Do we exist at all beyond this life's time? Can reason prove that the soul is immortal? (± 1 week)
 - Reading: *Soliloquies*, II + chosen excerpts from *On the Immortality of the Soul*

3. Life and the problem posed by the presence of evil (± 3 weeks)

- a) Doesn't God, Creator of all things, cause evil? Reflexion on the very nature of evil (± 0.5 week)
 - Reading: *Enchiridion* (= The Handbook), I and III-VII
- b) If we causes evil but God creates us, isn't that wrong and isn't He responsible? (± 2.5 week)
 - Reading: *The Problem of Free Choice*
- c) Dealing with the particular evil or war: the beginnings of a Just War Theory (± 1 week)
 - Reading: chosen excerpts from diverse works

Conclusion (± 0.5 week)

Methodology

The success of this course rests mainly on the student's personal work, whether it be at home or in the classroom. Students will be required to read and to reflect on their readings before and after coming into the classroom, which will allow us to have better and deeper discussions during lecture hours. Emphasis will be put on primary sources, i.e. Augustine's writings themselves.

Evaluation

The breakdown of the course evaluation will be as follows:

1. **Ten short quizzes** (10 X 2% = 20%), lasting approximately 5-10 minutes each and to be written without any aid and in the first few minutes of a class. These quizzes will be given throughout the semester and without warning. Their aim is to verify the students' completion and (to some limited extent) comprehension of the reading assigned in the preceding class. (N.B. There will actually be about 12 such quizzes. Only the best 10 results will be retained. This also allows for 1 or 2 quizzes missed due to illness or any other valid reason, for which there will therefore be no make-up tests. Should a student miss more than 2 quizzes for a legitimate and documented reason, however, make-up tests will be arranged.)
2. A **mid-term test** (25%), covering the content seen up to that date. Students will be given one or a few short-essay questions and will have 80 minutes to write one or a few ordered and fully-developed answers, without any aid. This test is scheduled on **Thursday, October 10th**.

3. A **2,500-word term paper** (30%). A detailed sheet providing more information about this paper will be given by the middle of the semester. It is due on **Tuesday, December 3rd**.
4. **Final exam** (25% of final grade). The final exam will in principle cover all of the course content and will be held during the time reserved by the registrar of the university for final exams. Students will have to answer one or a few short-essay questions and to answer it or them in an ordered and fully developed manner, without any aid.

Readings

Assigned readings are already mentioned in the Course Content section. The English translations that we will use are the following:

- *The City of God*, trans. M. Dods, in P. Schaff (ed.), *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Buffalo: The Christian Literature Company, vol. II: *St. Augustin's* [sic] *City of God and Christian Doctrine*, 1887, 621p., 145-152.
- *Against the Academicians* (Contra Academicos), trans. P. Garvey, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1943, 85p.
- *The Happy Life*, trans. M. T. Clark, in *Augustine of Hippo. Selected Writings*, New York: Paulist Press, 1984, 514p., 165-193.
- *The Confessions*, trans. A. Outler, in *Augustine: Confessions and Enchiridion*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955, 423p. (Scanned by Harry Plantinga.)
- *Soliloquies*, trans. J. H. S. Burleigh, in *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press (Library of Christian Classics, vol. 6), 1953, 413p., 23-63.
- *On the Immortality of the Soul*, trans. G. C. Leckie, in W. J. Oates (ed.), *The Basic Writings of Saint Augustine*, vol. 1, New York: Random House, 1948, 847p., 301-316.
- *Enchiridion*, trans. A. Outler, in *Augustine: Confessions and Enchiridion*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955, 423p.
- *The Problem of Free Choice*, trans. D. M. Pontifex, Westminster-London: The Newman Press-Longmans, Green and Co. (Ancient Christian Writers, vol. 22), 1955, 291p.

In compliance with copyright regulations (<https://uwaterloo.ca/copyright-guidelines/guide-instructors>), a complete or partial digital copy of those editions is made available on the course website. (Either the editions are no longer protected by copyrights laws or, when they still are, the excerpt made available on LEARN is small enough to be permitted by Canadian laws. If you are aware of any mistake I made concerning copyrighted material, please let me know.) **There is therefore nothing to buy for the course.**

A few short, additional readings will be made available on the course website after the beginning of the term, again in compliance with copyright regulations.

Make-up Tests and Plagiarism

There will be no make-up evaluation for quizzes, tests or final exams missed for a non-valid and non-properly-documented reason. Travel, excessive workload, defective alarm clocks, minor colds, a late bus, etc., are not considered to be valid reasons.

Students who are caught plagiarizing will automatically fail the evaluation in question and may fail the course. (Plagiarism, according to Webster's: the use or close imitation of the language and/or thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own original work.)

Important Information

Academic Integrity: To maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo and its Affiliated and Federated Institutions of Waterloo (AFIW) are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. [Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for

more information.]

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances,

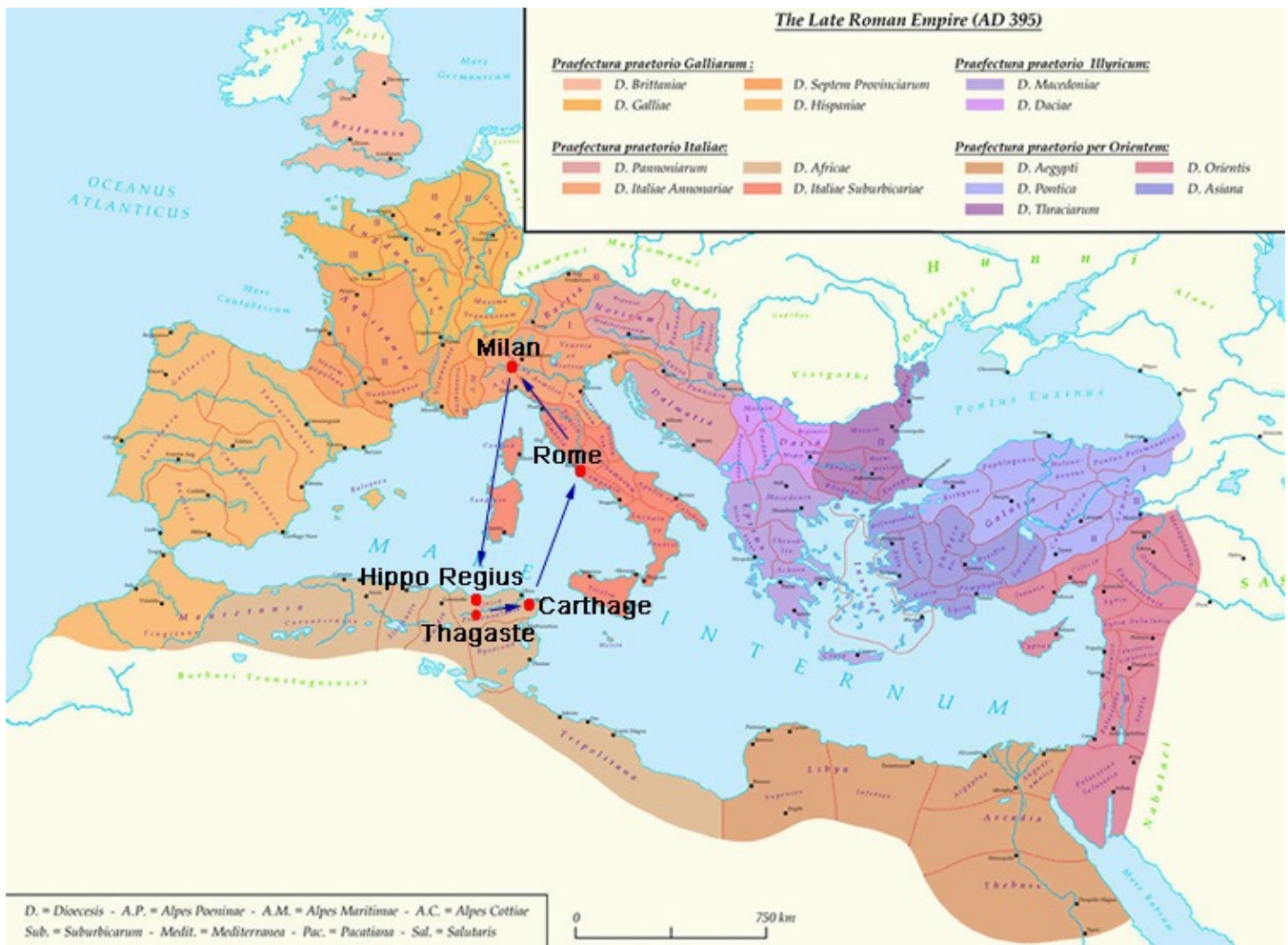
www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/upload_file/PLCY_AOM_Student-Petitions-and-Grievances_20151211-SJUSCapproved.pdf. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the St. Jerome's academic advisor who will provide further assistance.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. [Check

www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.] A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Discipline_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to University of Waterloo Policy 71, Student Discipline, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm. For typical penalties, check the Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Appeals, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Appeals_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf.

Note for Students with Disabilities: AccessAbility Services, located in Needles Hall (Room 1401) at the University of Waterloo, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term, www.uwaterloo.ca/accessability-services/.



Map of Augustine's Travels. Source: bhoffert.faculty.noctrl.edu-HOI100-06A.Augustine.html.

