

**Augustine Study Questions: Books 1-6**  
**Hum 110, Reed College**  
**Prof. Laura Leibman**

**Book 1:**

Does the opening of Augustine's *Confessions* surprise you? If so, how is it different from what you expected? Why might Augustine open the way he does? Augustine's *Confessions* often takes the form of a prayer to God. Psalms form number of different types of prayers (cries to God [Hallelujah], praises, wisdom, supplicant, faith). What type(s) of prayers does the *Confessions* use? In what other ways do you see the content, style, or direction of the *Confessions* as influenced by Psalms? Why is language important to Augustine? Why does he hate Greek literature? What is wrong with his schooling?

**Book 2:**

What does Augustine desire? How does he fulfill this desire? What do we make of his choice of fulfillment? How does Augustine characterize his mother, Monica? How does this characterization compare to that of other women we have seen in Roman and Christian texts? Why is he so upset that he stole a few pears? Have you had any comparable incidents in your own life? Were you plagued by them afterwards and why or why not?

**Book 3:**

Why does Augustine love/hate theatrical shows? Does he watch theater for the same reasons you might watch TV? How does his discussion of tragedy compare to that of Plato in Books 2 and 10 of the *Republic*? What does he learn from Cicero? Compare Augustine's distrust of rhetoric to that of other authors we have read this year. Do you find it ironic that Augustine has been charged (in his own time & in later times) with being too rhetorical? How might Augustine defend himself? What are the "chief kinds of wickedness" that plague Augustine in this book? If he wants God so much, why is he delaying? (Does his delay help us understand why we are delaying?)

**Book 4:**

What do you make of Augustine's description of his concubine? What role does she play in his life and his narrative? (Do the concubine and the mother represent a "Madonna"/"whore complex"? Use evidence to support your position.) Why does Augustine dedicate himself to Hierius? Why was he wrong? Why are Aristotle's 10 categories not useful? Why does Augustine have to tell us about all the times that he did something wrong or was incorrectly influenced? What is Augustine telling us we should do about our love life? How does he suggest we should interact with our studies?

**Book 5:**

What are the main tenets of Manichaeism? Why do they appeal to Augustine? Why does he reject them? What does Augustine learn from the incident with Faustus? What symbolism do you find in the way he describes his arrival to Rome? What is the nature of evil? What symbolism do you find in Augustine's use of sickness as a metaphor for spiritual unease? What passages in the Bible does it invoke? Do you agree with Augustine's definition of evil? If so, provide an example of something evil. If not, consider what causes you to disagree.

**Book 6:**

Compare Augustine's rejection of secular ambitions and worldly concerns to that of the Gospels and St. Anthony. What are the arguments for and against Augustine's marriage? Are these concerns that we have seen before in any other texts? Are these the reasons you would consider for getting married. If not, why not?